History of the Original Jesus Movement

A compendium of the ancient historical references

Mauricio BenZipporah
Also by the same author: "The (Original) Sayings and Deeds of Jesus the Nazrene".

History of the Original Jesus Movement: A compendium of the ancient historical references.

Copyright © January, 2017 Mauricio Benzipporah

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without written permission. For information contact staff@ebionim.org

ISBN:
ISBN-13:
To the Prophets.

And to the pillars of the original Jesus Movement:
   Yohannan the Immerser,
   Yeshua bar Yosef,
   Mariamene of Magdala,
   Yaakov bar Yosef,
   Yehuda bar Yosef,
   Yehuda Thomas (Judas the Twin),
   Simeon ‘Kefa’ bar Yona,
   Simeon bar Klopas.
May their story and authentic teachings finally see the light of day.

And to Albert Schweitzer, founder of the modern quest for the historical Jesus, and a true follower of The Way.
Deuteronomy 30:

15 See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.

16 If you obey the commandments of YH-H your God that I am commanding you today, by loving YH-H your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and YH-H your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess.

17 But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, 20 loving YH-H your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.
BIBLICAL ISRAEL ACCORDING TO THE TORAH
Isaiah’s Prophecies regarding the Kingdom of God.

Isaiah 2:1-3  1 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; All the nations shall stream to it. 3 Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of YH-H, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of YH-H from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 2:4  4 He [YH-H] shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 11:1-5  1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The spirit of YH-H shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of YH-H. 3 His delight shall be in the fear of YH-H. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

Isaiah 25:6-12  6 On this mountain YH-H of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. 7 And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. 8 Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for YH-H has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is YH-H for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. 10 For the hand of YH-H will rest on this mountain.

Isaiah 26:19  : Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Isaiah 43:5-6. I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give up," and to the south, "Keep not back, bring My sons from far, and My daughter from the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 59:15-21  15 Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled. YH-H saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. 16 He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so YH-H's own arm brought him victory, and YH-H's righteousness upheld him. 17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle. 18 According to their deeds, so will he repay; wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render requital. 19 So those in the west shall fear the name of YH-H, and those in the east, his glory; for he will come like a pent-up stream that the wind of YH-H drives on. 20 And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says YH-H. 21 And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says YH-H: my spirit is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says YH-H, from now on and forever.
CONTENTS

i  Preface
1  The Sources
2  Background
3  The Baptist
4  Jesus
5  The Family
6  James
7  James vs Saul
8  James vs Paul
9  Simon bar Jonah
10  Sectarian Differences
11  James' Death
12  The first generation passes away
13  After James, and Escape from Jerusalem
14  The Return
15  The Community of Canonical Matthew
16  The Community of Luke / Acts
17  Persecutions, End of the Jerusalem Leadership
18  After 135CE, Through Nicaea (325 CE)
19  After Nicaea

Appendix I: Who Killed Jesus and Jesus' brother James?
Appendix II: When did Jesus live?
Bibliography
PREFACE

Isaiah 40:3
A voice cries:
“In the wilderness, prepare The Way (דַּרְכֵּה / Ha Derekh) of YH-H; Make straight a highway in the desert, for our God.”

Before the Graeco-Roman missions of Paul, there was a original movement in Israel, led by Jesus and subsequently by his Torah-observant followers. This movement, Jewish to the core and zealous for the Sinai Covenant, would have its own evolution, separate from what eventually became known as Christianity. The purpose of this movement? To instigate the advent of God’s Kingdom on earth, by paving what it saw as the Straight Path (that is, “The Way”) for the Deity.

Yet, this Israelite movement failed utterly.

It was crushed, not once, but multiple times. First, around 30 CE, when Jesus’ teacher Yohannan the Immerser was decapitated by Herod Antipas. Then in 33CE with Jesus crucified at the hands of the illegal Sadducee priesthood in collaboration with their Roman patrons. Then in 62 CE the movement suffered another blow, with the murder of Jesus’ brother James the Righteous, at the hands of the same Sadducee High-Priesthood family that eliminated Jesus. And yet once again, around 110CE with the crucifixion of Jesus’ kinsman (brother, half-brother, cousin?), Simeon Bar Cleopas, leader of the Jesus Movement community at that time.

The pressure and persecution undergone by the Jesus Movement between 30CE and 62 CE (that is, between the ministry of Yohannan the Immerser and the death of Jesus’ brother James) parallels the general fate of the majority of the nation’s politico-religious groups, as the country trod its way towards the desperate rebellion of the First Jewish War against Rome (66CE to 73CE). Although united in their hatred of Roman oppression, the different groups in Israel (Zealots, Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Jesus followers, and others) were also vying against each other with deep antagonism, each with differing views on how to bring to fruition God’s purpose for the nation of Israel. Thus, the rebellion against Rome is at the same time also a civil war, wreaking havoc in the major cities, especially Jerusalem. Assisted by the Jewish infighting, Rome is victorious by 70 CE and any remaining semblance of self-rule in Israel is wiped out. Only the Pharisees manage to adapt to the new circumstances; Persuading emperor Vespasian in 70 CE to allow a Temple-less form of Judaism to survive, they move the center of religious study to Yavne (northwest of Jerusalem) and manage to save for the (now dispersed) Jewish people, the heritage of their Torah and part of their Jewish culture. With the defeat by Rome, now Graeco-Roman communities begin to increase in population in Israel and many Jewish communities are vanished, sold to slavery or dispersed to the nations.

Things will get worse. If a trifle of Israel remains after 70CE, it is absolutely dissolved after Israel’s defeat in the Second Jewish War against Rome (132CE to
135 CE), led by Simeon Bar Kochba. From 135 CE, Jews are not even allowed to enter Jerusalem (then renamed Aelia Capitolina). After 135 CE, Judaism is in desperate need of unity. With the Essenes, Zealots, Sadducees long gone, and the evident reality that the Jesus Movement did not produce a redemption from Rome’s oppression, only Pharisaism is strong enough to lead the Jewish people (what remains in Israel, and what is in the diaspora) with a unified worldview and religion. There will now be little room for the remnant of the Jesus Movement among the Jewish people. That original movement is now increasingly persecuted by all sides. To the Romans, they are the followers of a messianic claimant to David’s throne, an insurrectionist against the Empire. To the Jewish people in general, they are cultists who refuse to accept that their leader has failed to usher in God’s rule. To the Jews who fought Rome during the Second War, they are traitors who refused to join the military leader Bar Kochba in his fight against Rome. To the emerging Graeco-Roman Christian communities (in conquered Israel, as well as in the diaspora), they are the most dangerous disease of all: heretical Judaizers from within, partisans from that Rome-hating species: the Jews. And to Rabbinical Judaism, they also represent the greatest danger, as they are seen as likely vessels for the anti-Torah philosophy of Saint Paul and for Graeco-Roman paganism (with idolatry now disguised in the form of a Jewish teacher from Nazareth).

Nevertheless, the community persists and clings to the basic idea in Judaism: that the Sinai Covenant is eternal, and that the saga of the World to Come shall be seen thru.

But the forces of history are against them. By the year 400 CE they only exist as a small and disdained minority. After 500 CE even their enemies stop persecuting them. For the next fifteen hundred years, the story of this movement remains unpublicized. It is an inconvenient history that the victorious Roman empire wishes to suppress, for the original Jesus Movement exposes the Achilles’ heal of Christianity, the faith and new engine of Western Civilization. What is this Achilles’ heal? It is, as we shall see, that Christianity, by giving primacy to a dogma (the Pauline teaching of “Salvation only by Faith in Jesus”), diametrically opposes the “Repent and Return to God’s Commandments” salvation-by-works teaching of the one whom it claims to follow.

Today, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Western Civilization asks itself: “how could it be that Christianity so persecuted Jesus’ own nation?” The answer to this question is inextricably tied to the reasons for the demise of the original Jesus Movement. Plain and simple: Judaism (and, as we shall see, this is consistent with Jesus’ authentic teachings) abhors prescribing “forms” for connecting to the Creator; and offers salvation thru obedience to God’s Commandments (with priority on loving-kindness). Rome offers salvation only thru the pledge of allegiance to their ‘savior man-god’, a god for whom “there is neither Jew nor Greek” (that is, a god for whom all nations cease to have their own covenants, their own rituals, their own cultures). The problem with this, of course, is that Israel’s Covenant is eternal. It can not be abrogated. As the teacher from Nazareth said, “Not one jot or tittle shall pass from the Commandments, as long as heaven and earth exist.”

For the last two thousand years, the mere existence (and sometimes prosperity) of Judaism has painfully reminded Christians that God retains Israel and its Covenant, in
spite of their refusal to pledge allegiance to Rome’s ‘savior god’. Now modern research (that is, since 1906, when Albert Schweitzer pronounced the traditional “Quest for the Historical Jesus” as “closed, with no hope of succeeding”) is exposing the evidence that Jesus’ original followers and Jesus’ himself, championed at every turn the very same cause of the Jewish people: the sacredness and upholding of the Sinai Covenant; and that nothing like Paul’s dogma of “universal salvation only by confessing Jesus as divine savior” was ever part of Jesus’ teaching.

This compendium of ancient sources tells that story of the original Jesus Movement. It’s a story that starts before Jesus, and extends long after his death. It’s a story that will involve his own family members, in ways virtually unknown to the vast majority of today’s educated public. It is also a story that involves a alternate set of villains, compared to what Christianity and Western Civilization have taught (that’s right: Jesus’ death was not plotted by “the Jewish People” or “the Pharisees” or even “the Romans” per se). It is a story of defeat and of being seemingly forsaken by God; Yet, it is finally also a story of hope, for within the bowels of Rome’s victorious religion (Christianity), there still awaits an original teaching about God’s Rule materializing on to human history: that teaching is that Israel and every nation after Noah shall be allowed to fulfill its own, distinct, Covenant with the Creator, not based on “Confessing allegiance” to Rome’s idea of God, but based on Love for the Creator and Deeds of Righteousness towards God’s creation.
1
THE SOURCES

The following historical sources (listed in the order in which they were authored) give us a glimpse into the original Jesus Movement, as it existed, separate from the evolution of (gentile) Christianity:

• Saul of Tarsus (aka Paul) (died ca 62CE):
  • Paul’s letters of undisputed authorship:
    - Galatians, early 50’s CE;
    - First Thessalonians, ca 50-51CE;
    - First Corinthians, ca 54-57CE;
    - Romans, ca 55-57CE;
    - Second Corinthians, ca 55-57CE;
    - Philemon, ca 60-61CE;
    - Philippians, ca 61CE).

• Unknown authors: various sources of Christian synoptic Gospels:
  • Jesus sayings source “Q” (from German Quelle, “Source”), various layers written down between late 30’s and late 50’s CE.
  • Oldest text of “Mark”, compiled ca 70CE
  • Received texts of "Matthew" (compiled ca 80’sCE)
  • Received texts of "Luke & Acts" (compiled ca 80’s or 90’sCE).

• Josephus (born Joseph ben Matityahu, ca 37CE, died ca 100CE), Galilean Jewish War general, later became historian under the patronage of Roman emperor Vespasian, at which time he assumed his patron’s family surname and was renamed Titus Flavius Josephus:
  • "The Wars of the Jews" (aka “Bellum Judaicum” or “BJ”) written in Greek between 75 and 80CE, approx. A earlier version had been written by Josephus in Aramaic, however no extant copy exists. We shall look at the Greek received text, as well as a Slavonic variant version that has also been received.
1 - The Sources

- "Antiquities of the Jews" ("AJ") written in Greek, completed in 94CE approx.
- Pliny the Younger (wrote in 112CE) and Roman Emperor Trajan
  - Letter from Pliny to Trajan, and response from Trajan
- Unknown redactors and editors of The Didache (Teaching of the twelve Apostles), ca 100CE, although first quoted by Eusebius ca 327CE.
  - The Didache was rediscovered in 1873 after having been lost for centuries (previous writer who makes mention of it and had access to it was Nicephorus, ca 810CE). The letter, addressed to “the Gentiles / the nations”, deals with ethics (i.e. works), rituals (baptism, thanksgiving), and organization of assemblies. It reflects a low Christology (emphasis on Jesus as “Servant of God”, and “Son of David”) and makes no mention of the Pauline doctrine of “Atonement by accepting Jesus’ salvific death and resurrection”.

- Cornelius Tacitus (born 56CE – died 117CE):
  - “Annals”, written in 116CE.
- Suetonius, Roman historian (ca 69CE – ca. 122CE)
  - Lives of the twelve Caesars, written in 121CE.
- Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (modern day Manbij) (born ca 70 CE, wrote ca 130 CE), quoted by various later sources (Irenaeus, Eusebius, others):
  - “Exposition on the sayings [logia] of the Lord”, written ca 130 CE, a work in 5 books, now lost, but referenced by a number of ancient authors, including Eusebius and Irenaeus.
- Justin Martyr (born 100CE in Shechem (modern day Nablus), died 165CE in Rome):
  - First Apology [Roberts Donaldson English translation]
  - “Dialogue with Trypho the Jew”, written between 155 and 165CE.
- Jewish Christian chronicler Hegesippus (ca 110CE - ca 180CE), quoted by Eusebius.
- Irenaeus, Christian Church Father, Bishop of Lugdunum, Gaul (now Lyons, France) (died 202CE):
  - “Against Heresies” (Adversos Haereses), written ca 180CE.
History of the Original Jesus Movement

- Clement of Alexandria (ca 150CE - 215CE), Christian theologian.

- Tertullian, (ca 160CE - ca 220 CE), Christian writer and Church Father (later became a Montanist).

- Cassius Dio (born of Greek origin ca. 155 CE in Nicaea, Bythina – died 235CE in Bythinia); Roman consul and noted historian who wrote in Greek. Dio published a history of Rome in 80 volumes, beginning with the legendary arrival of Aeneas in Italy; the volumes then documented the subsequent founding of Rome (753 BC), the formation of the Republic (509 BC), and the creation of the Empire (31 BC), up until AD 229. The entire period covered by Dio’s work is approximately 1,400 years. Of the 80 books, written over 22 years, many survive into the modern age, intact, or as fragments, providing modern scholars with a detailed perspective on Roman history.

- Hippolytus of Rome (ca 170CE - ca 236CE), Christian theologian:
  - “Refutation of All Heresies” (also known as “Philosophumena” / Philosophical Teachings).

- Sextus Julius Africanus (c. 160CE – c. 240CE), Christian traveler and historian. Maintained friendship with Origen (185CE-254CE). Africanus’s writings are quoted by Eusebius (263CE-339CE) as well as later Christian chroniclers (George Syncellus, died 810; and George Kedrenos/Cedrenus writing around 1050).
  - Letter to Aristides (quoted by Eusebius), discussing genealogical practices prior to, and leading to, the time of Jesus.

- Pseudo-Clementine authors (various authors writing between 200CE and 350CE, each elaborating their own version of a novel describing a (probably fictional) journey by Roman bishop Clement to visit James brother of Jesus, and Peter, in Jerusalem around 40CE. Various received texts exist. Two main variants: Recognitions, and Homilies; both probably recensions of a original composed around 200CE either in Syria or Rome. The novel has a significantly (although not exclusively) ebionite viewpoint and may preserve information dating from the first century.

- Origen (185CE - 254CE).

- Eusebius 263CE - 339CE), Bishop of Caesarea:
  - "Historia Ecclesiastica" (History of the Church), written in 324 CE. Williamson translation.

- Hilarius Bishop of Poitiers, Gaul (France) (aka Hilary of Poitiers) (ca. 300CE – ca. 368CE).
1 - The Sources

- Ambrosiaster (unknown writer previously thought to have been St. Ambrose, hence the name “Ambrosiaster”, meaning “would-be Ambrose” or “Star of Ambrose”); Christian Church writer, author of “Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistles”, written in Rome during the papacy of Pope Damasus I, i.e. between 366 and 384CE.

- Epiphanius of Salamis, Cyprus (Christian Church Father) (born ca 315 - died 403 CE):
  - "Panarion" (Medicine Chest, also called "Adversus Haeresis"/Against Heresies), written between 374 and 377CE;
  - "On Measures and Weights" (written 392CE).

- Tyrannius Rufinus (ca342CE – 410CE)
  - “On the Trinity”

- Jerome, Roman Catholic priest and writer (born ca 347 in Dalmatia - lived many years in Antioch – died near Bethlehem in 420).

- John Cassian (ca. 360 – 435) (also known as John the Ascetic, or John Cassian the Roman), was a Christian monk and theologian celebrated in both the Western and Eastern Churches for his mystical writings.
  - “On the Incarnation”

- St. Nikephoros I or Nicephorus I, (c. 758 – April 5, 828) was a Christian Byzantine writer and Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople from April 806, to March 815.
  - The Stichometry by Patriarch Nicephorus I of Constantinople. It is significant in that it counts the number of lines of various texts, many of which were later suppressed by the church and lost. This has enabled modern scholars to determine how much of various fragmentary texts from the New Testament apocrypha and Old Testament apocrypha remain missing.

- Abd al-Jabbar Ibn Mohammad al-Hamdani (born 925, lived in Baghdad until he moved to Rayy, Iran in 978 at invitation of the governor of that province. Florished there thru his death in 1025). Abd al-Jabbar was a well-known Mu'tazilite theologian, author and Chief Qadi. His treatises were written at a time when Islam was loosing the war against Bizantium (al-Rum). In addition to his aversion for all things Byzantine/Roman, Al-Jabbar’s treatises are also generally dismissive or antagonistic against Judaism as well.
  - “The Book of the Establishment of Proofs with regards to our Master Muhammad’s being a Prophet” (Kitab Tathbit Dala il Nubuwwat Sayyidina Muhammad), section “Critique on Christian Origins”. In this treatise, historian Shlomo Pines explored in 1966 a number of passages which Al-Jabbar has apparently not authored, but rather brought into his text from writings which can only have been authored by a community of Jewish followers of Jesus. Their theme is
a lamentation of Christianity, which they describe as a Graeco-Roman religion that abandoned the original precepts of the Jewish teaching (Torah) and language (Hebrew) of Jesus. The quotes were brought to light and translated by Shlomo Pines in his 1966 publication, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities – Proceedings Volume II No 13). Subsequently the full text of *Critique on Christian Origins* has been translated by Gabriel Said Reynolds and Samir Khalil Samir (*Abd al-Jabbar – Critique of Christian Origins – A parallel English-Arabic text*, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2010).
Abbreviations:

NRSV: New Revised Standard Text
TNK: Torah (Five Books of Moses), Neviʾim (Prophets), Ketuvim (Writings)
YLT: Young's Literal Translation

Note on the use of fonts, color highlights, and conventions:

Use of the tetragrammaton: So as to prevent misuse, all Torah quotes using the Hebrew name of God have been modified to use “YH-H”.

All ancient source quotes appear in bold. Because so much of the content in this book consists of ancient source quotes, we have not made use of wider margins when quoting from the ancient sources.

Unless otherwise noted, quotes from Torah and New Testament are from New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Within ancient source quotes, we have used italics when providing a word in the original language (usually Greek or Latin).

We have made use of yellow highlighting for the purpose of conveying emphasis, especially in the midst of large quotations of the ancient sources. When quoting the ancient sources, our desire has been to provide as much of the text as necessary in order to present, not just the specific point of interest, but also the context and broader narrative provided by the ancient author. The result of course is that some of the material quoted is peripheral to main point being discussed. Hence thru the use of yellow highlights we point the reader to the narrow point of interest.

We have made use of green highlights when quoting gospels used by this or that branch of the original Jesus movement (i.e. Ebionim or Nazarene). In these cases, the name of the gospel (as given by the ancient source) has been highlighted in light blue.
Jesus lived in a period when Israel had recently lost its sovereignty once again, this time to Rome. Sixty years before Jesus' birth, Roman General Pompeii was asked for 'help' by one of the two Macabbean (aka Hasmonean) contenders to the Kingship and High Priesthood of Israel at that time. This event marked the beginning of the end for the Israel of late antiquity, for it eventually led to Roman domination, the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, and the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem in 135 CE, starting a 2000 year period of dispersion.

How was it that Rome came to exercise dominion over Israel? By the year 60 BCE, the Macabbean dynasty had reached a state of utmost decline. It was a far cry from the original Maccabean leadership that had gained independence for Israel from the Greek Syrians in about 160 BCE. In that year, the Galilean clan of a priest named Matthias, and his sons Judas Macabee ("Macabee" was his nickname, which means "Hammer"), Eleazar, Johannan, and Simeon, ignited a rebellion against the Greek Syrian Seleucid empire of Antiochus Epiphanes, winning independence for Israel after almost 100 years of domination (dating back to Alexander the Great's conquests). However, the subsequent generations of the Maccabean dynasty devolved into a tyrannical state, which even adopted the very Greek practices that Matthias had fought against. They also took over the office of the High Priest, even though they were not of Levitical/Aaronic descent. (It was such a major aberration, that it probably gave cause to the self-exiled community that created the Dead Sea Scrolls). At any rate, in the 60's BCE, a dispute erupted between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, two Maccabean brothers contending for High Priesthood and Kingship. They were sons of Alexander Janneus who was son of Johanan Hyrcanus who was son of Simeon who was son of Matthias.

This Hyrcanus, under the advice of a astute Idumean power broker named Antipater, called for Roman General Pompeii to assist him in overcoming his brother Aristobulus. This triggered Rome’s involvement. Pompeii intervened, exiling Aristobulus and establishing Hyrcanus, but he also converted Israel into a part of the Roman empire. As it turns out, Antipater would prove to be a manipulator of major proportions. Within one generation, Antipater's sons (Herod, Philip, Phasaelus) had become Rome's client rulers over Judaea, Samaria, Galilee, and the surrounding areas east of the Jordan, and the Maccabean dynasty had been completely displaced by the Herodian dynasty. See graphic below.

Antipater's son Herod (eventually called “Herod the Great”) was a megalomaniac, cruel, and paranoid ruler, who murdered his own wife Mariamne (a Macabbean princess
herself) and many of his own sons. He also murdered Hyrcanus, the man who had confided in Herod's own father Antipater. Herod murdered Hyrcanus even as Hyrcanus held the title High Priest and King of Judea. His power was then consolidated, and this completely with Rome's blessing. As a Idumean, Herod was a nominal Jew (less than one hundred years prior, Idumeans had been conquered and forcibly converted to Judaism by one of the Maccabean Kings) and Judeans and Galileans were constantly on the verge of rebellion against this Roman client king. Just as a Galilean clan (that of Matthias and Judas Maccabee) had spearheaded the fight against the Greek Seleucids, so also Galilee would now rise against the power of Rome and its puppet appointees. The first group to rise against Rome spawned a movement that lasted more than four generations, from 50BCE until 73CE, and received a name that still reverberates into the world's current consciousness: The Zealots. This first group would be as militant as the Maccabees of earlier days. Their zeal for Moses’ Law and for God’s rule eventually would put them at the center of the final collision that destroyed the state of Israel in 70CE. A second group, the focus of this book, would also rise from Galilee. That is, of course, the movement that started with John Baptist, and was eventually led by Jesus, and then by Jesus’ brother James. One must truly must pause for a moment to take stock on the importance of Galilee as a historical champion and defender of its nation, Israel.

Before delving into the Movement that John, Jesus, and James would lead (each in his own time), we shall complete our Background section with a extended reference to Josephus on the Jewish denominations in existence at the onset of the movement created by John the Baptist and Jesus and James: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots. As we shall see, there are many similarities and differences between these and our Jesus Movement.
Tetrarchy of Judea and neighboring Decapolis to the east and Syria.
After Herod the Great’s death in 4BCE, his kingdom was divided into four:
1) Archelaus, Herod’s son by his wife Malthace the Samaritan received Idumaea, Judea and Samaria. He was eventually replaced by Pilate.
2) Herod Antipas, Archelaus’ brother, received Galilee and Perea.
3) Philip I, Herod’s son by his fifth wife Cleopatra of Jerusalem, received the northern part. (Luke lists as Iturea and Trachonitis: Josephus lists variously as: Gaulanitis, Paneas, Trachonitis, Batanea (Antiquities XVII, 8 : 1) and: Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and "a certain part of what is called the House of Zenodorus" (Ant XVII, 11 : 4).
4) Lysinias (unrelated to Herodians) received Abilene in Iturea.
The Decapolis (including Pella) was outside Roman Herodian territory. To the north of the Tetrarchy was Chalcis, ruled by Herod of Chalcis (grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Herod Agrippa I).
First Appendix to Chapter 2: Josephus’ account on the rise of the Zealot movement in the time of Herod the Great and Rome’s occupation; also Josephus’ account on the main Jewish denominations at the onset of John Baptist’s ministry.

1. Josephus’ account of the rise of Herod the Great (50 BCE), and that of Hezekiah, precursor of the Zealot movement.

If Galilee was the downfall of the Greek Seleucids’ designs upon Israel (thanks to the Maccabees), again Galilee would take up arms upon the fall of the Maccabean dynasty to Rome. In the mid 60’s BCE, Rome is active in wars for control of Greek Syria. By 64 BCE Roman General Pompey has conquered the local Syrian rulers and brought Syria into Roman control. Shortly thereafter, in 62 BCE, Pompey is actually brought in (!!) to Israel to quell a dispute between two Maccabean brothers, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II. He seizes the opportunity to bring the area under Roman control. With Rome’s blessing, a astute Idumean by the name of Antipater rises in political influence and is named by Rome as its surrogate ruler over the area. Antipater quickly names his sons as generals over the different areas of Israel. Approximately in 47 BCE, a young son of Antipater, named Herod, is given control over Galilee. Already Galilee is up in arms against Rome’s puppet rulers. As we will see Josephus, writing his accounts under the patronage of Rome, writes with great antipathy against those militants who opposed Rome. He uses the Greek word “lestai” (“robber”, “bandit”), a equivalent to today’s term “terrorist”. Naturally, to many Jews of the time these fighters would have been seen as “freedom fighters”, to use modern parlance. Here is Josephus’ account, starting with the rise of Herod the Great, around 50 BCE:

Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 10.

4. But as soon as Antipater had conducted Caesar out of Syria he returned to Judea, and the first thing he did was to rebuild that wall of his own country [Jerusalem] which Pompey had overthrown, and then to go over the country, and to quiet the tumults that were therein; where he partly threatened, and partly advised, every one, and told them that in case they would submit to Hyrcanus, they would live happily and peaceably, and enjoy what they possessed, and that with universal peace and quietness; but that in case they hearkened to such as had some frigid hopes by raising new troubles to get themselves some gain, they should then find him to be their lord instead of their procurator; and find Hyrcanus to be a tyrant instead of a king; and both the Romans and Caesar to be
their enemies, instead of rulers; for that they would not suffer him to be removed from the government, whom they had made their governor. And, at the same time that he said this, he settled the affairs of the country by himself, because he saw that Hyrcanus was inactive, and not fit to manage the affairs of the kingdom. So he constituted his eldest son, Phasaelus, governor of Jerusalem, and of the parts about it; he also sent his next son, Herod, who was very young, with equal authority into Galilee.

5. Now Herod was an active man, and soon found proper materials for his active spirit to work upon. As therefore he found that Hezekias, the head of the robbers [lestai], ran over the neighboring parts of Syria with a great band of men, he caught him and slew him, and many more of the robbers with him; which exploit was chiefly grateful to the Syrians, insomuch that hymns were sung in Herod's commendation, both in the villages and in the cities, as having procured their quietness, and having preserved what they possessed to them; on which occasion he became acquainted with Sextus Caesar, a kinsman of the great Caesar, and president of Syria. A just emulation of his glorious actions excited Phasaelus also to imitate him. Accordingly, he procured the good-will of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, by his own management of the city affairs, and did not abuse his power in any disagreeable manner; whence it came to pass that the nation paid Antipater the respects that were due only to a king, and the honors they all yielded him were equal to the honors due to an absolute lord; yet did he not abate any part of that good-will or fidelity which he owed to Hyrcanus.

6. However, he found it impossible to escape envy in such his prosperity; for the glory of these young men affected even Hyrcanus himself already privately, though he said nothing of it to any body; but what he principally was grieved at was the great actions of Herod, and that so many messengers came one before another, and informed him of the great reputation he got in all his undertakings. There were also many people in the royal palace itself who inflamed his envy at him; those, I mean, who were obstructed in their designs by the prudence either of the young men, or of Antipater. These men said, that by committing the public affairs to the management of Antipater and of his sons, he sat down with nothing but the bare name of a king, without any of its authority; and they asked him how long he would so far mistake himself, as to breed up kings against his own interest; for that they did not now conceal their government of affairs any longer, but were plainly lords of the nation, and had thrust him out of his authority; that this was the case when Herod slew so many men without his giving him any command to do it, either by word of mouth, or by his letter, and this in contradiction to the laws of the Jews; who therefore, in case he be not a king, but a private man, still ought to come to his trial, and answer it to him, and to
the laws of his country, which do not permit any one to be killed till he hath been condemned in judgment.

7. Now Hyrcanus was, by degrees, inflamed with these discourses, and at length could bear no longer, but he summoned Herod to take his trial. Accordingly, by his father's advice, and as soon as the affairs of Galilee would give him leave, he came up to Jerusalem, when he had first placed garrisons in Galilee; however, he came with a sufficient body of soldiers, so many indeed that he might not appear to have with him an army able to overthrow Hyrcanus's government, nor yet so few as to expose him to the insults of those that envied him. However, Sextus Caesar was in fear for the young man, lest he should be taken by his enemies, and brought to punishment; so he sent some to denounce expressly to Hyrcanus that he should acquit Herod of the capital charge against him; who acquitted him accordingly, as being otherwise inclined also so to do, for he loved Herod.

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 14, Chapter 9:

1. NOW when Caesar had settled the affairs of Syria, he sailed away. And as soon as Antipater had conducted Caesar out of Syria, he returned to Judea. He then immediately raised up the wall which had been thrown down by Pompey; and, by coming thither, he pacified that tumult which had been in the country, and this by both threatening and advising them to be quiet; for that if they would be of Hyrcanus's side, they would live happily, and lead their lives without disturbance, and in the enjoyment of their own possessions; but if they were addicted to the hopes of what might come by innovation, and aimed to get wealth thereby, they should have him a severe master instead of a gentle governor, and Hyrcanus a tyrant instead of a king, and the Romans, together with Caesar, their bitter enemies instead of rulers, for that they would never bear him to be set aside whom they had appointed to govern. And when Antipater had said this to them, he himself settled the affairs of this country.

2. And seeing that Hyrcanus was of a slow and slothful temper, he made Phasaelus, his eldest son, governor of Jerusalem, and of the places that were about it, but committed Galilee to Herod, his next son, who was then a very young man, for he was but fifteen years of age. But that youth of his was no impediment to him; but as he was a youth of great mind, he presently met with an opportunity of signalizing his courage; for finding that there was one Hezekiah, a captain of a band of robbers, who overran the neighboring parts of Syria with a great troop of them, he seized him and slew him, as well as a great number of the other robbers that were with him; for which action he was greatly
beloved by the Syrians; for when they were very desirous to have their country freed from this nest of robbers, he purged it of them. So they sung songs in his commendation in their villages and cities, as having procured them peace, and the secure enjoyment of their possessions; and on this account it was that he became known to Sextus Caesar, who was a relation of the great Caesar, and was now president of Syria. Now Phasaelus, Herod's brother, was moved with emulation at his actions, and envied the fame he had thereby gotten, and became ambitious not to be behindhand with him in deserving it. So he made the inhabitants of Jerusalem bear him the greatest good-will while he held the city himself, but did neither manage its affairs improperly, nor abuse his authority therein. This conduct procured from the nation to Antipater such respect as is due to kings, and such honors as he might partake of if he were an absolute lord of the country. Yet did not this splendor of his, as frequently happens, in the least diminish in him that kindness and fidelity which he owed to Hyrcanus.

3. But now the principal men among the Jews, when they saw Antipater and his sons to grow so much in the good-will the nation bare to them, and in the revenues which they received out of Judea, and out of Hyrcanus's own wealth, they became ill-disposed to him; for indeed Antipater had contracted a friendship with the Roman emperors; and when he had prevailed with Hyrcanus to send them money, he took it to himself, and purloined the present intended, and sent it as if it were his own, and not Hyrcanus's gift to them. Hyrcanus heard of this his management, but took no care about it; nay, he rather was very glad of it. But the chief men of the Jews were therefore in fear, because they saw that Herod was a violent and bold man, and very desirous of acting tyrannically; so they came to Hyrcanus, and now accused Antipater openly, and said to him, "How long wilt thou be quiet under such actions as are now done? Or dost thou not see that Antipater and his sons have already seized upon the government, and that it is only the name of a king which is given thee? But do not thou suffer these things to be hidden from thee, nor do thou think to escape danger by being so careless of thyself and of thy kingdom; for Antipater and his sons are not now stewards of thine affairs: do not thou deceive thyself with such a notion; they are evidently absolute lords; for Herod, Antipater's son, hath slain Hezekiah, and those that were with him, and hath thereby transgressed our law, which hath forbidden to slay any man, even though he were a wicked man, unless he had been first condemned to suffer death by the Sanhedrim yet hath he been so insolent as to do this, and that without any authority from thee."
4. Upon Hyrcanus hearing this, he complied with them. The mothers also of those that had been slain by Herod raised his indignation; for those women continued every day in the temple, persuading the king and the people that Herod might undergo a trial before the Sanhedrim for what he had done. Hyrcanus was so moved by these complaints, that he summoned Herod to come to his trial for what was charged upon him. Accordingly he came; but his father had persuaded him to come not like a private man, but with a guard, for the security of his person; and that when he had settled the affairs of Galilee in the best manner he could for his own advantage, he should come to his trial, but still with a body of men sufficient for his security on his journey, yet so that he should not come with so great a force as might look like terrifying Hyrcanus, but still such a one as might not expose him naked and unguarded [to his enemies.] However, Sextus Caesar, president of Syria, wrote to Hyrcanus, and desired him to clear Herod, and dismiss him at his trial, and threatened him beforehand if he did not do it. Which epistle of his was the occasion of Hyrcanus delivering Herod from suffering any harm from the Sanhedrim, for he loved him as his own son. But when Herod stood before the Sanhedrim, with his body of men about him, he frightened them all, and no one of his former accusers dared after that bring any charge against him, but there was a deep silence, and nobody knew what was to be done. When affairs stood thus, one whose name was Sameas, a righteous man he was, and for that reason above all fear, rose up, and said, "O you that are assessors with me, and O thou that art our king, I neither have ever myself known such a case, nor do I suppose that any one of you can name its parallel, that one who is called to take his trial by us ever stood in such a manner before us; but every one, whosoever he be, that comes to be tried by this Sanhedrim, presents himself in a submissive manner, and like one that is in fear of himself, and that endeavors to move us to compassion, with his hair dishevelled, and in a black and mourning garment: but this admirable man Herod, who is accused of murder, and called to answer so heavy an accusation, stands here clothed in purple, and with the hair of his head finely trimmed, and with his armed men about him, that if we shall condemn him by our law, he may slay us, and by overbearing justice may himself escape death. Yet do not I make this complaint against Herod himself; he is to be sure more concerned for himself than for the laws; but my complaint is against yourselves, and your king, who gave him a license so to do. However, take you notice, that God is great, and that this very man, whom you are going to absolve and dismiss, for the sake of Hyrcanus, will one day punish both you and your king himself also." Nor did Sameas mistake in any part of this prediction; for [several years later] when Herod had received the kingdom, he slew all the members of
this Sanhedrim, and Hyrcanus himself also, excepting Sameas, for he had a great honor for him on account of his righteousness, and because, when the city was afterward besieged by Herod and Sosius, he persuaded the people to admit Herod into it; and told them that for their sins they would not be able to escape his hands: - which things will be related by us in their proper places.

5. But when Hyrcanus saw that the members of the Sanhedrim were ready to pronounce the sentence of death upon Herod, he put off the trial to another day, and sent privately to Herod, and advised him to fly out of the city, for that by this means he might escape. So he retired to Damascus, as though he fled from the king; and when he had been with Sextus Caesar, and had put his own affairs in a sure posture, he resolved to do thus; that in case he were again summoned before the Sanhedrim to take his trial, he would not obey that summons. Hereupon the members of the Sanhedrim had great indignation at this posture of affairs, and endeavored to persuade Hyrcanus that all these things were against him; which state of matters he was not ignorant of; but his temper was so unmanly, and so foolish, that he was able to do nothing at all. But when Sextus had made Herod general of the army of Celesyria, for he sold him that post for money, Hyrcanus was in fear lest Herod should make war upon him; nor was the effect of what he feared long in coming upon him; for Herod came and brought an army along with him to fight with Hyrcanus, as being angry at the trial he had been summoned to undergo before the Sanhedrim; but his father Antipater, and his brother [Phasaelus], met him, and hindered him from assaulting Jerusalem. They also pacified his vehement temper, and persuaded him to do no overt action, but only to affright them with threatenings, and to proceed no further against one who had given him the dignity he had: they also desired him not only to be angry that he was summoned, and obliged to come to his trial, but to remember withal how he was dismissed without condemnation, and how he ought to give Hyrcanus thanks for the same; and that he was not to regard only what was disagreeable to him, and be unthankful for his deliverance. So they desired him to consider, that since it is God that turns the scales of war, there is great uncertainty in the issue of battles, and that therefore he ought of to expect the victory when he should fight with his king, and him that had supported him, and bestowed many benefits upon him, and had done nothing itself very severe to him; for that his accusation, which was derived from evil counselors, and not from himself, had rather the suspicion of some severity, than any thing really severe in it. Herod was persuaded by these arguments, and believed that it was sufficient for his future hopes to have made a show of his strength before the
nation, and done no more to it - and in this state were the affairs of Judea at this time.
2. Josephus’ account of the revolts shortly after Herod the Great’s death in 4 BCE, including Judas the Galilean’s first revolt.

At the time of Herod’s death in March of 4 BCE, the turmoil in the land has grown to largely unmanageable levels. Herod’s kingdom is now in the process of being dispositioned by Rome among his sons. At first Archelaus and Antipas compete for Rome’s favor. Eventually Rome decides the split among three sons (Archelaus in charge of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Antipas in charge of Galilee and Perea; Herod Philip I in charge of Iturea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Paneas/Baneas, and Batanea, areas mainly east of the Jordan). But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Upon Herod’s death, Jerusalem-based Archelaus is the de-facto interim ruler, and departs to Rome for ratification. Seizing the opportunity, the entire nation (Judea, Galilee, Idumea) rises in tumult.

Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 2

CHAPTER 3. THE JEWS FIGHT A GREAT BATTLE WITH SABINUS'S SOLDIERS, AND A GREAT DESTRUCTION IS MADE AT JERUSALEM.

1. ... Varus, after Archelaus was sailed, went up to Jerusalem to restrain the promoters of the sedition, since it was manifest that the nation would not be at rest; So he left one of those legions which he brought with him out of Syria in the city, and went himself to Antioch. But Sabinus came, after he was gone, and gave them an occasion of making innovations; for he compelled the keepers of the citadels to deliver them up to him, and made a bitter search after the king's money, as depending not only on the soldiers which were left by Varus, but on the multitude of his own servants, all which he armed and used as the instruments of his covetousness. Now when that feast, which was observed after seven weeks, and which the Jews called Pentecost, (i. e. the 50th day,) was at hand, its name being taken from the number of the days [after the passover], the people got together, but not on account of the accustomed Divine worship, but of the indignation they had ['at the present state of affairs']. Wherefore an immense multitude ran together, out of Galilee, and Idumea, and Jericho, and Perea, that was beyond Jordan; but the people that naturally belonged to Judea
itself were above the rest, both in number, and in the alacrity of the men. So they distributed themselves into three parts, and pitched their camps in three places; one at the north side of the temple, another at the south side, by the Hippodrome, and the third part were at the palace on the west. So they lay round about the Romans on every side, and besieged them.

2. Now Sabinus was afrighted, both at their multitude, and at their courage, and sent messengers to Varus continually, and besought him to come to his succor quickly; for that if he delayed, his legion would be cut to pieces. As for Sabinus himself, he got up to the highest tower of the fortress, which was called Phasaelus; it is of the same name with Herod's brother, who was destroyed by the Parthians; and then he made signs to the soldiers of that legion to attack the enemy; for his astonishment was so great, that he durst not go down to his own men. Hereupon the soldiers were prevailed upon, and leaped out into the temple, and fought a terrible battle with the Jews; in which, while there were none over their heads to distress them, they were too hard for them, by their skill, and the others' want of skill, in war; but when once many of the Jews had gotten up to the top of the cloisters, and threw their darts downwards, upon the heads of the Romans, there were a great many of them destroyed. Nor was it easy to avenge themselves upon those that threw their weapons from on high, nor was it more easy for them to sustain those who came to fight them hand to hand.

3. Since therefore the Romans were sorely afflicted by both these circumstances, they set fire to the cloisters, which were works to be admired, both on account of their magnificence and costliness. Whereupon those that were above them were presently encompassed with the flame, and many of them perished therein; as many of them also were destroyed by the enemy, who came suddenly upon them; some of them also threw themselves down from the walls backward, and some there were who, from the desperate condition they were in, prevented the fire, by killing themselves with their own swords; but so many of them as crept out from the walls, and came upon the Romans, were easily mastered by them, by reason of the astonishment they were under; until at last some of the Jews being destroyed, and others dispersed by the terror they were in, the soldiers fell upon the treasure of God, which was now deserted, and plundered about four hundred talents, Of which sum Sabinus got together all that was not carried away by the soldiers.
4. However, this destruction of the works [about the temple], and of the men, occasioned a much greater number, and those of a more warlike sort, to get together, to oppose the Romans. These encompassed the palace round, and threatened to deploy all that were in it, unless they went their ways quickly; for they promised that Sabinus should come to no harm, if he would go out with his legion. There were also a great many of the king's party who deserted the Romans, and assisted the Jews; yet did the most warlike body of them all, who were three thousand of the men of Sebaste, go over to the Romans. Rufus also, and Gratus, their captains, did the same, (Gratus having the foot of the king's party under him, and Rufus the horse,) each of whom, even without the forces under them, were of great weight, on account of their strength and wisdom, which turn the scales in war. Now the Jews in the siege, and tried to break down walls of the fortress, and cried out to Sabinus and his party, that they should go their ways, and not prove a hinderance to them, now they hoped, after a long time, to recover that ancient liberty which their forefathers had enjoyed. Sabinus indeed was well contented to get out of the danger he was in, but he distrusted the assurances the Jews gave him, and suspected such gentle treatment was but a bait laid as a snare for them: this consideration, together with the hopes he had of succor from Varus, made him bear the siege still longer.

CHAPTER 4. HEROD'S VETERAN SOLDIERS BECOME TUMULTUOUS. THE ROBBERIES OF JUDAS. SIMON AND ATHRONOEUS TAKE THE NAME OF KING UPON THEM.

1. AT this time there were great disturbances in the country, and that in many places; and the opportunity that now offered itself induced a great many to set up for kings. And indeed in Idumea two thousand of Herod's veteran soldiers got together, and armed and fought against those of the king's party; against whom Achiabus, the king's first cousin, fought, and that out of some of the places that were the most strongly fortified; but so as to avoid a direct conflict with them in the plains. In Sepphoris also, a city of Galilee, there was one Judas (the son of that arch-robber Hezekias, who formerly overran the country, and had been subdued by king Herod); this man got no small multitude together, and brake open the place where the royal armor was laid up, and armed those about him, and attacked those that were so earnest to gain the dominion.
2. In Perea also, Simon, one of the servants to the king, relying upon the handsome appearance and tallness of his body, put a diadem upon his own head also; he also went about with a company of robbers that he had gotten together, and burnt down the royal palace that was at Jericho, and many other costly edifices besides, and procured himself very easily spoils by rapine, as snatching them out of the fire. And he had soon burnt down all the fine edifices, if Gratus, the captain of the foot of the king’s party, had not taken the Trachonite archers, and the most warlike of Sebaste, and met the man. His footmen were slain in the battle in abundance; Gratus also cut to pieces Simon himself, as he was flying along a strait valley, when he gave him an oblique stroke upon his neck, as he ran away, and brake it. The royal palaces that were near Jordan at Betharampta were also burnt down by some other of the seditious that came out of Perea.

3. At this time it was that a certain shepherd ventured to set himself up for a king; he was called Athrongeus. It was his strength of body that made him expect such a dignity, as well as his soul, which despised death; and besides these qualifications, he had four brethren like himself. He put a troop of armed men under each of these his brethren, and made use of them as his generals and commanders, when he made his incursions, while he did himself act like a king, and meddled only with the more important affairs; and at this time he put a diadem about his head, and continued after that to overrun the country for no little time with his brethren, and became their leader in killing both the Romans and those of the king’s party; nor did any Jew escape him, if any gain could accrue to him thereby. He once ventured to encompass a whole troop of Romans at Emmaus, who were carrying corn and weapons to their legion; his men therefore shot their arrows and darts, and thereby slew their centurion Aurius, and forty of the stoutest of his men, while the rest of them, who were in danger of the same fate, upon the coming of Gratus, with those of Sebaste, to their assistance, escaped. And when these men had thus served both their own countrymen and foreigners, and that through this whole war, three of them were, after some time, subdued; the eldest by Archelaus, the two next by falling into the hands of Gratus and Ptolemeus; but the fourth delivered himself up to Archelaus, upon his giving him his right hand for his security. However, this their end was not till afterward, while at present they filled all Judea with a piratic war.

CHAPTER 5. VARUS COMPOSES THE TUMULTS IN JUDEA AND CRUCIFIES ABOUT TWO THOUSAND OF THE SEDITIOUS.
1. UPON Varus's reception of the letters that were written by Sabinus and the captains, he could not avoid being afraid for the whole legion [he had left there]. So he made haste to their relief, and took with him the other two legions, with the four troops of horsemen to them belonging, and marched to Ptolemais; having given orders for the auxiliaries that were sent by the kings and governors of cities to meet him there. Moreover, he received from the people of Berytus, as he passed through their city, fifteen hundred armed men. Now as soon as the other body of auxiliaries were come to Ptolemais, as well as Aretas the Arabian, (who, out of the hatred he bore to Herod, brought a great army of horse and foot,) Varus sent a part of his army presently to Galilee, which lay near to Ptolemais, and Caius, one of his friends, for their captain. This Caius put those that met him to flight, and took the city Sepphoris, and burnt it, and made slaves of its inhabitants; but as for Varus himself, he marched to Samaria with his whole army, where he did not meddle with the city itself, because he found that it had made no commotion during these troubles, but pitched his camp about a certain village which was called Aras. It belonged to Ptolemy, and on that account was plundered by the Arabians, who were very angry even at Herod's friends also. He thence marched on to the village Sampho, another fortified place, which they plundered, as they had done the other. As they carried off all the money they lighted upon belonging to the public revenues, all was now full of fire and bloodshed, and nothing could resist the plunders of the Arabians. Emnaus was also burnt, upon the flight of its inhabitants, and this at the command of Varus, out of his rage at the slaughter of those that were about Arias.

2. Thence he marched on to Jerusalem, and as soon as he was but seen by the Jews, he made their camps disperse themselves; they also went away, and fled up and down the country. But the citizens received him, and cleared themselves of having any hand in this revolt, and said that they had raised no commotions, but had only been forced to admit the multitude, because of the festival, and that they were rather besieged together with the Romans, than assisted those that had revolted. There had before this met him Joseph, the first cousin of Archelaus, and Gratus, together with Rufus, who led those of Sebaste, as well as the king's army: there also met him those of the Roman legion, armed after their accustomed manner; for as to Sabinus, he durst not come into Varus's sight, but was gone out of the city before this, to the sea-side. But Varus sent a part of his army into the country, against those that had been the authors of this commotion, and as they caught great numbers of them, those that appeared to
Background

have been the least concerned in these tumults he put into custody, but such as were the most guilty he crucified; these were in number about two thousand.

3. He was also informed that there continued in Idumea ten thousand men still in arms; but when he found that the Arabians did not act like auxiliaries, but managed the war according to their own passions, and did mischief to the country otherwise than he intended, and this out of their hatred to Herod, he sent them away, but made haste, with his own legions, to march against those that had revolted; but these, by the advice of Achiabus, delivered themselves up to him before it came to a battle. Then did Varus forgive the multitude their offenses, but sent their captains to Caesar to be examined by him. Now Caesar forgave the rest, but gave orders that certain of the king's relations (for some of those that were among them were Herod's kinsmen) should be put to death, because they had engaged in a war against a king of their own family. When therefore Varus had settled matters at Jerusalem after this manner, and had left the former legion there as a garrison, he returned to Antioch.

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 17, Chapter 10:

1. ... for after Archelaus was sailed, the whole nation was in a tumult. So Varus [president of Syria, under whose jurisdiction Herod's lands were], since he was there [in Jerusalem] himself, brought the authors of the disturbance to punishment; and when he had restrained them for the most part from this sedition, which was a great one, he took his journey to Antioch, leaving one legion of his army at Jerusalem to keep the Jews quiet, who were now very fond of innovation. Yet did not this at all avail to put an end to that their sedition; for after Varus was gone away, Sabinus, Caesar's procurator, stayed behind, and greatly distressed the Jews, relying on the forces that were left there that they would by their multitude protect him; for he made use of them, and armed them as his guards, thereby so oppressing the Jews, and giving them so great disturbance, that at length they rebelled; for he used force in seizing the citadels, and zealously pressed on the search after the king's money, in order to seize upon it by force, on account of his love of gain and his extraordinary covetousness.

2. But on the approach of Pentecost, which is a festival of ours, so called from the days of our forefathers, a great many ten thousands of men got together; nor did
they come only to celebrate the festival, but out of their indignation at the madness of Sabinus, and at the injuries he offered them. A great number there was of Galileans, and Idumeans, and many men from Jericho, and others who had passed over the river Jordan, and inhabited those parts. This whole multitude joined themselves to all the rest, and were more zealous than the others in making an assault on Sabinus, in order to be avenged on him; so they parted themselves into three bands, and encamped themselves in the places following: - some of them seized on the hippodrome and of the other two bands, one pitched themselves from the northern part of the temple to the southern, on the east quarter; but the third band held the western part of the city, where the king’s palace was. Their work tended entirely to besiege the Romans, and to enclose them on all sides. Now Sabinus was afraid of these men's number, and of their resolution, who had little regard to their lives, but were very desirous not to be overcome, while they thought it a point of puissance to overcome their enemies; so he sent immediately a letter to Varus, and, as he used to do, was very pressing with him, and entreated him to come quickly to his assistance, because the forces he had left were in imminent danger, and would probably, in no long time, be seized upon, and cut to pieces; while he did himself get up to the highest tower of the fortress Phasaelus, which had been built in honor of Phasaelus, king Herod's brother, and called so when the Parthians had brought him to his death. So Sabinus gave thence a signal to the Romans to fall upon the Jews, although he did not himself venture so much as to come down to his friends, and thought he might expect that the others should expose themselves first to die on account of his avarice. However, the Romans ventured to make a sally out of the place, and a terrible battle ensued; wherein, though it is true the Romans beat their adversaries, yet were not the Jews daunted in their resolutions, even when they had the sight of that terrible slaughter that was made of them; but they went round about, and got upon those cloisters which encompassed the outer court of the temple, where a great fight was still continued, and they cast stones at the Romans, partly with their hands, and partly with slings, as being much used to those exercises. All the archers also in array did the Romans a great deal of mischief, because they used their hands dexterously from a place superior to the others, and because the others were at an utter loss what to do; for when they tried to shoot their arrows against the Jews upwards, these arrows could not reach them, insomuch that the Jews were easily too hard for their enemies. And this sort of fight lasted a great while, till at last the Romans, who were greatly distressed by what was done, set fire to the cloisters so privately, that those that were gotten upon them did not perceive it.
This fire being fed by a great deal of combustible matter, caught hold immediately on the roof of the cloisters; so the wood, which was full of pitch and wax, and whose gold was laid on it with wax, yielded to the flame presently, and those vast works, which were of the highest value and esteem, were destroyed utterly, while those that were on the roof unexpectedly perished at the same time; for as the roof tumbled down, some of these men tumbled down with it, and others of them were killed by their enemies who encompassed them. There was a great number more, who, out of despair of saving their lives, and out of astonishment at the misery that surrounded them, did either cast themselves into the fire, or threw themselves upon their swords, and so got out of their misery. But as to those that retired behind the same way by which they ascended, and thereby escaped, they were all killed by the Romans, as being unarmed men, and their courage failing them; their wild fury being now not able to help them, because they were destitute of armor, insomuch that of those that went up to the top of the roof, not one escaped. The Romans also rushed through the fire, where it gave them room so to do, and seized on that treasure where the sacred money was reposited; a great part of which was stolen by the soldiers, and Sabinus got openly four hundred talents.

3. But this calamity of the Jews' friends, who fell in this battle, grieved them, as did also this plundering of the money dedicated to God in the temple. Accordingly, that body of them which continued best together, and was the most warlike, encompassed the palace, and threatened to set fire to it, and kill all that were in it. Yet still they commanded them to go out presently, and promised, that if they would do so, they would not hurt them, nor Sabinus neither; at which time the greatest part of the king's troops deserted to them, while Rufus and Gratus, who had three thousand of the most warlike of Herod's army with them, who were men of active bodies, went over to the Romans. There was also a band of horsemen under the command of Ruffis, which itself went over to the Romans also. However, the Jews went on with the siege, and dug mines under the palace walls, and besought those that were gone over to the other side not to be their hinderance, now they had such a proper opportunity for the recovery of their country's ancient liberty; and for Sabinus, truly he was desirous of going away with his soldiers, but was not able to trust himself with the enemy, on account of what mischief he had already done them; and he took this great [pretended] lenity of theirs for an argument why he should not comply with them; and so, because he expected that Varus was coming, he still bore the siege.
4. Now at this time there were ten thousand other disorders in Judea, which were like tumults, because a great number put themselves into a warlike posture, either out of hopes of gain to themselves, or out of enmity to the Jews. In particular, two thousand of Herod's old soldiers, who had been already disbanded, got together in Judea itself, and fought against the king's troops, although Achiabus, Herod's first cousin, opposed them; but as he was driven out of the plains into the mountainous parts by the military skill of those men, he kept himself in the fastnesses that were there, and saved what he could.

5. There was also Judas, the son of that Ezekias who had been head of the robbers; which Ezekias was a very strong man, and had with great difficulty been caught by Herod. This Judas, having gotten together a multitude of men of a profligate character about Sepphoris in Galilee, made an assault upon the palace [there,] and seized upon all the weapons that were laid up in it, and with them armed every one of those that were with him, and carried away what money was left there; and he became terrible to all men, by tearing and rending those that came near him; and all this in order to raise himself, and out of an ambitious desire of the royal dignity; and he hoped to obtain that as the reward not of his virtuous skill in war, but of his extravagance in doing injuries.

6. There was also Simon [of Perea], who had been a slave of Herod the king, but in other respects a comely person, of a tall and robust body; he was one that was much superior to others of his order, and had great things committed to his care. This man was elevated at the disorderly state of things, and was so bold as to put a diadem on his head, while a certain number of the people stood by him, and by them he was declared to be a king, and thought himself more worthy of that dignity than anyone else. He burnt down the royal palace at Jericho, and plundered what was left in it. He also set fire to many other of the king's houses in several places of the country, and utterly destroyed them, and permitted those that were with him to take what was left in them for a prey; and he would have done greater things, unless care had been taken to repress him immediately; for Gratus, when he had joined himself to some Roman soldiers, took the forces he had with him, and met Simon, and after a great and a long fight, no small part of those that came from Perea, who were a disordered body of men, and fought rather in a bold than in a skillful manner, were destroyed; and although Simon had saved himself by flying away through a certain valley, yet Gratus overtook him, and cut off his head. The royal palace also at Amathus, by the river Jordan, was burnt down by a party of men that were got together, as were those belonging to Simon. And thus did a great and wild fury spread itself over the
nation, because they had no king to keep the multitude in good order, and because those foreigners who came to reduce the seditious to sobriety did, on the contrary, set them more in a flame, because of the injuries they offered them, and the avaricious management of their affairs.

...

8. And now [also] Judea was full of robberies; and as the several companies of the seditious lighted upon any one to head them, he [Archelaus] was created a king immediately, in order to do mischief to the public. They were in some small measure indeed, and in small matters, hurtful to the Romans; but the murders they committed upon their own people lasted a long while.

9. As soon as Varus [president of Syria, under whose jurisdiction Herod’s lands were] was once informed of the state of Judea by Sabinus’s writing to him [Sabinus was Varus’ military procurator in Judea], he was afraid for the legion he had left there; so he took the two other legions, (for there were three legions in all belonging to Syria,) and four troops of horsemen, with the several auxiliary forces which either the kings or certain of the tetrarchs afforded him, and made what haste he could to assist those that were then besieged in Judea. He also gave order that all that were sent out for this expedition, should make haste to Ptolemais. The citizens of Berytus also gave him fifteen hundred auxiliaries as he passed through their city. Aretas also, the king of Arabia Petrea, out of his hatred to Herod, and in order to purchase the favor of the Romans, sent him no small assistance, besides their footmen and horsemen; and when he had now collected all his forces together, he committed part of them to his son, and to a friend of his, and sent them upon an expedition into Galilee, which lies in the neighborhood of Ptolemais; who made an attack upon the enemy, and put them to flight, and took Sepphoris, and made its inhabitants slaves, and burnt the city. But Varus himself pursued his march for Samaria with his whole army; yet did not he meddle with the city of that name, because it had not at all joined with the seditious; but pitched his camp at a certain village that belonged to Ptolemy, whose name was Arus, which the Arabians burnt, out of their hatred to Herod, and out of the enmity they bore to his friends; whence they marched to another village, whose name was Sampho, which the Arabians plundered and burnt, although it was a fortified and a strong place; and all along this march nothing escaped them, but all places were full of fire and of slaughter. Emmaus was also burnt by Varus’s order, after its inhabitants had deserted it, that he might avenge those that had there been destroyed. From thence he now marched to
Jerusalem; whereupon those Jews whose camp lay there, and who had besieged the Roman legion, not bearing the coming of this army, left the siege imperfect: but as to the Jerusalem Jews, when Varus reproached them bitterly for what had been done, they cleared themselves of the accusation, and alleged that the conflux of the people was occasioned by the feast; that the war was not made with their approbation, but by the rashness of the strangers, while they were on the side of the Romans, and besieged together with them, rather than having any inclination to besiege them. There also came beforehand to meet Varus, Joseph, the cousin-germain of king Herod, as also Gratus and Rufus, who brought their soldiers along with them, together with those Romans who had been besieged; but Sabinus did not come into Varus's presence, but stole out of the city privately, and went to the sea-side.

10. Upon this, Varus sent a part of his army into the country, to seek out those that had been the authors of the revolt [in Jerusalem]; and when they were discovered, he punished some of them that were most guilty, and some he dismissed: now the number of those that were crucified on this account were two thousand. After which he disbanded his army, which he found no way useful to him in the affairs he came about; for they behaved themselves very disorderly, and disobeyed his orders, and what Varus desired them to do, and this out of regard to that gain which they made by the mischief they did. As for himself, when he was informed that ten thousand Jews had gotten together, he made haste to catch them; but they did not proceed so far as to fight him, but, by the advice of Achiabus, they came together, and delivered themselves up to him: hereupon Varus forgave the crime of revolting to the multitude, but sent their several commanders to Caesar, many of whom Caesar dismissed; but for the several relations of Herod who had been among these men in this war, they were the only persons whom he punished, who, without the least regard to justice, fought against their own kindred.
3. Josephus’ account of the successions preceding Judas the Galilean’s revolt and Josephus’ description of the Jewish ‘denominations’ of that time.

The year is 6 or 7 CE. Varus is replaced by Cyrenius (aka Quirinius) as president of Syria; Archelaus (son of Herod the Great) is banished by Caesar (for incompetence) and replaced by a Roman Procurator (Coponius) accountable to Syria. Judas the Galilean revolts after Cyrenius orders a taxation census. Finally, Josephus’ description of the Jewish ‘denominations’, including that of the Zealots.

Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Chapter 8


1. AND now Archelaus's part of Judea was reduced into a province, and Coponius, one of the equestrian order among the Romans, was sent as a procurator, having the power of [life and] death put into his hands by Caesar. Under his administration it was that a certain Galilean, whose name was Judas, prevailed with his countrymen to revolt, and said they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and would after God submit to mortal men as their lords. This man was a teacher of a peculiar sect of his own, and was not at all like the rest of those their leaders.

2. For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essens. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essens reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.
3. These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, - insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one’s possessions are intermingled with every other’s possessions; and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren. They think that oil is a defilement; and if any one of them be anointed without his own approbation, it is wiped off his body; for they think to be sweaty is a good thing, as they do also to be clothed in white garments. They also have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs, who every one of them have no separate business for any, but what is for the uses of them all.

4. They have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own; and they go in to such as they never knew before, as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them. For which reason they carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts, though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves. Accordingly, there is, in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers, and to provide garments and other necessaries for them. But the habit and management of their bodies is such as children use who are in fear of their masters. Nor do they allow of the change of or of shoes till be first torn to pieces, or worn out by time. Nor do they either buy or sell anything to one another; but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wants it, and receives from him again in lieu of it what may be convenient for himself; and although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please.

5. And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sunrising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising. After this every one of them are sent away by their curators, to exercise some of those arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labor with great diligence till the fifth hour. After which they assemble themselves together again into one place; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water. And after this purification is over, they every one meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any of another sect to enter; while they go, after a pure manner, into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves
down; upon which the baker lays them loaves in order; the cook also brings a single plate of one sort of food, and sets it before every one of them; but a priest says grace before meat; and it is unlawful for any one to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when he hath dined, says grace again after meat; and when they begin, and when they end, they praise God, as he that bestows their food upon them; after which they lay aside their [white] garments, and betake themselves to their labors again till the evening; then they return home to supper, after the same manner; and if there be any strangers there, they sit down with them. Nor is there ever any clamor or disturbance to pollute their house, but they give every one leave to speak in their turn; which silence thus kept in their house appears to foreigners like some tremendous mystery; the cause of which is that perpetual sobriety they exercise, and the same settled measure of meat and drink that is allotted them, and that such as is abundantly sufficient for them.

6. And truly, as for other things, they do nothing but according to the injunctions of their curators; only these two things are done among them at everyone's own free-will, which are to assist those that want it, and to show mercy; for they are permitted of their own accord to afford succor to such as deserve it, when they stand in need of it, and to bestow food on those that are in distress; but they cannot give anything to their kindred without the curators. They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury for they say that he who cannot be believed without [swearing by] God is already condemned. They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body; and they inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure their distempers.

7. But now if any one hath a mind to come over to their sect, he is not immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use for a year, while he continues excluded; and they give him also a small hatchet, and the fore-mentioned girdle, and the white garment. And when he hath given evidence, during that time, that he can observe their continence, he approaches nearer to their way of living, and is made a partaker of the waters of purification; yet is he not even now admitted to live with them; for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temper is tried two more years; and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society. And before he is
allowed to touch their common food, he is obliged to take tremendous oaths, that, in the first place, he will exercise piety towards God, and then that he will observe justice towards men, and that he will do no harm to any one, either of his own accord, or by the command of others; that he will always hate the wicked, and be assistant to the righteous; that he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority, because no one obtains the government without God’s assistance; and that if he be in authority, he will at no time whatever abuse his authority, nor endeavor to outshine his subjects either in his garments, or any other finery; that he will be perpetually a lover of truth, and propose to himself to reprove those that tell lies; that he will keep his hands clear from theft, and his soul from unlawful gains; and that he will neither conceal anything from those of his own sect, nor discover any of their doctrines to others, no, not though anyone should compel him so to do at the hazard of his life. Moreover, he swears to communicate their doctrines to no one any otherwise than as he received them himself; that he will abstain from robbery, and will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of the angels [or messengers]. These are the oaths by which they secure their proselytes to themselves.

8. But for those that are caught in any heinous sins, they cast them out of their society; and he who is thus separated from them does often die after a miserable manner; for as he is bound by the oath he hath taken, and by the customs he hath been engaged in, he is not at liberty to partake of that food that he meets with elsewhere, but is forced to eat grass, and to famish his body with hunger, till he perish; for which reason they receive many of them again when they are at the last gasp, out of compassion to them, as thinking the miseries they have endured till they came to the very brink of death to be a sufficient punishment for the sins they had been guilty of.

9. But in the judgments they exercise they are most accurate and just, nor do they pass sentence by the votes of a court that is fewer than a hundred. And as to what is once determined by that number, it is unalterable. What they most of all honor, after God himself, is the name of their legislator [Moses], whom if any one blaspheme he is punished capitally. They also think it a good thing to obey their elders, and the major part. Accordingly, if ten of them be sitting together, no one of them will speak while the other nine are against it. They also avoid spitting in the midst of them, or on the right side. Moreover, they are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labors on the seventh day; for they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged
to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not remove any vessel out of its place, nor go to stool thereon. Nay, on other days they dig a small pit, a foot deep, with a paddle (which kind of hatchet is given them when they are first admitted among them); and covering themselves round with their garment, that they may not affront the Divine rays of light, they ease themselves into that pit, after which they put the earth that was dug out again into the pit; and even this they do only in the more lonely places, which they choose out for this purpose; and although this easement of the body be natural, yet it is a rule with them to wash themselves after it, as if it were a defilement to them.

10. Now after the time of their preparatory trial is over, they are parted into four classes; and so far are the juniors inferior to the seniors, that if the seniors should be touched by the juniors, they must wash themselves, as if they had intermixed themselves with the company of a foreigner. They are long-lived also, insomuch that many of them live above a hundred years, by means of the simplicity of their diet; nay, as I think, by means of the regular course of life they observe also. They contemn the miseries of life, and are above pain, by the generosity of their mind. And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always; and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear; but they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted the torments upon them, and resigned up their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again.

11. For their doctrine is this: That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continue forever; and that they come out of the most subtile air, and are united to their bodies as to prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinions of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breathing of a west wind, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean; while they allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishments. And indeed the Greeks seem to me to have followed the same notion, when they allot the islands of the
blessed to their brave men, whom they call heroes and demi-gods; and to the souls of the wicked, the region of the ungodly, in Hades, where their fables relate that certain persons, such as Sisyphus, and Tantalus, and Ixion, and Tityus, are punished; which is built on this first supposition, that souls are immortal; and thence are those exhortations to virtue and dehortations from wickedness collected; whereby good men are bettered in the conduct of their life by the hope they have of reward after their death; and whereby the vehement inclinations of bad men to vice are restrained, by the fear and expectation they are in, that although they should lie concealed in this life, they should suffer immortal punishment after their death. These are the Divine doctrines of the Essens about the soul, which lay an unavoidable bait for such as have once had a taste of their philosophy.

12. There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come, by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets; and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions.

13. Moreover, there is another order of Essens, who agree with the rest as to their way of living, and customs, and laws, but differ from them in the point of marriage, as thinking that by not marrying they cut off the principal part of human life, which is the prospect of succession; nay, rather, that if all men should be of the same opinion, the whole race of mankind would fail. However, they try their spouses for three years; and if they find that they have their natural purgations thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them. But they do not use to accompany with their wives when they are with child, as a demonstration that they do not many out of regard to pleasure, but for the sake of posterity. Now the women go into the baths with some of their garments on, as the men do with somewhat girded about them. And these are the customs of this order of Essens.

14. But then as to the two other orders at first mentioned, the Pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and introduce the first sect. These ascribe all to fate [or providence], and to God, and yet allow, that to act what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of men, although fate does co-operate in every action. They say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies, but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment.
But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades.

Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public; but the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild, and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews.

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Chapter 1

HOW CYRENIUS WAS SENT BY CAESAR TO MAKE A TAXATION OF SYRIA AND JUDEA; AND HOW COPONIUS WAS SENT TO BE PROCURATOR OF JUDEA; CONCERNING JUDAS OF GALILEE AND CONCERNING THE SECTS THAT WERE AMONG THE JEWS

1. NOW Cyrenius, a Roman senator, and one who had gone through other magistracies, and had passed through them till he had been consul, and one who, on other accounts, was of great dignity, came at this time into Syria, with a few others, being sent by Caesar to be a judge of that nation, and to take an account of their substance. Coponius also, a man of the equestrian order, was sent together with him, to have the supreme power over the Jews. Moreover, Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance, and to dispose of Archelaus's money; but the Jews, although at the beginning they took the report of a taxation heinously, yet did they leave off any further opposition to it, by the persuasion of Joazar, who was the son of Boethus, and high priest; so they, being over-persuaded by Joazar's words, gave an account of their estates, without any dispute about it. Yet was there one Judas, a Gaulonite, of a city whose name was Gamala, who, taking with him Sadduc, a Pharisee, became zealous to draw them to a revolt, who both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty; as if they could procure them happiness and security for what they possessed, and an assured enjoyment of a still greater good, which was that of the honor and glory they would thereby acquire for magnanimity. They also said that God would not otherwise be assisting to them, than upon their joining with one another in such councils as might be successful, and for their own advantage; and this especially, if they
would set about great exploits, and not grow weary in executing the same; so
men received what they said with pleasure, and this bold attempt proceeded to
a great height. All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the
nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree; one violent war
came upon us after another, and we lost our friends which used to alleviate our
pains; there were also very great robberies and murder of our principal men. This
was done in pretense indeed for the public welfare, but in reality for the hopes
of gain to themselves; whence arose seditions, and from them murders of men,
which sometimes fell on those of their own people, (by the madness of these
men towards one another, while their desire was that none of the adverse party
might be left,) and sometimes on their enemies; a famine also coming upon us,
reduced us to the last degree of despair, as did also the taking and demolishing
of cities; nay, the sedition at last increased so high, that the very temple of God
was burnt down by their enemies' fire. Such were the consequences of this, that
the customs of our fathers were altered, and such a change was made, as added
a mighty weight toward bringing all to destruction, which these men occasioned
by their thus conspiring together; for Judas and Sadduc, who excited a fourth
philosophic sect among us, and had a great many followers therein, filled our civil
government with tumults at present, and laid the foundations of our future
miseries, by this system of philosophy, which we were before unacquainted
withal, concerning which I will discourse a little, and this the rather because the
infection which spread thence among the younger sort, who were zealous for it,
brought the public to destruction.

2. The Jews had for a great while had three sects of philosophy peculiar to
themselves; the sect of the Essens, and the sect of the Sadducees, and the third
sort of opinions was that of those called Pharisees; of which sects, although I
have already spoken in the second book of the Jewish War, yet will I a little touch
upon them now.

3. Now, for the Pharisees, they live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and
they follow the conduct of reason; and what that prescribes to them as good for
them they do; and they think they ought earnestly to strive to observe reason's
dictates for practice. They also pay a respect to such as are in years; nor are the
y
so bo
ld as to contradict them in any
thing which they have introduced; and
when
they determine that all things are done by fate, [yet ]they do not take away the
freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath
pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that
the will of man can act virtuously or viciously. They also believe that souls have
an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or
punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and
the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall
have power to revive and live again; on account of which doctrines they are able
greatly to persuade the body of the people; and whatsoever they do about Divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; insomuch that the cities give great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

4. But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the [written] Law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent: but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity. But they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them.

5. The doctrine of the Essens is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for; and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry. It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness; and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so hath it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer any thing to hinder them from having all things in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all. There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another. They also appoint certain stewards to receive the incomes of their revenues, and of the fruits of the ground; such as are good men and priests, who are to get their corn and their food ready for them. They none of them differ from others of the Essens in their way of living, but do the most resemble those Dacae who are called Polistae [dwellers in cities].

6. But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord. And since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a
great many, I shall speak no further about that matter; nor am I afraid that anything I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain. And it was in Gessius Florus's time [editor’s note: Gessius Florus, Roman Procurator of Judea from 64 to 66CE, under whose rule the Jewish War began] that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans. And these are the sects of Jewish philosophy.
Second Appendix to Chapter 2: Christian historian Julius Africanus’ (wrote ca 210-240CE) account of Herod the Great’s background (quoted by Eusebius in Historia Ecclesiastica Book 1, Chapter 6).

2. ... As Josephus relates, he [Herod the Great] was an Idumean on his father's side and an Arabian on his mother's. But Africanus, who was also no common writer, says that they who were more accurately informed about him report that he was a son of Antipater, and that the latter was the son of a certain Herod of Ascalon, one of the so-called servants of the temple of Apollo.

3. This Antipater, having been taken a prisoner while a boy by Idumean robbers, lived with them, because his father, being a poor man, was unable to pay a ransom for him. Growing up in their practices he was afterward befriended by Hyrcanus, the high priest of the Jews. A son of his was that Herod who lived in the times of our Saviour.

4. When the Kingdom of the Jews had devolved upon such a man the expectation of the nations was, according to prophecy, already at the door. For with him their princes and governors, who had ruled in regular succession from the time of Moses came to an end.

5. Before their captivity and their transportation to Babylon they were ruled by Saul first and then by David, and before the kings leaders governed them who were called Judges, and who came after Moses and his successor Jesus.

6. After their return from Babylon they continued to have without interruption an aristocratic form of government, with an oligarchy. For the priests had the direction of affairs until Pompey, the Roman general, took Jerusalem by force, and defiled the holy places by entering the very innermost sanctuary of the temple. Aristobulus, who, by the right of ancient succession, had been up to that time both king and high priest, he sent with his children in chains to Rome; and gave to Hyrcanus, brother of Aristobulus, the high priesthood, while the whole nation of the Jews was made tributary to the Romans from that time.

7. But Hyrcanus, who was the last of the regular line of high priests, was very soon afterward taken prisoner by the Parthians, and Herod, the first foreigner, as I have already said, was made King of the Jewish nation by the Roman senate and by Augustus.

8. Under him Christ appeared in bodily shape, and the expected Salvation of the nations and their calling followed in accordance with prophecy. From this time
the princes and rulers of Judah, I mean of the Jewish nation, came to an end, and as a natural consequence the order of the high priesthood, which from ancient times had proceeded regularly in closest succession from generation to generation, was immediately thrown into confusion.
3
THE BAPTIST

Herod the Great reigned 34 years (from ca 38 BCE to 4 BCE) and died after a reign of barbarous cruelty. It was approximately upon the death of Herod the Great in 4 BCE, that Jesus was born in Galilee. Herod the Great was succeeded (with Rome's blessing) by his sons; Archelaus inherited his father's title of King of the Jews and ruled over Judah and Samaria; Herod Antipas inherited rule over Galilee and Perea; and Herod Philip inherited rule over Trachonitis and the neighboring lands east of the Jordan. As documented by Josephus, and other historians, these children of Herod the Great would prove to be no less barbarous than their father and certainly equally adept to touting the Roman line. As Roman oppression drove the Jews to poverty and desperation, Israel became a tinderbox waiting to explode. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the entire period of Roman rule from 63 BCE to 70 CE is replete with insurrection attempts and messianic figures, all vying for the deliverance of Israel from the hand of Rome and for the advent of the Kingdom of God. One of those rebellious figures was Yohannan Ha Matbil (Ioannes Baptiste in Greek, or John the Immerser).

In the late 20's CE, Yohannan’s movement came into full force. Yohannan made a call to Righteousness and Repentance with a warning of imminent re-entry of God in human history to judge humankind, establish the rule of God on earth, and destroy the Roman oppressors and their Jewish puppets: King Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great), and the High-Priest dynasty of Annanias bar Seth.

Yohannan’s practice of Immersion in water (the term "Baptiste" is Greek for "Immerser") was not a innovation, as many Christians or other non-Jews today might imagine. To the contrary, immersion in water is a ritual of purification, mandated several times in the Torah:

- For the consecration of priests: Ex 29:4 and Exodus 40:12 **And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tent of meeting, and shalt wash them with water.**

- During Yom Kippur the priest must wash in water before making atonement for the people, for cleansing of their sins : Leviticus 16:23-24 **And Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. 24 And he shall bathe his flesh in water in a holy place and put on his other vestments, and come forth, and offer his burnt-offering and the burnt-offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. 25 And the fat of the sin-offering shall he make smoke upon the altar. 26 And he that letteth go the goat for Azazel shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he may come into
the camp. 27 And the bullock of the sin-offering, and the goat of the sin-offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be carried forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung. 28 And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. 29 And it shall be a statute for ever unto you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger that sojourneth among you. 30 For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before YH-H. 31 It is a sabbath of solemn rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls; it is a statute for ever. 32 And the priest, who shall be anointed and who shall be consecrated to be priest in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments. 33 And he shall make atonement for the most holy place, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar; and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. 34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make atonement for the children of Israel because of all their sins once in the year.' And he did as YH-H commanded Moses.

A immersion pool is known as a mikvah and immersion in water continues to be practiced in Judaism today. Archaeological evidence from Israel and diaspora centers of Jewish communities of antiquity show the extremely important role that immersion played in daily religious life.

Yohannan’s possible connection to the Essene community has been highlighted by numerous scholars, based on two data points:

First, Yohannan’s mission began along the Jordan, near the community of Essenes located in the area of Qumran and Ein Gedi. On the other hand, as we shall see from Josephus, his movement had spread, especially into Herod Antipas’ two domains of Galilee and Perea (east of the Jordan), so much so that it was Herod Antipas that eventually took action against Yohannan.

Secondly, Yohannan’s use of Immersion has similarities to that recorded by the Essenes in the Dead Sea Scrolls: while the Pharisee and Sadducee sects viewed Immersion as a Commandment related to Ritual Purity, the Essenes viewed Immersion as (1) a Commandment related to Ritual Purity and (2) a sign of Teshuva (Repentance from sin and Return to God’s Way) and the consequent “making things right” (i.e. Atonement) with God. [The question will arise, whether the latter (i.e. “2”) was interpreted as a Commandment (i.e. was Immersion was a prequesite in order to achieve Atonement with God), or whether Immersion was merely a gesture of the person acting with commitment to the Commandments.]

Yohannan's movement continued to grow and became noticed as a threat by Herod Antipas. To make matters worse, Yohannan actively denigrated Herod Antipas for his doubly unlawful marriage to Herodias (a daughter of Herod Antipas’ half-brother Aristobulus, and undivorced wife of his brother Herod Philip). Here is what Flavius Josephus records regarding Yohannan the Immerser:
Josephus, Antiquities 18:5:4:

… Herodias … was married to [her uncle] Herod son of Herod the Great and Mariamne daughter of Simon the high priest, and she had a daughter, Salome; after whose birth Herodias took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod [Antipas], her husband's brother by the father's side, he was tetrarch of Galilee. …

Josephus, Antiquities 18:5:1-2:

1. Areta, the King of Arabia Petrea and Herod [Antipas] had a quarrel, on account of the following: Herod [Antipas] the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas and had lived with her a great while; but when he [Herod Antipas] was once at Rome, he lodged with Herod, who was his brother, but not by the same mother, for this Herod was the son of [Mariamne] the High Priest Simon's daughter. However he [Herod Antipas] fell in love with this last Herod’s wife, Herodias (she was also the daughter of Aristobulus their brother, and sister of Herod Agrippa the Great). This man [Herod Antipas] ventured to talk to her about a marriage between them, upon which request, since she accepted. A agreement was made for her to change her domicile and come to him as soon as he should return from Rome; yet one article of this marriage agreement was that he [Herod Antipas] should divorce Areta's daughter. … So Aretas made this the first reason of his enmity with Herod [Antipas]... So they raised armies on both sides and prepared for war and sent their generals to fight instead of themselves; and, when they had joined battle, all Herod [Antipas] 's army was destroyed by the treachery of some fugitives, who, though they were from the tetrarchy of [Herod] Philip, joined with Aretas' army. ...

2. Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod [Antipas]'s army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John that was called the Immerser; for Herod [Antipas] slew him [John], who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to Immersion; for the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not for the forgiveness of some sins [only] but for the purification of the body, supposing still that the soul was purified beforehand by acts of righteousness. Now, when others came in crowds about him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod [Antipas] , who feared that the great influence John had over the people might put into his [John's] power an inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advice), thought it best, by putting him [John] to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man [John] who might make him [Herod Antipas] regret it when it should be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod [Antipas] 's suspicious temper, to Machaerus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this [Herod Antipas'] army was sent as a punishment upon Herod [Antipas] , and as a mark of God's displeasure with him.
Machaerus fortress (above) located in what today is Jordan, about 12 miles southeast of the juncture of the Jordan river and the Dead Sea.
Before concluding Josephus’ references to John, we will highlight a further source; A Slavonic translation of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” came to the attention of scholars over the past century, and contains a numbers of references to Yohannan and Jesus which, intriguingly, are not found in the Greek received text of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars”. For quite some time, the Slavonic references have been generally thought to be forged interpolations, added by Christian Slavonic editors as they translated from the
Greek. However recent scholarship has begun to take the Slavonic segments more seriously, for two reasons: (1) The references to Yohannan and Jesus do not reflect the standard Christian view or canonical chronologies as known from the NT Gospels; and (2) the Greek text of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” is strangely 100% silent on Yohannan and Jesus (i.e. only Josephus’s Greek “Antiquities of the Jews” contains references to Yohannan and Jesus). Hence a new, cautious, scholarship is evolving around the possibility that it may be that the received Greek text of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” has been the one tampered with (i.e. such that Christian copyists may have completely removed the references to Yohannan and Jesus because they disagreed with Christian orthodoxy). The Slavonic text gives us intriguing details which could only have come from a non-Christian source:

- The text highlights in Yohannan's message a key goal that was also the main message of the Gallilean zealot movement that began with Judas the Gallilean: that of establishing a Kingdom in Israel where there would be no ruler but God, in other words, a theocracy.
- The text places the start of Yohannan’s ministry much earlier, around 5 CE, during the reign of Archelaus over Judea, instead of the late 20’s according to the canonical Christian NT.

Below in brown font we show the Slavonic text [Slavonic to German and German to English translations by Johannes Frey (University of Dorpat) and GRS Mead, respectively] as well as (for context) the surrounding text before and after (which is the same between the Slavonic and the Greek received corpus).

**Josephus, Jewish Wars (Greek text in black font and Slavonic in brown font)**

**Book 2, Chapter 7:**

**THE HISTORY OF THE SPURIOUS ALEXANDER. ARCHELAUS IS BANISHED AND GLAPHYRA DIES, AFTER WHAT WAS TO HAPPEN TO BOTH OF THEM HAD BEEN SHOWED THEM IN DREAMS.**

1. ..... 
2. ..... 
3. 

**JOHN'S PROCLAMATION AND HIS REBUKE OF THE AUTHORITIES.** 1. Now at that time a man went about among the Jews in strange garments; for he had put pelts on his body everywhere where it was not covered with his own hair; 2. indeed to look at he was like a wild man. 3. He came to the Jews and summoned them to freedom, saying: "God hath sent me, that I may show you the way of the Law, wherein ye may free yourselves from many holders of power. 4. And there will be no mortal ruling over you, only the Highest who hath sent me." 5. And when the people had heard this, they were joyful. And there went after him all Judæa, that lies in the region round Jerusalem. 6. And he did nothing else to them save that he plunged them into the stream of the Jordan and dismissed them, instructing
them that they should cease from evil works, and [promising] that there would [then] be given them a ruler who would set them free and subject to them all that is not in submission; but no one of whom we speak (?), would himself be subjected. 7. Some reviled, but others got faith. 8. And when he had been brought to Archelaus and the doctors of the Law had assembled, they asked him who he is and where he has been until then. 9. And to this he made answer and spake: "I am pure; [for] the Spirit of God hath led me on, and [I live on] cane and roots and tree-food". 10. But when they threatened to put him to torture if he would not cease from those words and deeds, he nevertheless said: "It is [ ] for you [rather] to cease from your heinous works and cleave unto the Lord your God." 11. And there rose up in anger Simon, an Essæan by extraction, a scribe, and he spake: "We read every day the divine books. 12. But thou, only now come from the forest like a wild animal,—thou darest in sooth to teach us and to mislead the people with thy reprobate words." 13. And he rushed forward to do him bodily violence. 14. But he, rebuking them, spake: "I will not disclose to you the mystery which dwelleth in you, for ye have not desired it. 15. Thereby an untold calamity is come upon you, and because of yourselves." 16. And when he had thus spoken, he went forth to the other side of the Jordan; and while no one durst rebuke him, that one did what [he had done] also heretofore.

And now Archelaus took possession of his ethnarchy, and used not the Jews only, but the Samaritans also, barbarously; and this out of his resentment of their old quarrels with him. Whereupon they both of them sent ambassadors against him to Caesar; and in the ninth year of his government he was banished to Vienna, a city of Gaul, and his effects were put into Caesar's treasury. But the report goes, that before he was sent for by Caesar, he seemed to see [in a dream] nine ears of corn, full and large, but devoured by oxen. When, therefore, he had sent for the diviners, and some of the Chaldeans, and inquired of them what they thought it portended; and when one of them had one interpretation, and another had another, Simon, one of the sect of Essens, said that he thought the ears of corn denoted years, and the oxen denoted a mutation of things, because by their ploughing they made an alteration of the country. That therefore he should reign as many years as there were ears of corn; and after he had passed through various alterations of fortune, should die. Now five days after Archelaus had heard this interpretation he was called to his trial.

4. I cannot also but think it worthy to be recorded what dream Glaphyra, the daughter of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, had, who had at first been wife to Alexander, who was the brother of Archelaus [son of Herod], concerning whom we have been discoursing. This Alexander was the son of Herod the king, by whom he was put to death, as we have already related. This Glaphyra was married, after his death, to Juba, king of Libya; and, after his death, was returned home, and lived a widow with her father. Then it was that Archelaus [son of Herod], the ethnarch, saw her, and fell so deeply in love with her, that he divorced Mariamne, who was then his wife, and married her. When, therefore, she was come into Judea, and had been there
for a little while, she thought she saw Alexander stand by her, and that he said to her; "Thy marriage with the king of Libya might have been sufficient for thee; but thou wast not contented with him, but art returned again to my family, to a third husband; and him, thou impudent woman, hast thou chosen for thine husband, who is my brother. However, I shall not overlook the injury thou hast offered me; I shall [soon] have thee again, whether thou wilt or no." Now Glaphyra hardly survived the narration of this dream of hers two days.

The reader will recall from the previous chapter that, following Antiquities Book 2 Chapter 7, we have in Chapter 8 the description of Judas the Galilean: And now, Archelaus’s part of Judea was reduced into a province, and Coponius, one of the equestrian order among the Romans, was sent as a procurator, having the power of [life and] death put into his hands by Caesar. Under his administration it was that a certain Galilean, whose name was Judas, prevailed with his countrymen to revolt, and said they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and would after God submit to mortal men as their lords. This man was a teacher of a peculiar sect of his own, and was not at all like the rest of those their leaders.

Compare this with our Slavonic quote above: He came to the Jews and summoned them to freedom, saying: "God hath sent me, that I may show you the way of the Law, wherein ye may free yourselves from many holders of power. 4. And there will be no mortal ruling over you, only the Highest who hath sent me."

Either John the Baptist is a Zealot after the school of Judas the Galilean (or viceversa ?!) or the above Slavonic Josephus segment on John is a forgery consisting of inserted text with borrowings from Josephus’ description of Judas the Galilean, just a few paragraphs later. But why would a copyist forge such a description of John ? Would a Christian copyist have any interest in portraying John the Baptist as one of those “robbers” that Roman-friendly Josephus maligns ? Probably not. A second question is regarding the timing. The above passage puts John’s ministry during Archelaus’ ethnarchy (between 4BCE and 5CE) more than twenty years earlier than what is recorded by the other sources. Perhaps the text is accurate, and an embarrassed Christian copyist has shifted the text to an earlier timeframe in order to decouple John from Jesus (notice that the Slavonic does not call out John’s name !).

A second reference from Slavonic Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” is also found (again, we quote the text found only in the Slavonic in brown font, surrounded by the received Greek text shown in black font):

Josephus, Jewish Wars, Book 2, Chapter 9.
3 - The Baptist


1. AND now as the ethnarchy of Archelaus was fallen into a Roman province, the other sons of Herod [The Great], Philip, and that Herod who was called Antipas, each of them took upon them the administration of their own tetrarchies; for when Salome died, she bequeathed to Julia, the wife of Augustus, both her toparchy, and Jamriga, as also her plantation of palm trees that were in Phasaelis. But when the Roman empire was translated to Tiberius, the son of Julia, upon the death of Augustus, who had reigned fifty-seven years, six months, and two days, both Herod and Philip continued in their tetrarchies; and the latter of them built the city Cesarea, at the fountains of Jordan, and in the region of Paneas; as also the city Julias, in the lower Gaulonitis. Herod also built the city Tiberias in Galilee, and in Perea [beyond Jordan] another that was also called Julias.

JOHN’s INTERPRETATION OF PHILIP’S DREAM. 1. While Philip was [still] in possession of his dominion, he saw a dream, — how an eagle tore out both his eyes. 2. And he summoned all his wise men. 3. But when each interpreted the dream differently, there came to him suddenly, without being summoned, that man of whom we have previously written, that he went about in skins of animals and cleansed the people in the waters of the Jordan. 4. And he spake: "Give ear to the word of the Lord,— the dream which thou hast seen. 5. The eagle— that is thy venality; because that bird is violent and rapacious. 6. And that sin will take away thy eyes which are thy dominion and thy wife." 7. And when he had thus spoken, Philip died before evening and his dominion was given to Agrippa.

HIS PERSISTENT REBUKING OF AGRIPPA AND HIS EXECUTION. 1. And Herod, his brother, took his [Philip’s] wife Herodias. 2. And because of her all the doctors of the Law abhorred him, but durst not accuse him before his face. 3. But only that one whom they called a wild man, came to him in anger and spake: "Why hast thou taken the wife of thy brother? 4. As thy brother hath died a death void of pity, thou too wilt be reaped off by the heavenly sickle. 5. God’s decree will not be silenced, but will destroy thee through evil affliction in foreign lands. 6. For thou dost not raise up seed for thy brother, but gratifiest thy fleshly lust and committest adultery, seeing that four children of him are alive." 7. Now when Herod heard [this], he was filled with wrath and commanded that they should beat him and drive him away. 8. But he accused Herod incessantly wherever he found him, and right up to the time when he [Herod] put him under arrest and gave orders to slay him. 9. Now his disposition (or character) was extraordinary and his mode of life not that of a man; indeed just like a bodiless spirit, thus did this one too continue. 10. His lips knew no bread; not even at Passover did he taste unleavened bread, saying that, in
remembrance of God who had freed the people from slavery, it was given for eating in the flight, for the way was in haste. To wine and intoxicating drink he let himself not even draw near. And every animal he abhorred [as food], and every wrong he rebuked, and tree-produce <and locusts and wild honey> served him for use.

2. Now Pilate, who was sent as procurator into Judea by Tiberius, sent by night those images of Caesar that are called ensigns into Jerusalem. This excited a very among great tumult among the Jews when it was day; for those that were near them were astonished at the sight of them, as indications that their laws were trodden under foot; for those laws do not permit any sort of image to be brought into the city. Nay, besides the indignation which the citizens had themselves at this procedure, a vast number of people came running out of the country. These came zealously to Pilate to Cesarea, and besought him to carry those ensigns out of Jerusalem, and to preserve them their ancient laws inviolable; but upon Pilate's denial of their request, they fell down prostrate upon the ground, and continued immovable in that posture for five days and as many nights.

3. On the next day Pilate sat upon his tribunal, in the open market-place, and called to him the multitude, as desirous to give them an answer; and then gave a signal to the soldiers, that they should all by agreement at once encompass the Jews with their weapons; so the band of soldiers stood round about the Jews in three ranks. The Jews were under the utmost consternation at that unexpected sight. Pilate also said to them that they should be cut in pieces, unless they would admit of Caesar's images, and gave intimation to the soldiers to draw their naked swords. Hereupon the Jews, as it were at one signal, fell down in vast numbers together, and exposed their necks bare, and cried out that they were sooner ready to be slain, than that their law should be transgressed. Hereupon Pilate was greatly surprised at their prodigious superstition, and gave order that the ensigns should be presently carried out of Jerusalem.

4. After this he raised another disturbance, by expending that sacred treasure which is called Corban upon aqueducts, whereby he brought water from the distance of four hundred furlongs. At this the multitude had indignation; and when Pilate was come to Jerusalem, they came about his tribunal, and made a clamor at it. Now when he was apprized beforehand of this disturbance, he mixed his own soldiers in their armor with the multitude, and ordered them to conceal themselves under the habits of private men, and not indeed to use their swords, but with their staves to beat those that made the clamor. He then gave the signal from his tribunal [to do as he had bidden them]. Now the Jews were so sadly beaten, that many of them perished by the stripes they received, and many of them perished as trodden to death by themselves; by which means the multitude was astonished at the calamity of those that were slain, and held their peace.
5. In the meantime Agrippa, the son of that Aristobulus who had been slain by his father Herod [The Great], came to Tiberius, to accuse Herod [Antipas] the tetrarch; who not admitting of his accusation, he stayed at Rome, and cultivated a friendship with others of the men of note, but principally with Caius the son of Germanicus, who was then but a private person. Now this Agrippa, at a certain time, feasted Caius; and as he was very complaisant to him on several other accounts, he at length stretched out his hands, and openly wished that Tiberius might die, and that he might quickly see him emperor of the world. This was told to Tiberius by one of Agrippa's domestics, who thereupon was very angry, and ordered Agrippa to be bound, and had him very ill-treated in the prison for six months, until Tiberius died, after he had reigned twenty-two years, six months, and three days.

6. But when Caius was made Caesar, he released Agrippa from his bonds, and made him king of Philip's tetrarchy, who was now dead; but when Agrippa had arrived at that degree of dignity, he inflamed the ambitious desires of Herod the tetrarch, who was chiefly induced to hope for the royal authority by his wife Herodias, who reproached him for his sloth, and told him that it was only because he would not sail to Caesar that he was destitute of that great dignity; for since Caesar had made Agrippa a king, from a private person, much more would he advance him from a tetrarch to that dignity. These arguments prevailed with Herod, so that he came to Caius, by whom he was punished for his ambition, by being banished into Spain; for Agrippa followed him, in order to accuse him; to whom also Caius gave his tetrarchy, by way of addition. So Herod died in Spain, whither his wife had followed him.

According to the “Gospel of Mark”, as well as the "Gospel of the Hebrews” (so called by Epiphanius), and an other document also called “Gospel of the Hebrews” (so called by Jerome), the Jesus Movement began from within John's movement and took on its own independence after Jesus’ immersion by John. In spite of numerous attempts in the synoptic gospels to de-emphasize John in relation to Jesus, John's movement must have been of such great importance that even the synoptic gospels accept that Jesus arose from that movement (Jesus being immersed by John!) and they even present a blood relationship between the two (their mothers being cousins). One can find numerous occurences in the synoptics, of John’s importance and even primacy:

- Jesus’s message is articulated with the very same words used to describe John’s message.
  - Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Immerser appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (also Mark 1:2-6 and Luke 3:1-9).
  - Mark 1:14-15 : Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (also in Matt 4:12-17)
The well-known narrative of Jesus’ immersion by John depicts that moment as the instance of God’s very public imparting to Jesus of the status of Davidic Messiah. So much so that in Matthew (although not in Mark or Luke) John questions whether he should Immer...se Jesus... One would assume that John diminishes so that Jesus can fulfill the mission of ushering in God’s Kingdom. Strangely, in Luke and Matthew we have remnants that tell us that John continued to see himself as a leader in search of “the one to come”: Matthew 11:1-6

Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities. When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" (also in Luke 7:18-23). In other words, John may have baptized Jesus, but even after that and even after being put in prison, John had not passed the baton of leadership of the movement to Jesus.

In fact we can see certain hints that Jesus himself considered John as a unparalleled prophet. The Q source narrates the following: Luke 7:24-28 (also in Matt 11:7-11): When John's disciples left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaking in the wind? Then tell me what you went out to see. A man in soft clothes? Look, those who wear soft clothes live in palaces. So what did you expect? A prophet? Yes, of course, and much more than a prophet. This is the one referred to in the writings, 'Look, I am sending my messenger before you. He will prepare your path ahead of you.' I am telling you, no one born of a woman is greater than John; yet the least in God's realm is greater than he." (also in Thomas 46). That would imply that John could be greater even than Jesus, except for the disclaimer at the end “yet the least in God’s realm is greater than he”. Curiously, Shem-Tov’s copy of Matthew in Hebrew is missing that last sentence. If there is authenticity in Shem-Tov’s version, one can clearly see why a Jesus follower would have added it into the canonical/received Greek Matthew.

In Matthew, the above passage is immediately followed by (Matt 11:13-14): For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Curiously again, Shem-Tov’s Hebrew Matthew says it differently: For all the prophets and the Law prophesied concerning John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

Perhaps the best known prayer from the gospels is “Our Father”. According to them, this prayer comes to us from John, not Jesus: Luke 11:2-4 and Matt 6:9-13: He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” [Then he said]: “When you pray say,

'Father, may your name be holy.
May your rule take place.
Give us today our daily bread.
Pardon our debts, as we ourselves pardon those indebted to us.
And do not bring us to trial [into a trying situation].”

John's movement continued after his death, even separate from what would later become Jesus' movement. The Christian New Testament author of 'Luke' refers to a preacher Apollos who carried the message of John's movement, without knowing that of Jesus:

Acts 18:24-28: Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately.

The Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, a ebionite novel written between 100CE and 250CE, mentions followers of John who accept him as the Messiah:

Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, Chapter LIV (Jewish Sects): …Yea, some even of the disciples of John, who seemed to be great ones, have separated themselves from the people, and proclaimed their own master as the Christ.

Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, Chapter LX. (Disciples of John Refuted): And, behold, one of the disciples of John asserted that John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus Himself declared that John was greater than all men and all prophets. 'If, then,' said he, 'he be greater than all, he must be held to be greater than Moses, and than Jesus himself. But if he be the greatest of all, then must he be the Christ.' To this Simon the Canaanite, answering, asserted that John was indeed greater than all the prophets, and all who are born of women, yet that he is not greater than the Son of Man. Accordingly Jesus is also the Christ, whereas John is only a prophet: and there is as much difference between him and Jesus, as between the forerunner and Him whose forerunner he is; or as between Him who gives the law, and him who keeps the law. Having made these and similar statements, the Canaanite also was silent. After him Barnabas, who also is called Matthias, who was substituted as an apostle in the place of Judas, began to exhort the people that they should not regard Jesus with hatred, nor speak evil of Him. For it were far more proper, even for one who might be in ignorance or in doubt concerning Jesus, to love than to hate Him. For God has affixed a reward to love, a penalty to hatred. 'For the very fact,' said he, 'that He assumed a Jewish body, and was born among the Jews, how has not this incited us all to love Him?' When he had spoken this, and more to the same effect, he stopped.

By the year 620 CE followers of John the Baptist were still known, and they are referred to as 'Sabeans' several times in the Q'ran ('Saba' is the Aramaic word for 'Immersion in water'), e.g. : Q'ran 2:62: "Those who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabeans, whoever believes in God and the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve." Even today in the 21st century a Gnostic offshoot of John the
Baptist followers can be found in Iraq. They refer to themselves as the Mandaeans (“those with knowledge”, i.e. “gnostics”). They consider Jesus as a false prophet.

In summary, we have in the Immerser a leader who is 100% in the prophetic tradition of “Repent and Return to Righteousness” as the vehicle for ushering God’s rule on earth; a man who achieved sufficient influence as to be persecuted by the reigning powers. The Immerser achieved such prominence that even those who would later glorify Jesus can not exclude that Jesus arose as a disciple who underwent John’s baptism.
JESUS

Did Jesus exist? Or could he be a fictitious character invented by a group of people between the thirties CE (when he supposedly ministered and died) and early fifties CE (the years of the earliest known dateable texts, those of Paul of Tarsus, which mention Jesus)?

The earliest date-able texts that witness the historical person Jesus are the seven letters known to be from Paul. Even though Paul says precious little about the historical Jesus (more on what Paul says on the historical Jesus later), what is key here is that his letters themselves constitute a extremely early correspondence which can not have happened without a few critical historical events:

- Paul tells his communities that he is in a living relationship with the original Jesus circle, including names known from secular traditions, such as James brother of Jesus. If Paul had invented the character Jesus, he could not be telling the world that he has been conversing and will visit with Jesus’ brother James, who is based in Jerusalem.

The single point above gives strong evidence that there once was a person called Jesus, who had a brother, and that Paul, Jesus, James were all adults circa the 30’s CE.

Paul also shares a few historical facts which would be impossible for him to manufacture, given that his letters are in the public arena and can be read (or his recipients accessed by) James and the community that he leads from Jerusalem. These few facts are:

Jesus was a descendant of King David: Romans 1:3 … the good news concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh.

Jesus was handed over to his adversaries, who brought about his death by crucifixion:

- 1Corinthians 11:23-34 … on the night when he was handed over [The Greek is paredidoto, which does not mean “betrayed” as sometimes rendered by translators too familiar with the Judas story. Paul’s letters, the oldest written NT texts, never even mention a Judas Iscariot.] …

- Galatians 3:1-2 [Young’s Literal Translation] 1 O thoughtless Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was written about among you as crucified?
History of the Original Jesus Movement

We shall have much more to say about Paul, and what Paul says (about Jesus, about the Jews in general, about Jesus’ followers, and about Judaism), but for now suffice it to say that Paul’s letters (dating from the late forties CE) and the fact that he maintains a relationship with Jesus’ followers (especially his brother) are a solid witness to the basic fact of “there existed a person Jesus contemporary with a contemporary of Paul, who was crucified”.

What adds further credibility to Paul’s letters being a reliable witness to the existence of Jesus is the fact that the relationship that Paul has with James, which he proclaims in his letters, is actually adversarial. In other words, it is extremely unlikely that Paul could be in collusion with the James of history and still disparage James and James’ approach to enabling people’s access to God’s imminent Kingdom.

The second set of witnesses to Jesus are the Gospels. However they are a one-way communication. They alone (i.e., if Paul’s letters did not exist) could not constitute a self-standing proof of the existence of Jesus. Only because we know from Paul’s letters that a Jesus existed, can we then see the Gospels as a secondary witness from the first few decades after Jesus’ death. We shall examine the Gospels in some detail, however suffice it to say that it is conceivable (even if unlikely) that they could be inventions.

Therefore, we must ask: are there other sources of which we can say “these sources are self-standing and convincing evidence of the existence of Jesus”? We will need to look for secular sources. As we did above, the reader must always keep two things in mind as we visit each source:
- When was the source authored?
- What is the time of the events spoken of, by the source?

The earliest secular reference to the man Jesus comes from historian Josephus Flavius in his ‘Antiquities of the Jews’ (written in Greek, ca. early 90’s CE, under the patronage of emperor Vespasian). Josephus was a young Galilean general who participated in the war against Rome (66 CE to 70 CE), but surrendered when defeat was imminent and was then adopted by general Vespasian and moved to Rome, from where he wrote his ‘Wars of the Jews’ in the 80’s and “Antiquities of the Jews” in the 90’s, documenting in Greek the history of Israel until the defeat in 70 CE at the hands of Rome. Partly because of Josephus’ accounts on Jesus, Christian communities have steadfastly maintained Josephus’ works for posterity.

The first reference to Jesus in Josephus is known as the “Testimonium Flavianum” (Flavius was Josephus’ adopted surname after Vespasian, of the Flavian dynasty, became his patron). Because, other than Eusebius in the early fourth century, the text is not referenced by any authors until the late fourth century, and because the text reflects a high degree of Christian dogmatism, it may be a interpolation, added to Josephus’ Antiquities after the establishment by Constantine of Christian orthodoxy. We present the text here at face value (using the oldest known manuscript, from the sixth century, rendering Jerome’s rendering of Eusebius’ rendering of the text). Also,
see Chapter Note 1 for a more extensive coverage on the strange circumstances of the Testimonium Flavianum.

Jerome’s rendering of Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Ch 3, section 3, follows (it is probably taken from Eusebius’ Historia Ecclesiastica, since Jerome tells us in De Viris that he is making extensive use of Eusebius):

De Viris Illustribus (On Illustrious Men), Ch 13.14:
(Translation: Ben C. Smith, Text Excavation, The Testimonium Flavianum)

In the eighth book of his Antiquities he most openly acknowledges that Christ was slain by the Pharisees on account of the greatness of his miracles, that John the Baptist was truly a prophet, and that Jerusalem was destroyed because of the murder of James the apostle. He wrote also concerning the Lord after this fashion:

At the same time there was Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is proper to say that he was a man; for he was an accomplisher of marvelous works and a teacher of those who freely receive true things; he also had very many followers, as many from the Jews as from the gentiles, and he was believed to be Christ. When by the envy of our principal ones Pilate had affixed him to a cross, those who had first loved him nevertheless persevered {in the faith}; for he appeared to them on the third day living; many things, both these and other marvelous things, are in the songs of the prophets who made predictions about him. Even until today the race of Christians, having obtained the word from him, is not extinct.

The Testimonium In Jerome’s original Latin:

Eodem tempore fuit Iesus, sapiens vir, si tamen virum eum oportet dicere; erat enim mirabilium patrator operum et doctor eorum qui libenter vera suscipiunt; plurimos quoque tam de Iudaeis quam de gentilibus habuit sectatores, et credebatur esse Christus. cumque invidia nostrorum principum cruci eum Pilatus adfixisset, nihilominus qui primum dilexerant perseverarunt {in fide}; apparuit enim eis tertia die vivens; multa et haec et alia mirabilia carminibus prophetarum de eo vaticinantibus. et usque hodie Christianorum gens ab hoc sortita vocabulum non defecit.

Josephus mentions Jesus again when later recounting the death of Jesus’ brother James at the hands of High Priest Ananias bar Ananias in 62 CE. We will cover James’ story later in our History, but suffice it to say here that Josephus devotes a extended narrative to James’ death (much more extensive than the brief paragraph on Jesus!). This narrative on James is a more solid attestation to the existence of Jesus (compared to the previous Josephan mention, discussed earlier) because it is less likely to have been a insertion by Christian scribes (Christian scribes would not insert a narrative on James that is more detailed than that of Jesus). We shall explore the text in detail, in our chapter on James, but for our purpose here, we present the reference to Jesus: Josephus, Antiquities, Book 20, Chapter 9, Paragraph 1:

So he [Ananus bar Ananus] assembled the sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James
and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.

As we shall from our two next sources, by the year 116 CE the Roman archives (or other sources available to Roman historians) already made reference to events relating to “Christians” (in both cases such events take place in Rome), and to the originator of their movement.

Our second secular source on Jesus, after Josephus’, is Cornelius Tacitus, generally considered the greatest historian of ancient Rome. In his Annals, written in 116CE, Tacitus describes the search for a party guilty of causing the great fire of 64CE that burned in the city of Rome, and the subsequent scapegoating of the Roman Christians. In clarifying the source of the name “Christians” for his audience, Tacitus makes the reference to their leader, a person named “Christus”:

Annales XLIV: Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiation of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Chrestianos by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man’s cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

Certainly Tacitus is not fond of “Christ” or the “Chrestians” in Rome. It is probable that his reference on “Christ” is obtained from the Roman imperial archives, but it is conceivable that he could have obtained it from Christians in Rome (as we shall see, by 116 CE, there already were enough Christians in certain cities of the empire
such that Tacitus could have had access to them) or from other Roman citizens (such as his friend Pliny, whom we will also encounter in this chapter).

What is more certain however is that his facts on there being a large enough community of Christians in Rome by 64 CE (large enough to warrant Nero to target them) must be reasonably accurate (as a historian of good repute, he had to be, and he certainly had no reason to invent them) and those facts are independent of Paul or any Gospels. The existence of a large Roman community of Christians by 64 CE may not be certain evidence of the existence of Jesus, but it strengthens the base set by Paul’s letters, since Paul tells us that in the 50’s he is already in touch with a vibrant community in Rome.

Note in particular that no reference is made to any role from the Jewish establishment in Jesus' death (although as we shall see, it is clear from Josephus that the High Priesthood was solely responsible for the death of Jesus’ brother James). Why does Tacitus not mention any role of the Jewish leadership in Jesus’ death? Simple: Tacitus (and same can be said of his source, if his source is the Roman imperial archives) knows that Pilate approved the execution, and no Roman official would approve a execution (even if instigated by leaders of the Rome’s subject peoples) unless he believed (and could explain to the emperor) how it addressed a threat to Roman-imposed order. For Tacitus (and his probable source, the imperial archives), Jesus created problems against Rome, and was disposed of. Even if Tacitus knew about a Jewish leadership involvement, he is not about to honor Jewish leadership (certainly not after the Jewish War!) with any kind recognition of Roman-sanctioned influence.

Tacitus’ record of the use of the term “Chrestianos” by 64 CE begs the question: what are the earliest witnesses to that term? See Chapter Note 2 for the earliest uses of this term.

Our third secular source on Jesus is Roman historian Suetonius, writing in 122 CE about the Roman emperors, in “Lives of the Twelve Caesars”. In the section on Claudius (reigned 41 to 54 CE), Suetonius reports Claudius’ dealings with the eastern Roman Empire, that is, with Greece and Macedonia, and with the Lycians, Rhodians, and Trojans. In Claudius 25, Suetonius refers to the expulsion of Jews by Claudius and states:

**Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chresto, he expelled them from Rome.** [*Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit.*]

Scholars generally agree that the "edict of Claudius" for the expulsion of the Jews dates to 49CE. This relies on three separate texts beyond Suetonius' own reference, which in chronological order are: (a) Cassius Dio's reference in History 60.6.6-7, (b) Paulus Orosius's fifth century mention in History 7.6.15-16 of a non-extant Josephus reference. The dating of 49 CE is also consistent with the reference in Acts 18 where Paul encounters Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth after their recent Claudian expulsion from Italy, followed shortly thereafter by Paul's trial before Gallio, consul of neighboring Achaia from 51 to 52 CE.

What we have established thus far, from secular sources only, is:
That circa 49 CE, in Rome, people knew about a “Chresto” whose influence caused Jews to make tumults in the city and caused Claudius to expel them. (Two expellees would have been the Jesus followers Aquila and Priscilla, of Acts 18:2.)

That in 64 CE, also in Rome, people knew about a “Chrestus”, who had died under Pilate, and whose followers were known as “Chreestianos” and were present in Judea first and then in Rome, where they were tortured under Nero.

That in the 90’s historian Josephus is aware of James brother of Jesus being killed in 62 CE by the High Priest Ananus bar Ananus. Josephus may have also been aware of Jesus, since he refers to James as “James brother of Jesus, called Christ”.

Before concluding our earliest secular references to Jesus, we will highlight again the Slavonic version of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” as a final reference. As we indicated in the previous chapter, a Slavonic translation of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” came to the attention of scholars over the past century, and contains a numbers of references to Yohannan and Jesus which, intriguingly, are not found in the Greek received text of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars”. For quite some time, the Slavonic references were treated as certain forged interpolations, added by Christian Slavonic editors as they translated from the Greek. However recent scholarship has begun to take the Slavonic segments more seriously, for two reasons: (1) The references to Yohannan and Jesus do not reflect the standard Christian view or canonical chronologies as known from the NT Gospels; and (2) the Greek text of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” is strangely 100% silent on Yohannan and Jesus (i.e. within the Greek Josephus corpus, only the “Antiquities of the Jews” contains references to Yohannan and Jesus). Hence a new, cautious, scholarship is evolving around the possibility that it may be the Greek received text of Josephus’ “Jewish Wars” that has been tampered with (i.e. such that Christian copyists may have completely removed the references to Yohannan and Jesus because the references disagreed with Christian orthodoxy). The Slavonic text gives us intriguing details, and its wording reflects a frame of reference which can hardly be described as Christian.

A few Slavonic Josephus highlights: (a) the thirty talents are given to Pilate (unlike the Christian tradition which has them given to Judas the apostle), (b) the custom to often stop at the Mount of Olives (and the resulting urging of the crowd that he should enter Jerusalem and cut down the Roman soldiers) is intriguingly similar to how the less famous “Egyptian” is characterized in various sources like Josephus and in the mouth of Gamaliel in Acts (5:36) ; (c) the reference “if they do not issue from God, they will be convicted” is the same as we find in the mouth of Gamaliel in Acts 5:34-37 (34 But a Pharisee in the council named Gamali-el, a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a while. 35 And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas arose, giving himself out to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After
him Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

Here is our Slavonic text: (brown bold text is the Slavonic; black bold text is from the received Greek text, provided for context):

**THE MINISTRY, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.** [Follows immediately after Bellum Judaicum (Wars of the Jews) II. ix. 3.]:

1. At that time also a man came forward,—if even it is fitting to call him a man [simply]. 2. His nature as well as his form were a man's, but his showing forth was more than [that] of a man. 3. His works, that is to say, were godly, and he wrought wonder-deeds amazing and full of power. 4. Therefore it is not possible for me to call him a man [simply]. 5. But again, looking at the existence he shared with all, I would also not call him an angel. 6. And all that he wrought through some kind of invisible power, he wrought by word and command. 7. Some said of him, that our first Lawgiver has risen from the dead and shows forth many cures and arts. 8. But others supposed [less definitely] that he is sent by God. 9. Now he opposed himself in much to the Law and did not observe the Sabbath according to ancestral custom. 10. Yet, on the other hand, he did nothing reprehensible nor any crime; but by word solely he effected everything. 11. And many from the folk followed him and received his teachings. 12. And many souls became wavering, supposing that thereby the Jewish tribes would set themselves free from the Roman hands. 13. Now it was his custom often to stop on the Mount of Olives facing the city. 14. And there also he avouched his cures to the people. 15. And there gathered themselves to him of disciples a hundred and fifty, but of the folk a multitude. 16. But when they saw his power, that he accomplished everything that he would by word, they urged him that he should enter the city and cut down the Roman soldiers and Pilate and rule over us. 17. But that one scorned it. 18. And thereafter, when knowledge of it came to the Jewish leaders, they gathered together with the High-priest and spake: "We are powerless and weak to withstand the Romans. 19. But as withal the bow is bent, we will go and tell Pilate what we have heard, and we will be without distress, lest if he hear it from others, we be robbed of our substance and ourselves be put to the sword and our children ruined." 20. And they went and told it to Pilate. 21. And he sent and had many of the people cut down. 22. And he had that wonder-doer brought up. And when he had instituted a trial concerning him, he perceived that he is a doer of good, but not an evildoer, nor a revolutionary, nor one who aimed at power, and set him free. 23. He had, you should know, healed his dying wife. 24. And he went to his accustomed place and wrought his accustomed works. 25. And as again more folk gathered themselves together round him, then did he win glory through his works more than all. 26. The teachers of the Law were [therefore] envenomed with envy and gave thirty talents to Pilate, in order that he should put him to death. 27. And he, after he had taken [the money], gave them consent that they should themselves carry out their purpose. 28. And they took him and crucified him according to the ancestral law.
THE TREATMENT OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS. [Follows on B. J. II. xi. 6, after the notice on the death in 44CE of Herod Agrippa I] 1. Again Claudius sent his authorities to those states—Cuspius Fadus [Procurator of Judea 44-46CE] and Tiberius Alexander [Procurator of Judea 46-48CE], both of whom kept the people in peace, not allowing them to depart in anything from the pure laws. 2. But if anyone diverged from the word of the Law, plaint was brought before the teachers of the Law. 3. Often they expelled him and sent him to the Emperor's presence. 4. And at the time of these two many had been discovered as servants of the previously described wonder-doer; and as they spake to the people about their teacher,—that he is living, although he is dead, and that he will free you from your servitude,—many from the folk gave ear to the above-named and took upon themselves their precept,—5. not because of their reputation; they were indeed of the humbler sort some just cobbler, others sandal-makers, others artisans. 6. And [yet] as marvelous signs they accomplished in truth what they would. 7. But when those noble governors [i.e. Fadus and Alexander. Editorial: calling Alexander a “noble governor” betrays a non-Josephan source. Alexander was a Romanized Jew who helped Titus in the campaign against Jerusalem, and later helped Vespasian acquire the Roman Emperorship; in the Greek text of Josephus, Josephus is quite dismissive of Alexander] saw the misleading of the people, they deliberated with the scribes to seize and put them to death, for fear lest the little be not little if it have ended in the great. 8. But they shrank back and were alarmed over the signs, saying: "In the plain course such wonders do not occur. 9. But if they do not issue from the counsel of God, they will quickly be convicted." 10. And they gave them [the Jesus followers] authority to act as they would. 11. But afterwards, becoming pestered by them, they had them sent away, some to the Emperor, but others to Antioch, others again to distant lands,—for the testing of the matter. [Editorial: That Alexander would have allowed people suspicious of rebelliousness to “act as they would” seems unlikely; As a case in point, Alexander was responsible for putting to death by crucifixion the two sons of the founder of the Zealots, Judas the Galilean: Simon and James] 12. But Claudius removed the two governors, [and] sent Cumanus [in 48CE], under whom there was lamentation and ruin for the Jews.

THE TRILINGUAL INSCRIPTION CONCERNING JESUS. [Inserted in B. J. V. v. 2.] At it (the barrier of the Temple) were columns . . . and on these inscriptions in Greek and Roman and Jewish characters, publishing the law of purity and [proclaiming] that no foreigner should enter the inner [court]; for they called it the Holy [Place] to which one had to ascend by fourteen steps, and whose upper part was built in a square. And over these tablets with inscriptions hung a fourth tablet with inscription in these [three] characters, to the effect: Jesus has not reigned as king; he has been crucified by the Jews, because he proclaimed the destruction of the city and the laying waste of the temple.

PORTENTS AT THE DEATH OF JESUS AND RUMOURS OF HIS RESURRECTION. [Follows on B. J. V. v. 4, at the end of the description of the
Temple-curtain.] 1. This curtain [katapetasma] was prior to this generation entire, because the people were pious; but now it was lamentable to look at. 2. It had, you should know, been suddenly rent from the top to the ground, when they delivered over to death through bribery the doer of good, the man—yea, him who through his doing was no man. 3. And of many other signs they tell which came to pass at that time. 4. And it was said that after he was put to death, yea after burial in the grave, he was not found. 5. Some then assert that he is risen; but others, that he has been stolen by his friends. 6. I, however, do not know which speak more correctly. 7. For a dead man cannot rise of himself—though possibly with the help of another righteous man; unless he will be an angel or another of the heavenly authorities, or God himself appears as a man and accomplishes what he will,—both walks with men and falls, and lies down and rises up, as it is according to his will. 8. But others said that it was not possible to steal him, because they had put guards all round his grave,—thirty Romans, but a thousand Jews. 9. Such [is narrated] as to that curtain (katapetasma). Moreover [as to] the cause of its tearing there are [?] various statements.

A PROPHECY CONCERNING JESUS. [In B. J. VI. v. 4, where in the Greek text the prophecy of the world-ruler is referred to Vespasian solely.] But the Jews, after the demolition of Antonia [fortress], reduced the temple to a square, although they had it in their oracles that the city and sanctuary would be taken when the temple should become four-square. But what had more than all incited them to war was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world.

This they understood to be someone from their own race, and many of their wise men went astray in their interpretation of it. The oracle however in reality signified the sovereignty of Vespasian, who was proclaimed emperor on Jewish soil.

Some indeed by this understood Herod, but others the crucified wonder-doer Jesus; others again Vespasian.

Jesus and his Movement, according to the oldest religious sources: “Q”, Paul’s authentic letters, and the “oldest received text of ‘Mark’: 
Having looked at secular sources for evidence on Jesus, we will turn to the earliest religious literature. Our focus is no longer “did he exist?”, but now: “what did he say and do?”. In order to capture the closest historical picture of what Jesus said and did, we will focus our analysis of New Testament material only on the three oldest sources:

- The seven undisputed-authorship letters of Paul of Tarsus, written from 50 thru 61/62 CE.
- “Q” (the sayings source that was used in common by the authors of “Luke” and canonical “Matthew”, some of which also appears in “Mark”), penned probably as a sayings source, between the late 30’s and the mid 50’s CE.
- The oldest manuscript of “Mark”, which goes from 1:1 thru 16:8 and excludes the ending (Mk 16:9-20), which is a later addition. Oldest Mark was written shortly after 70CE, but probably reflects earlier written sources (including parts of “Q”) and oral narratives.

There are two related yet distinctly different reasons why looking at the oldest sources is extremely valuable: First, being closest to the time of the events, they stand a greater chance of being free of after-the-fact dogmatic adulterations. Secondly, they are the best reflection of what the earliest witnesses actually wished to convey for posterity (versus, say, Matthew, Luke, John, or other NT text authors like the author of Epistle to Hebrews). In a subsequent chapter, we shall examine canonical Matthew and Luke/Acts, in the context of the communities they originally addressed (“Matthew” in the 80’s, “Luke” in the 90’s), and we shall discuss whether they are consistent or not, with respect to the historical data and with respect to the belief systems contained in each of the three oldest sources.

Before we look at the texts of Paul, “Q”, and “Oldest Mark”, a word of introduction on Paul and his corpus.

Paul’s letters document vital disagreements between Paul and the followers of the Original Movement, and those differences also come out loud and clear when one compares the two oldest gospel sources (“Q” and “Oldest Mark”) against Paul’s belief system set forth in his seven undisputed-authorship epistles. Much will be said in later chapters on this, the relationship between Paul and the followers of the Original Jesus Movement. However in this section we will not focus on Paul’s belief system, but only on:

- What we can learn from Paul about what Jesus said and did.
- What we can learn from “Q” and “Oldest Mark” about what Jesus said and did.

At any rate, it is still important to present Paul through a brief summary: Paul did not know Jesus during Jesus’ ministry. Rather, after Jesus’ crucifixion, the High Priest procures services from him (he was known then as Saul of Tarsus), in order to persecute and kill the leading members of the Jesus Movement, which has continued to grow even after Jesus’ death circa 33CE. Sometime between 34 and 36 CE, while on his way to Damascus, persecuting the Jesus Movement, Paul has a vision which transforms him. In his new vision, Paul hears a revelation from a resurrected Jesus, by which he is to preach a particular message. He then befriends the leadership of the Jesus Movement, and this goes well in the beginning. However as his message unfolds
it becomes clear that it is different than what the Jesus Movement proclaims. While the Jesus Movement, led by Jesus’ brother James, preaches obedience to the Torah Commandments as the vehicle to usher God’s Kingdom, Paul preaches confession of allegiance to Jesus himself. Paul’s letters are rife with exhortations to his communities, guarding them against “those of the circumcision”, who preach the Law (ie the Torah Commandments), which Paul calls “a ministry of death”. Paul’s message eventually spreads thru the Graeco-Roman world, while the Jesus Movement’s message (led by James and his successors) fades after the destruction of Israel thru the two Jewish Wars (66-73CE, and 132-135CE).

We will see that Paul tells us extremely little about the historical Jesus. This may be surprising to some; but, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, Paul is much more focused on talking about his interpretation of the meaning of Jesus’ death, and setting forth his speculations about the cosmic origins of Jesus’ soul.

Here is what Paul tells us on the historical Jesus:

Jesus was a descendant of King David: Romans 1:3 … the good news concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh.

He was handed over to his Jewish adversaries, who brought about his death by crucifixion:
1 Corinthians 11:23-24 NRSV 23 … on the night when he was handed over [The Greek is paredidoto, which does not mean “betrayed” as sometimes rendered by translators too familiar with the Judas story. Paul’s letters, the oldest written NT texts, never even mention a Judas Iscariot.] …

Galatians 3:1-2 [Literal Translation] 1 O thoughtless Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was written about among you as crucified? 2 Thessalonians 2:10-15 14 For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Judeans/Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; [editorial: as we shall see, Paul knows full well that is was the Roman-appointed High Priest who drove Jesus’ execution, and not “the Judeans/Jews” in general. By the time of his writings Paul is fully jaded against all Jews in general, because they do not partake of his new religion. Let us not digress further on this, as we shall cover Paul later. Nevertheless of note is the fact that Paul here constitutes the very first historical source where the generalization of “the Jews” in general as perpetrators of Jesus’ death is made.]

Paul also tells us that, according to what the “Risen Christ” revealed to him, Jesus instituted at his last supper a new tradition, a thanks-giving (eucharist, in Greek): 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 NRSV 23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was handed over took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way he
took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." As Paul tells us, this (very un-Jewish) “body and blood thanksgiving” ritual seems to have come, not from the historical Jesus, nor from Paul’s learning of such a tradition from James and the other followers, but rather from Paul’s own “revelation” directly from the “Risen Christ”. We shall see this again in Mark and discuss the implications of this text.

Paul tells us that Jesus resurrects three days after his death and appears to his followers (including, as we shall see, people that are contemporary to Paul: Cephas, and James brother of Jesus): 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 NRSV  

1 Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, 2 through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you--unless you have come to believe in vain. 3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

As we shall see, Mark also speaks of a resurrection. Although “Oldest Mark” ends with the body simply missing (16:8), Mark has previously let his reader know that Jesus will inaugurate the resurrection of the dead: Mark 14:8: "but after my having risen I will go before you to Galilee.

Hence, from Paul and Mark, then, we can glean the historical data point that it was widely accepted among Jesus’ followers that Jesus had resurrected. Of course, Paul will utilize this to create a unique dogma, not found in “Q” or “Mark”, but that is the topic of later chapters.

Lastly, in terms of historical data points, Paul also tells us that Peter and James are scrupulous keepers of the Torah Commandments, including the ritual and dietary observances. For example, in Galatians Paul mentions Peter observing dietary regulations in Antioch (in fact strengthening his observance upon arrival from emissaries from James). We will quote Paul extensively in subsequent chapters on this, but suffice it to say for now that Paul’s evidence on Peter’s and James’ insistence in upholding the Torah Commandments (even when causing difficulties in integrating gentile believers into the movement) is very solid indicator from Paul’s letters alone that Jesus himself could not possibly have provided any explicit injunctions against the observances (e.g. dietary). In fact Paul, not once, quotes Jesus as saying anything against full observance of the Torah commandments.

Now let us turn to “Q” and Mark. Here are the basics that we can glean if one looks at these two sources:
Jesus begins as a disciple of Yohannan the Immerser (Mark 1:9-11): **In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was immersed by John in the Jordan.**

Jesus’ ‘good news’ (Evangelion: Eu/Good, Angelion/Message) as reported by the author of Mark is identical to that reported of Yohannan’s, i.e. he is expecting the imminent re-entry of God into human history (to inaugurate a government where God’s rule is established), and he urges people to repent (i.e. make a return to righteousness): (Mark 1:14-15) **After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."**

He appoints 12 emissaries, one to represent each tribe of Israel. Women are also part of his leadership:

- Mark 1:16-20: As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

- Mark 2:14: As he was walking along, he saw Levi [Matthew 9:9 says "Matthew" instead of "Levi"] son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

- Mark 3:13-19: He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named emissaries, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); and Andrew [Simon Peter’s brother], and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew [Matthew is also called Levi earlier in Mark’s Gospel], and Thomas [Thomas is also called Judas Thomas Dydimos or Judas Twin Twin], and James son of Alphaeus [this may be the same as James the brother of Jesus if Alphaeus is same as Jesus’ uncle Cleophas, who Mary may have married after Jesus’ father Joseph died], and Thaddaeus [called, or replaced by, Judas son of James, in Luke’s gospel], and Simon the Kanaites ["Kanaites"/"κανανητη" is a Greek mistranslation of Hebrew word Kana’ which means Zealot. He is correctly called Simon Zelotes (the Zealot) in Luke’s gospel], and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

- Luke 8:1-3 (see also Mark 16:9) : Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been
cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

- Luke 6:20-21 (also Matthew 5:1-9 as well as Thomas 54, 69): Seeing the crowds, he said to his disciples, "How fortunate are the poor; they have God's kingdom. How fortunate the hungry; they will be fed. How fortunate are those who are crying; they will laugh."

He performs deeds of healing and power, e.g. Mark 1:29: And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.

His grass-roots community is that of the poor and the outcasts, e.g. Mark 2:15-17: And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples--for there were many who followed him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

His teaching is based on upholding the Torah (not on glorifying himself). Upholding God's Commandments is his formula for ushering in the Kingdom of God.:

- Mark 10:17-31 (also Luke 18:18-30 and Matt. 19:16-30): ... a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? " Jesus said to him, " Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.' " He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

- Matthew 7:21-27 (also Luke 6:46-49): "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'

- Mark 3:35: “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

- Matthew 5:17-20 (see also Luke 16:17): Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.
For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Like the prophets of old, he places righteousness, ethics and human life ahead of ritual Commandments (but does not exclude the ritual Commandments).

- Mark 12:28-34 : (see also Luke 10:25-28 and Matt 22:234-40) : One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. …

- Mark 2:23-28: One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Adam is lord even of the sabbath." Jesus certainly upholds the Jewish Sabbath; the fact that he goes to great lengths to qualify an exception to the rule demonstrates that, in his mind, the rule (ie. the validity of the Sabbath) is in force.

- Matthew 5:22-24 : …when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; FIRST be reconciled to your brother or sister, and THEN come and offer your gift. [caps by the author]. Luke does not have a “Q” equivalent in this case.

He protects the upholding of the Commandments by building a more stringent guideline to avoid breaking them. This is in the same vein as the Rabbinical and Talmudic approach known as “building a fence around the Torah”. This comes clear in the “You have heard that it was said” injunctions:
Matthew 5:43-45: You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. In Luke 6:27-28: I am telling you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Matthew 5:38-41: You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. In Luke 6:30: Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone takes away your belongings, do not ask to have them back.

Matthew 5:27-28: You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Luke does not have the “Q” equivalent in this case.

Matthew 5:21-24: You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Luke does not have the “Q” equivalent in this case.

Mark 10:1-12 (also Luke 16:18, Matt 19:1-12 & 5:31-32): Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."
- Mark 4:24 (also Luke 6:38 and Matthew 7:2) : The measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.

He rejects any Oral Law stipulations which may detract (as in the first example below), or even distract (as in the second example below) from the intent of the Written Law (in doing so, he calls such stipulations “Traditions of Men”, this probably to the delight of the Sadducees, who denied the validity of the Oral Law.)

- Mark 7:9-13: 9 Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God)-- 12 then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this."

- Mark 7:1-23 (notice, by the way, Mark’s gentile vantage point, where he needs to explain dietary Oral Laws to his audience): 1 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, 2 they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. 3 (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; 4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) 5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" 6 He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; 7 in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' 8 You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." ... 14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." 16 17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, "Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, 19 since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?"

Mark then interjects his own editorial comment : (Thus he declared all foods clean.), probably a Pauline leaning, for the “benefit” of his gentile audience. This is not Jesus speaking, but Mark’s extrapolation and goes beyond the actual topic (the topic is whether a Jew must wash hands before eating, not whether a Jew can eat pork and shrimp!). We know from Paul’s letter to Galatians, which is older than Mark by at least 20 years, (we will quote that letter...
extensively later) that Jesus’ disciples (namely, Peter, James the brother of Jesus) adhered tightly to the dietary laws and expected all Jews to do so. Given the challenges brought about by this (i.e., it certainly makes it harder to commune with gentiles in commensality and prayer, when one has to keep foods, utensils, facilities separate), if Jesus would have meant to enjoin Jews to eat unkosher, he certainly would have practiced it. Of course the evidence is 100% to the contrary, as we know from Peter and James’ zealousness to keep the dietary (and all other, for that matter) Laws.

20 And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. 21 For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, 22 adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Ten years after Mark, Canonical Matthew (whose audience is Jewish) will remove Mark’s editorial, and insert his own reinforcement that the topic is about washing hands specifically:

Matthew 15: 15-20: 15 But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." 16 Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. 19 For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

Interestingly, Luke, writing twenty years after Mark, does not include this Markan passage at all.

His community practices communal living (sharing all material wealth) and open commensality (table is open to guests from all social strata and walks of life):

- Luke 12:33-34 (also Matt 6:19-21 and Thomas 76) : "Sell your possessions and give to charity. Store up treasure for yourselves in a heavenly account, where moths and rust do not consume, and where thieves cannot break in and steal." "For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be."

He has a eschatological / apocalyptic view regarding the imminent advent of the Kingdom of God. He exhorts people to behave today knowing that traditional human history is coming to a close (with great trauma):

- Luke 12:49-52 (also Matthew10:34-36, Thomas 16) : "I came to strike fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already aflame!" "Do you think that I have come to bring peace on the earth? No, not peace, but a sword." "From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three;" "For I have come to create conflict between a man and his father, disagreement between a daughter and her mother, and estrangement between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law. A person's enemies will be one's own kin."
Luke 12:58-59 (also Matthew 5:25-26): "Make an effort to settle with your accuser while you are with him on the way to court. If you don't, he will drag you to the judge, the judge will hand you over to the guard, and the guard will throw you in prison. I am telling you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."

Mark 9:1 (also Matthew 16:28 and Luke 9:27): And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power."

Mark 9:43-50 (also Matthew 5:29-30): If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched. "For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

He rails against the power base of Sadducees and Pharisees when they forego social justice, the main intent of the Torah. For example:

Q: Luke 11:42 and Matthew 2:23: "Shame on you Pharisees! for you are scrupulous about giving a tithe of mint and dill and cumin to the priests, but you neglect justice and the love of God."

In agreement with the Pharisees (and in disagreement with the Sadducees), he expects the upcoming Resurrection of the Dead.

Mark 12:18-25: Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that 'if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.' There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her." Jesus said to them, "Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (Also in Luke 20:27-36 and Matthew 22:23-30)

In keeping with the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, Jesus makes a deliberate entrance into Jerusalem riding on a colt (that is, a young foal or suckling of a female donkey). He is hailed by his followers as their hoped-for Davidic King.
- Mark 11:1-10 (also in Luke 19:29-38 and Matthew 21:1-9) : When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

In the days leading up to the feast of Passover, he instigates a “disturbance” at the Temple precinct, disrupting services for the ritual offerings. This causes the final reaction from the Temple authorities (at the time run by Roman puppets Ananias bar Seth and his son-in-law Joseph bar Qaiafa), who succeed in requesting of Pilate the penalty of crucifixion.

- Mark 11:15-19 (see also Luke 19:45-48, Matt 21:12-17) : Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of thieves." And when the high priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

- What kind of “disturbance” was this? In Mark’s straightforward Greek (un-“cleansed” by later Church euphemists) the exact term used is: “sustasiaston” i.e.: insurrection”.

Mark 15:7:

ην δὲ ο λεγομενος βαραββας μετα των ςυςτασιαστων δεδεμενος οιτινες εν τη στασει φονον πεποιηκεσαν.

en de o legomenos barabbas meta ton sustasiaston dedemenos oitines en te
There was but the one called Barabbas with the insurrectionists in prison, who during the insurrection murder had committed.

Later Christian Church doctrine would paint the picture of Jesus the pacifist, who is upset at the money changers due to their greed (remember “you have turned my house into a den of thieves”)? Nonsense! Mark tells us clearly: Jesus lead a insurrection at the Temple precinct. Why? A insurrection is done for no other reason than to trigger a coup against the ruler (in this case the Roman puppet High-Priest and his running of the Temple). Jesus is railing against Ananias Bar Seth, his son-in-law Joseph Bar Qaiafa, and their clan of corrupt Sadducee priests. Not only that, Barabbas, long held in Church lore as the antithesis of Jesus, was actually one of those WITH the same insurrection instigated by Jesus. Are we to believe the Church’s narrative, that there were TWO disturbances at the Temple, one by Jesus the pacifist and one by other violent ones? Of course not. Mark is a straightforward, uncomplicated narrative, writing for people close enough to the events, such that he does not even attempt to “curate” things that are so well-known to his audience. And he tells us clearly: Jesus instigated a insurrection; people were captured; some among them had committed murder; finally, the culprits were punished with the only vehicle applicable to enemies of the Roman state: crucifixion. Those two “bandits” crucified next to Jesus, which Church doctrine would like us to take as regular thieves, i.e. sinners “like you and I”, are not thieves at all. They are more of these insurrectionists. The Greek term used by Mark, “lestas”, is well translated as “bandits”: it has that same ambiguity as in English, either a person who steals and/or kills for personal gain (i.e. a robber), or one who kills and/or commits acts of vandalism against the political authority (i.e. a rebel). “Lestas” comes from the same root as “stasei” / insurrection. In fact, “Lestai” / λησταί is also the same term used by Josephus when applied to those other famous revolutionaries that he likes to put down: the Zealots.

As far as Temple takeover attempts go, this was not the first time to happen in recent Jewish history, and it wouldn’t be the last: a few years later (in 66CE) other zealots for the Law would try again (successfully this time, although victory was shortlived as they were promptly razed by the Roman military in 70CE). How sensitive a matter was attempting a coup at the Temple? Let’s just say that when it happened in 66CE, it triggered the Jewish – Roman war, and the ensuing destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem, and all Jewish rule in the land of Israel. That’s how sensitive a matter this was. No wonder Jesus and several co-religionists were crucified for attempting it!

Our “oldest Mark” wraps things up quite curtly:
- Persecuted by the authorities, in the last few days leading to the Passover, Jesus and his followers partake in a final meal (perhaps the actual Passover seder).
- He is captured shortly that evening, “delivered over” to the High Priest’s henchmen by one of his twelve followers, Judas Iskariot. The precise word “paradossei” (meaning “deliver over” or “hand over”) is used several times by Mark in this passage. It is the very same word used by Paul.
Mark 4:16-18 [YLT] : 16 And his disciples went forth, and came to the city, and found as he said to them, and they made ready the passover. 17 And evening having come, he cometh with the twelve, 18 and as they are reclining, and eating, Jesus said, 'Verily I say to you -- one of you, who is eating with me -- shall deliver me up.'

Mark 14:41-44 [YLT]: 41 And he comes the third time, and says to them, 'Sleep on henceforth, and rest--it is over; the hour did come; lo, the Son of Man is delivered up to the hands of the sinful; 42 rise, we may go, lo, he who is delivering me up hath come nigh.' 43 And immediately--while he is yet speaking--comes near Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude, with swords and sticks, from the high priests, and the scribes, and the elders; And the one who is delivering him over had given a code to them, saying, 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, he it is, lay hold on him, and lead him away safely,'

Going to Pilate, the High Priest requests the crucifixion penalty from Pilate. Mark blames the High Priest for instigating a crowd against Jesus, in front of a somewhat sarcastic (if ambivalent) Pilate, who nevertheless obliges without too much convincing. Rome appends a inscription to his cross; the official crime: claiming to be “King of the Jews”.

Mark 15:1-32 : 1 As soon as it was morning, the high priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and delivered him over to Pilate. 2 Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." 3 Then the high priests accused him of many things. 4 Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." 5 But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. 6 Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. 7 Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. 8 So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. 9 Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" He answered them, "You say so." 10 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the high priests had handed him over. 11 But the high priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" 13 They [editorial: that is, the crowd that the high priests have stirred up against Jesus] shouted back, "Crucify him!" 14 Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" 15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. 16 Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole
cohort. 17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. 18 And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. 20 After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. 21 They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. 22 Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). 23 And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. 25 It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26 The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 And with him they crucified two rebels [lestai], one on his right and one on his left. 28 29 Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 In the same way the high priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

Although Mark probably had access to Paul’s letters, we do not see here the invective against the Jewish people in general that we will see in Paul (1Thessalonians). Notice also that Mark does not exculpate Pilate (as eventually canonical Matthew and Luke will).

A brief excursus is due here, on how the above Markan scene will come to be portrayed by these two later authors. Of primary note, of course, is the added text in canonical Matthew (written ca the 80’s): Mt27:25, “And all the people said, ‘His blood shall be on us and on our children!’ ”. As infamous as this phrase is as a showcase of supposed anti-Judaism of canonical Matthew, a careful reading shows that canonical Matthew is not condemning Israel overall, but specifically the crowd which he also points out was stirred up by the “high priests and the elders”. Of course, Jew-haters have had a field day generalizing this. What canonical Matthew does do is call out Pilate’s “innocence” (washing of the hands is Matthean only), however one might argue that canonical Matthew’s purpose is to leave no doubt that Jesus’ pursuers were first and foremost the clan of the High Priest. Luke on the other hand does show a greater overall anti-Jewish tendency. He very carefully tweaks the Markan narrative to give the impression that a public crowd pursues Jesus, and, without any prompting from the high priests, calls out for Jesus’ crucifixion. Luke first turns Mark 15:1’s “the high priests, elders, scribes, and whole council … delivered him to Pilate” into Lk 23:1’s “the whole multitude of them… took him to Pilate.”, followed by 23:13-21: 13 And Pilate having called together the high priests, and the rulers, and the people, 14 said unto them, ‘Ye brought to me this man as perverting the people, and lo, I before you having examined, found in this man no fault in those things
ye bring forward against him; …nor Herod, for I sent you back unto him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is having been done by him; 16 having chastised, therefore, I will release him,' 17 (for it was necessary for him to release to them one at every feast), 18 and they cried out—the whole multitude—saying, 'Away with this one, and release to us Barabbas,' 19 who had been, because of a certain sedition made in the city, and murder, cast into prison. 20 Pilate again then—wishing to release Jesus—called to them, 21 but they were calling out, saying, 'Crucify, crucify him.' [Young’s Literal Translation]. Notice that unlike Mark, but with Matthew, Luke exculpates Pilate. But Luke also exculpates Herod Antipas! Finally, he even partially exculpates the “high priests, elders, and scribes” since, instead of a crowd assembled and stirred by them, we have a general multitude gathered for a release of prisoners, who is gratuitously hateful of Jesus. Luke’s Acts will of course put the cherry on the anti-Jewish cake (in Peter’s mouth of all things!): Acts 2: 22-23: 22 You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— 23 this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law [i.e. the Romans]. At any rate, Luke, the Gentile apologist par-excellence, is only building on the school of Paul, of course. More on Luke in a later chapter; let us move on.

- Mark’s depiction of Jesus’ final moments is short but very telling: Mark 15:34 At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?". In other words, Mark’s narrative reflects a Jesus who dies in a state of agonizing bewilderment. It is a Jesus who had expected to triumph in life, and is now feeling rejected and failed. This is not a Jesus who is all-knowing (let alone willing) regarding his ministry ending in death. Yet, we shall come back to a few other quotes where Mark has retroactively made Jesus knowing and willing, regarding his finale-in-death.

- After the crucifixion, Mary of Magdala and Mary his mother find that his body has disappeared from the tomb, and they run away in a great panic. Mark 16:1-8 : When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror
and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Either Jesus himself or his earliest followers after his death, identified Jesus with the “one like a Son of Adam” (the messianic super-being from Daniel’s prophecy, who will conquer Israel’s enemies and establish God’s rule on earth):

- Mark 2:1-13 (also Luke 5:17-26, Matt 9:1-8) : Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Adam has authority on earth to forgive sins" --he said to the paralytic-- "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home."

Both “oldest Mark” and “Q” record furthermore that Jesus expected to die and rise after three days, patterned by the miracle of Jonah and the whale. Whether Jesus actually expected this or whether his earliest followers come to believe that he expected it, we can not know. It is important to understand that these two earliest texts (oldest manuscript of Mark and “Q”) upon which we have based our information here on Jesus’ sayings and deeds are not a unbiased account and neither of them can be said to be the work of one person. Both “oldest Mark” and “Q” probably contain layers authored at different points between 33CE and 70CE. They also contain idiosyncracies of the communities that authored the various layers: aside from the obvious fact that the authors all saw Jesus as their hero, we can also see how they are retroactively seeing the history of Jesus’ activities in the light of recent events such as a Jesus’ death, and (at least for Mark) the destruction of the Temple (in 70CE). Hence it should not surprise us to see “evidence” of Jesus predicting his own death and resurrection (the idea of a general resurrection is consistent with the messianic-age events predicted in the Torah, although the Sadducees did not see it that way), as well as even the destruction of the Temple.

- Matthew 12:38-40: Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Adam will be in the heart of the earth." (also Luke 11:16, Luke 11:29-32 and Matthew 16:4)

- Mark 10:32-34 (see also Luke 18:31-34, Matt 20:17-19) : He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Adam will be handed over to the high priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."
We also see the earliest signs of viewing Jesus as the servant, whose deeds of kindness and his suffering death serve a type of atoning purpose. We know already that there is nothing un-Jewish or un-biblical about the idea that a repentant sinner can, thru someone else’s intercession or thru a sacrificial offering at the Temple, be listened to by God and (if God so pleases) receive forgiveness for sins past (as long as the person demonstrates repentance by returning to God’s Commandments). Did not Abraham intercede with God to delay God’s anger against S’dom and G’morrah? Was Moses not successful numerous times in calming God’s fury against the early Israelites? Furthermore, as is written in the Torah (Lev 16:29), the High Priest is qualified to intercede every year on Yom Kippur on behalf of all the people. Then we also have the Torah system of sacrificial offerings for specific types of transgressions. Finally, we have the well known Isaiah 53 messianic age prophecy of Israel as the suffering servant, whose past suffering (due to the past transgressions of Israel) enables intercession for the people: Isaiah 53:1-12:

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of YH-H been revealed? 2 For he grew up before Him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. 4 Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and YH-H has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 8 By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. 9 They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of YH-H to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of YH-H shall prosper. 11 Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil—with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In other words, the suffering of a righteous person (or as in the case of Isaiah 53, of a people, as in “Israel”) CAN constitute atonement in-and-of-itself and/or entitle the suffering servant to make intercession. It is entirely possible that soon after his death, Jesus the man comes to be seen as such a intercessor suffering servant. Such power for intercession would have been ever-so more relevant if the community saw itself living in the Final Days (i.e. without too much time left to make amends through
Torah deeds), and if they saw Jesus also as that super-powerful messianic “One like a Son of Adam” that ushers in the Kingdom of God:

- Mark 10:45 (also Matt 20:20-28, Luke 22:24-27): …For the Son of Adam came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many.

Recall that Mark’s narrative will show in Mark 15:34 a Jesus who dies in agonizing bewilderment. Mark 10:45 and Mark 10:32 have Jesus predicting and willing to go through death, and hence these two texts go against the narrative of Mark 15:34. If Jesus would have truly said what he is depicted as saying in Mark 10:32 and 45, he surely would not have died saying what is in Mark 15:34, and Mark has no reason to have invented that either. What is more likely is that Mark 15:34 more closely reflects Jesus’ final moments, and that Mark 10:32 and 10:45 reflect Jesus’ followers rationalizing his death as a Suffering Servant’s power to make Intercession for Atonement. It must be stressed again that no atonement (whether via intercession from a Suffering Servant type, or Temple sacrifice, or Immersion, or even thru calling YH-H’s name) can imply that a person can then dispense with striving to keep the Torah Commandments. There is not one iota of inclination in “Q” or Mark regarding doing away with the need for the Commandments. In the Torah, the Commandments are stated to be eternal, and eternal means even thru the advent of the Messianic Age (see Ex31:16-17, Num15:15, Deut4:35-40, Deut 29:29, 1Chron16:13-18, Isaiah 55:3, Isaiah 24:5, Psalm 103:17-18, Psalm 105:6-11). Yes, even in the climate of End Times that John Baptist and Jesus lived in, when presumably there is little time left, both John and Jesus insisted that without a demonstrated subsequent Return to Righteousness (e.g., “Bear fruit worthy of Repentance!”), there can be no lasting atonement. The followers of Jesus after his death continued to insist on a return to observance of the Commandments, even as they continued to seek atonement for the forgiveness of sins past through Immersion, Temple sacrifices, and even through seeking Intercession by their expected Messiah who would arrive in the Clouds.

However we shall later see that Paul of Tarsus latched on to this idea of Atonement by Jesus’ Intercession, and takes it to the extreme of annulling the very Covenant that Repentance is meant to return the Atoned person to. If, during First and Second Temple period, Atonement was meant to enable a Repentant (i.e. Returning to the Commandments) person to be cleansed of guilt, to Paul, Atonement-thru-Jesus shall become a Law in-and-of-itself (i.e. God’s precondition for Salvation) and in fact the ONLY necessary Law, at the expense of all others. Anticipating the imminent culmination of history, Paul decides that the need for striving to meet the Commandments is past; that there is no time left. To Paul, striving to follow the Torah Commandments (especially the ritual ones) is tantamount to an insult to God, that is, a rejection of God’s Gracious offer of Jesus’ intercession on our behalf. Essentially Paul says: “There is no time left for trying to make points thru the Law. But God is offering you a last chance: by confessing Jesus as your savior, God will not only remove your past sins, but He will also remove the burden of your having to continue to strive to abide by the Commandments. On the other hand, if you insist in your arrogance and reject God’s new Gracious gift and you want to rely on the old Law, then you will die
unsaved in your arrogance, because none of your unfulfilled Commandements will be forgiven”.

The next text from “Q” and “Mark” keeps us with Paul for a bit longer in this chapter. This text is the ONE text which appears not only in both “Q” and Mark, but also in Paul: the Eucharist (=Greek, Eu/Good, Charis/Thanksgiving): Mark 14:22-24 [YLT]: And as they are eating, Jesus having taken bread, having blessed, brake, and gave to them, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And having taken the cup, having given thanks, he gave to them, and they drank of it--all; and he said to them, 'This is my blood of the new covenant, which for many is being poured out; (see also Matthew 26:26-28, Luke 22:19-20, and Paul’s 1Corinthians 11:23-29).

We have discussed already the possibility of a Servant’s suffering (more so if to the point of death?) having atonement power. Conceptually speaking this does not go against the Torah. However in the Eucharist passage things get quite paganly graphic: the Messiah’s dead body and his blood as providing the atoning power? Didn’t God tell Abraham (and therefore Israel) that human sacrifice is taboo? And what about consumption of blood (of a human, let alone)? Recall that blood ingestion is not only forbidden to Jews, but to all humans (per God’s Covenant with Noah, after the Flood): Genesis 9:3-4 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. The Eucharist is no longer the paradigm of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. It has lept to the paradigm of a Temple Sacrifice that provides atonement, such as the Yom Kippur yearly atonement ritual where the sacrificial scapegoats are offered and the High Priest provides the yearly atonement blessing.

But if the idea of a human sacrifice that is consumed (blood and all) is so unJewish, how DID this text make it to all four sources (Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke)? A Christian apologist could argue that it was originally authentically captured as part of a early oral tradition or an early written apostolic layer of “Q” and from there known to Paul and (later) to Mark (and subsequently to Matthew and Luke). This is unlikely, since we also know that, separate from this eucharist discussion, Paul makes no use in his epistles of any text from “Q”. In fact, Paul gives us the answer: he tells us that he received it, not from the Apostles, not from any written or oral tradition, but directly from “the risen Lord”: 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 [YLT] For I--I received from the Lord that which also I did deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was delivered up, took bread, and having given thanks, he brake, and said, 'Take ye, eat ye, this is my body, that for you is being broken; this do ye--to the remembrance of me.' In like manner also the cup after the supping, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do ye, as often as ye may drink it --to the remembrance of me'.

From Paul’s letter, how did it make its way into Mark, Matthew, Luke? One option is that Mark (writing for a gentile audience) picked it up from Paul, and then Matthew and Luke picked it from either Mark or directly from 1Corinthians (Luke probably had access to both). A second option is that the “Q” author(s) picked it up from 1Corinthians, and then on to Mark, Matthew, Luke.
The appearance of the Eucharist in Mark does beg the question: to what extent was “Mark”’s author already starting to pick up Pauline influences? One can also wonder whether the Markan verses that we have traced back to a Suffering Servant view of Jesus, may also be a Pauline influence. If in fact the Eucharist, and perhaps even the idea of Jesus as a Servant whose Suffering enables him to intercede for atonement, were picked up by Mark from Paul, one must still credit Mark for not falling into the anti-Torah doctrine that we shall see in Paul, where Paul’s use of Atonement-by-Jesus’-intercession becomes the anti-thesis of Jesus’ main teaching of “Repent and Return to God’s Commandments”. As we shall also see, Paul’s idea that, with Jesus’ death, humanity is to avail itself of a final and perpetually accessible Atonement Sacrifice is diametrically opposed to James’ (Jesus’ brother) teachings of continued reliance and commitment to the Torah Commandments, including the ritual aspects such as Immersion and Temple sacrifices.

When and Where would the Kingdom come?

The timing when Jesus expected God’s Rule to be ushered in was imminent: Mark 14:25 (also in Luke 22:18 and Matt. 26:29) : Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

This imminently arriving Kingdom of God was to be here on earth, a Kingdom to last one thousand years. Eusebius (dismissively) tells us that Papias, who wrote around 130CE and claimed having met the apostle John and other followers, recorded this:

Historia Ecclesiastica 3.39 : 11. The same writer [Papias] gives also other accounts which he says came to him through unwritten tradition, certain strange parables and teachings of the Saviour, and some other more mythical things. 12. To these belong his statement that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth. I suppose he got these ideas through a misunderstanding of the apostolic accounts, not perceiving that the things said by them were spoken mystically in figures. 13. For he appears to have been of very limited understanding, as one can see from his discourses. But it was due to him that so many of the Church Fathers after him adopted a like opinion, urging in their own support the antiquity of the man; as for instance Irenæus and any one else that may have proclaimed similar views.

To summarize, as with John the Baptist, Jesus’ work focused on ushering in God’s Kingdom and bringing an end to Israel’s oppression, teaching Repentance and priority on Love of God, and Love of neighbor (two commandments which he deemed most important; not unlike the prophets Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah), while at the same time disacknowledging the authority of Rome and its priestly and kingly puppets (i.e. the High-Priesthood of Ananias bar Seth’s clan, and the kingship of the Herodian clan). When Jesus died, as recorded in “oldest Mark” (written in early 70’sCE), his followers reported that three days later his physical body was gone. As we shall see in the next
chapter, Jesus’ followers, led by Jesus’ brother James, expected his imminent return and, with that, the advent of the Kingdom of God (and possibly the fulfillment of Jesus’ role as Davidic Messiah).

With the exception of the eucharist ritual (which we have discussed as a probable Pauline addition) what is very clear is that the record of what Jesus said and did, according to all three sources (“Q”, “oldest Mark”, and Paul’s scant historical data points) gives us a very Jewish Jesus:

- There is no instance of Jesus presenting himself to Israel as “God incarnate” (as we will find embryonically in Paul’s letters and then fully developed in John’s Gospel).
- Both Mark and Paul present Jesus as having some type of extra-special soul, which is quite consistent with Jewish messianic expectations such as those found in Daniel’s “Son of Adam” vision. Mark presents a tradition whereby Jesus is invaded by a Holy Spirit at Baptism and acknowledged thus by the multitude with him. Paul on the other hand speculates that Jesus has a pre-existent cosmic soul from birth.
- None of them goes as far as presenting a virgin birth. They all matter-of-factly accept the physical Jesus as a man born according to the flesh, just like we would expect the Davidic Messiah to be born.
- There is also no instance of Jesus telling Israel that the Torah Commandments have in any way been superceded by “confessing Jesus as savior” (such a concept is presented by Paul and he does so as Paul’s own teaching, never ascribing that teaching to Jesus. It pervades Paul’s corpus as well as other later NT books such as John’s Gospel and the “Epistle to Hebrews”). Quite the contrary, in “Q” and “oldest Mark”, Jesus’ injunction to his people is urgently stressing the need to Return to God’s Torah Commandments in order to attain Salvation.
- In “Q” and “oldest Mark” there is not the anti-semitism (call it anti-Judaism if you like) that we find in Paul (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 2:10-16) and later NT texts like John’s Gospel and the “Epistle to Hebrews”. Even in the Markan incident where a crowd before Pilate claims for Jesus’ crucifixion, Mark is clear to note that it is the crowd that had been brought in, and incited by, the High-Priest Joseph bar Qaiaphas.
- Jesus is not the super-confident self-glorying Jesus (as in John’s Gospel), but rather a holy man and his Torah oriented teaching, who, upon having tried to usher in God’s rule on earth, exhausts his life on a Roman cross, exclaiming in pained and resigned exasperation: “My God My God, Why have you forsaken me?”. a man who dies thinking that he has failed!
- Both Paul and Oldest Mark allude to a miraculous event after Jesus’ death: the advent of the resurrection of the dead, a very Jewish concept (although the Sadducees would not agree so). In Oldest Mark this is limited (the body is simply missing, no appearances); in Paul’s letters Paul alludes to appearances by Jesus to his disciples.

**Jesus’ origins**
No account on Jesus would be complete without a discussion on his origins. We will touch on two topics: place of birth and parentage.

The two most basic credentials that the Davidic messiah must fulfill at birth are: He needs to be, not only of the tribe of Judah, but specifically a descendant (patrilineally) of King David; and he needs to be born in Bethlehem:

- 2 Samuel 7:1-29  
  11 YH-H declares to you [David] that YH-H will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. 15 But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

- Jeremiah 23 tells us: 5 The days are surely coming, says YH-H, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "YH-H is our righteousness." 7 Therefore, the days are surely coming, says YH-H, when it shall no longer be said, "As YH-H lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt," 8 but "As YH-H lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them." Then they shall live in their own land.

- Micah 5:2 tells us: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

Looking at our oldest sources (Paul’s letters, “oldest Mark”, “Q”) there is no indication whatsoever that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Neither Paul nor “Q” make mention of a place of origin. Mark introduces Jesus thus: “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was Immersed by John in the Jordan”, but no mention of a birthplace (one could argue that if he was Judean (that is, coming from Bethlehem) and not Gallilean (i.e. from Nazareth), Mark would have taken the effort to note it. Otherwise, why risk that the reader go away with the impression that Jesus was a native of Nazareth?

How about parentage?

Paul has the following to say: Romans 1:1-4  
1 Paul, a servant[a] of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, 3 the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was
declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Again in Romans, Paul emphasizes Jesus’ lineage from David. Quoting Isaiah, he says: Romans 15:12 And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope.”

Mark’s testimony is less direct. We do find a couple of instances where Jesus is indeed associated in connection to David or David’s soon-to-be-restored kingship:

Mark 10: 46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” 48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 49 Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. 51 “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” 52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Mark 11:1-15: 1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' " 4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! " "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" 10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" 11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Our next Markan reference in fact opens the question on Jesus’ lineage:
Mark 6:1-3 : Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him.
If this is to be a solid affirmation on Davidic ancestry, Mark certainly doesn’t make a strong case for it. In fact, in those days a reference to someone without stating the paternal line could be easily taken to imply that the father was unknown.

What he have in summary is Paul’s and Mark’s understanding that Jesus was (or understood himself to be) a descendant of David; yet neither is categorically strong in getting to the evidence. What is clear is that in neither of our three oldest sources (Paul, “Q”, oldest Mark) is there any inkling of a virgin birth.

Eventually we will see the nativity stories of “Matthew” and “Luke”, both written after 75CE. Although they disagree with each other in the details, both stories go to great lengths at establishing the place (Bethlehem) and nature (virginal) of Jesus’ birth. Because their stories are so different in the details, it is clear that they wrote separately from each other. Nevertheless, by the time they wrote, ie between 75 and 90CE, the stories about Jesus’ nativity were sufficiently known, that both of them picked them up. Matthew and Luke did not invent “Bethlehem as the place of birth” nor did they invent the virgin birth idea. Not only was the virgin birth story a early development (no later than the seventies’ CE), but it was strong enough that we shall find it in non-Christian communities. The Nazarenes (of which much more later) certainly preserved it. Eventually it even made its way to Islam. On the other hand, it likely did not develop before the sixties (when Paul wrote his last letters), otherwise Paul (who loves the concept of a cosmic Christ) would have made wide use of it. Instead he is quite matter-of-fact about Jesus’ provenance: “descended from David, according to the flesh”.

So, what was it about Jesus’ parentage that enables Paul to say “descended from David, according to the flesh” and Mark to say “the son of Mary” and “son of David”, and yet Matthew and Luke found it necessary to incorporate the virgin birth into their gospels?

What you are already thinking is also hinted at in John’s gospel. John, who knows nothing of a virgin birth, has the episode where Jesus confronts his naysayers and calls them “children of the devil”. Their reply ? John 8:41 : “We are not children of adultery” !! The idea that Jesus could have been an illegitimate child was strong, as evidenced by the fact that both virgin birth narratives (written separately) include the mention about Joseph being ready to cast Mary aside for adultery.

Other polemical sources also raised their voice against Mary’s venerable motherhood. Approximately in 180CE, Greek philosopher (and anti-Christian polemicist) Celsus (Kelsos) wrote the following (which has been preserved in Origen’s “Contra Celsum”, written in 248 CE, Book 1: 32) : [Celsus has said]: But let us now return to where the Jew is introduced, speaking of the mother of Jesus, and saying that "when she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera."  Likewise (although significantly later in time) we have rabbinical anti-christian polemical sources referring to Mary as having had an unmarried relationship to a ‘Panthera’. Whether these sources used the well-known quote from Celsus, or are a independent tradition, we do not know.
There is no precedent whatsoever in Jewish tradition of anyone who is conceived supernaturally (except for Adam and Eve). It is certainly possible that between the late sixties and early eighties Jesus’ followers invented the story of the virgin birth, to counter what must have been a very strong allegation that Mary had conceived illegitimately. If so, it was a extremely desperate measure, for it presents another (much larger) issue: Remember that tribal “membership” is derived patrilineally. And the Messiah must belong to the tribe of Judah and specifically be a descendant of David. If Jesus’ father does not belong to Judah, Jesus can not belong to Judah, let alone belong to David’s tribal lineage.

As we shall later see, the two main inheritors of the original Jesus movement, that is, the Ebionites, and the Nazoreans (aka Nazarenes) landed on opposite sides of the debate: for the Ebionites, Jesus is a fully human individual who is given the quality of “Messiah” at his Baptism; for the Nazarenes, Jesus is supernatural from his birth (a virgin birth).

Perhaps the Nazarene ideas on Jesus are what influenced Arabian thinking thru the seventh century, thru the composition of the Quran, which also subscribes to the virgin birth, and consistently refers to Jesus as “Jesus son of Mary”.
Chapter Note 1. The Testimonium Flavianum.

Josephus wrote his Antiquities of the Jews in the early 90’s CE. In Book 18 of the received text (preserved over the centuries by Christian copyists) we find this “testimony” on Jesus:

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Ch 3, section 3:

Now there was about this time Iesous Ἰησοῦς, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works -- a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ Χριστός; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of the Christians, Χριστιανῶν so named from him, are not extinct to this day.

Strangely, no church father before Eusebius (wrote ca. 324 CE) has any awareness of the so-called Testimonium. Melito of Sardis (died ca. 180), Theophilus of Antioch (died ca. 185), Irenaeus of Lyons (died ca. 202), Minucius Felix (active in the late 2nd or first half of the 3rd century), Clement of Alexandria (died 215), Tertullian (died after 220), Julius Africanus (died ca. 250), Pseudo-Justin (probably active shortly after Africanus), Hippolytus of Rome (died ca. 235), Origen (died ca. 254) and Cyprian of Carthage (died ca. 258), Methodius of Olympus (died ca. 311), Arnobius the Elder (died ca. 305) and Lactantius (died ca. 320). All these 14 Fathers of the Church were most likely familiar with Josephus’ writings, and many quoted several passages from these, however, without referring to the Testimonium.

Heinz Schreckenberg points out (Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter, 1972, p. 70 ff) the following Christian Church Fathers living before Eusebius all being familiar with Josephus yet neither of them mentioning Josephus having a reference to Jesus: Pseudo-Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, Minucius Felix, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Methodius of Olympus, and Pseudo-Eustathius (who however, wrote about the year 400).

The above Church Fathers are not only familiar with Josephus. They actively quote from Josephus’ accounts of Jewish calamities to advocate their points of view (such as “God brought the calamities as punishment to the Jews for having Jesus crucified”). It is impossible, had it existed in their versions of Antiquities, that they would have ignored the Testimonium, which (accurately) calls out the Jewish leadership for their role in Jesus’ death.

Let’s take a case in point, Origen and his treaty against anti-Christian Greek Philosopher Celsus (wrote ca. 170 CE). Firstly, Celsus makes extensive use of Josephus to argue in favor of the antiquity of Judaism (as opposed to Christianity, who Celsus accuses of being a invention). Celsus could have never utilized Josephus to further his anti-Christian argument, if his copy of Josephus had the Testimonium having a reference to Jesus: Pseudo-Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, Minucius Felix, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Methodius of Olympus, and Pseudo-Eustathius (who however, wrote about the year 400).

By the same token, Origen in responding to Celsus, would have not missed the opportunity to call out the Testimonium as evidence that Jesus existed and was crucified under Pilate. Instead, Origen DOES use Josephus, but he calls out Josephus’ references to John the Baptist and “James brother of Jesus, called Christ”: “I would like to say to Celsus, who represents the Jew as accepting somehow John as a
Baptist, who baptized Jesus, that the existence of John the Baptist, baptizing for the remission of sins, is related by one who lived no great length of time after John and Jesus. For in the 18th book of his Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and as promising purification to those who underwent the rite. Now this writer, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless—being, although against his will, not far from the truth—that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ),--the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice. (Origen, Contra Celsus 1:47). (As will be discussed in the chapter on James, Origen alludes to Josephus assigning James’ death as the cause of the Temple destruction. The received text of Antiquities has an extensive reference to James, however does not assign James’ death as the cause of the destruction of the Temple. Has that reference been removed from our Josephus received text?

The text surrounding the Testimonium in the received text of Josephus’ “Antiquities of the Jews” is also of interest in that the Testimonium seems oddly inserted between what should have been a continuous account of calamities occurring during the procuratorship of Pilate. Before the Testimonium, Josephus concludes the preceding paragraph thus: ‘”...and since the people were unarmed, and were caught by men prepared for what they were about, there were a great number of them slain by this means, and others of them ran away wounded. And thus an end was put to this sedition.” And likewise, immediately after the Testimonium, Josephus begins thus: “About the same time also another sad calamity put the Jews into disorder”...

Strange also are the two calamitous accounts which occur immediately after the Testimonium:
- each involve a woman (Paulina first, then Fulvia) whose husband’s name is Saturninus, and each Saturninus has the ear of Tiberius, and in both cases Tiberius orders a disproportionate action, and
- they both take place in Rome (not Judea), and
- they both take place chronologically outside the times that Josephus is supposedly recounting, that is, Pilate’s procuratorship (which took place from 26 to 36 CE). Tiberius' actions to destroy the Isis temple (the “Paulina incident” here) and his expulsion of the Jews from Rome (the “Fulvia incident” here) occurred ca 19CE, not during Pilate’s procuratorship. It would seem that the Paulina and Fulvia accounts are conflated (both have a Saturninus to accuses his wife’s outrage to Tiberius, with Tiberius taking disproportionate action) and may be insertions as they are out of place thematically (ie. unrelated to Pilate’s procuratorship) and chronologically (they occurred ca. 19CE). After the Paulina & Fulvia accounts, the Antiques text resumes telling the calamities that occurred during Pilate’s procuratorship. For the full text, see Chapter Note 1B.

At any rate, only starting with Eusebius (Eusebius quotes the Testimonium in three of his extant works: the Demonstration of the Gospel 3.5.106, the Ecclesiastical History 1.11.8, and the Theophany 5.44.) do we see the witnesses to the Testimonium. It would appear that Eusebius invented the Testimonium, and copyists of Josephus after Eusebius began inserting the Testimonium into Josephus. Eusebius was Bishop of Caesarea and was powerfully aligned with emperor Constantine. Copies of Josephus would have been very expensive to make (ie. mainly possible with imperial funds). It is entirely plausible that it is after Rome’s acceptance of Christianity that we see the propagation of Josephus with the Testimonium.

Some pre-Eusebius copies of Josephus’ Antiquities did survive long enough to be quoted by post-Eusebius Church Fathers, and hence we also see some post-Eusebius Church Fathers quoting Josephus yet not taking advantage of the (probably absent from their copies of Antiquities) Testimonium: neither John Chrysostom (died ca. 407) nor the Christian historian and theologian Paulus Orosius (died ca. 420), nor Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia (died ca. 428) nor Bishop Augustine of Hippo (died ca. 430) mention the Testimonium. They all quote from Josephus and they would have had good opportunities and reasons to avail themselves of a Jewish — and thus a non-Christian — testimony from Josephus.
A case in point: John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople and rabid anti-Jew, quotes from *Antiquities* extensively, and at one point has the following to say about Josephus’ account of the calamitous Jewish War: “For neither can any one say that the man was a believer and, in order to establish Christ’s words, has exaggerated the tragical history. For indeed he was both a Jew, and a determined Jew, and very zealous, and among them that lived after Christ’s coming.” (John Chrysostom, Homily 76 on Matthew). Obviously John Chrysostom could not have said any of this if the kind words of the *Testimonium* had been in front of him. He likely had a pre-Eusebius copy of the Antiquities.

A couple of additional points (also against Josephan origin of the received text):

First:
Josephus was a Jewish general during the war with Rome. When defeat in Galilee was unavoidable, he surrendered to the Romans and gave his services to their general (future emperor Vespasian). One of the schemes used by Josephus to save his own life was to proclaim Vespasian Messiah. Josephus wrote his works under the patronage of Vespasian (he even adopted Vespasian’s family surname, Flavius). The most unlikely thing for Josephus to do would be to insult his patron (and savior) Vespasian by writing that a insurrectionist called Jesus was the actual Messiah. Josephus himself documents how he proclaims Vespasian as Messiah:

Josephus, Jewish War 6.312-313

What did the most to induce the Jews to start this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth. The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea.

Incidentally, the idea that Vespasian was the Messiah foretold by the Jewish scriptures was a widely held view in Rome. The Roman authors Suetonius and Tacitus give the same interpretation of the prophecy, probably using the same source (someone other than Josephus?):

Tacitus, Histories 5.13 : The majority [of the Jews] were convinced that the ancient scriptures of their priests alluded to the present as the very time when the Orient would triumph and from Judaea would go forth men destined to rule the world. This mysterious prophecy really referred to Vespasian and Titus, but the common people, true to the selfish ambitions of mankind, thought that this exalted destiny was reserved for them, and not even their calamities opened their eyes to the truth.

Suetonius, Life of Vespasian 4.5 : There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated for men coming from Judaea to rule the world. This prediction, referring to the emperor of Rome - as afterwards appeared from the event - the people of Judaea took to themselves.

Second:
If Josephus were providing his readers an account of Jesus, the absolute minimum that he would have wanted to explain would have been: what was the charge against this man? He would have done that EVEN if Josephus had had a good disposition towards Jesus (as he has towards John Baptist and James Brother of Jesus). All subsequent historians explain to the reader WHAT he is charged with, namely for generating insurrectionist activity against Rome. (e.g., Tacitus: for creating “a most mischiefive superstition”; Suetonius: for being the “instigation” of “constant disturbances” by the Jews of Rome). But there is none of that in the *Testimonium*. It certainly fits Eusebius’ (and Paul’s, as we shall see) master narrative: that Jesus was put to death “at the instigation of Jews”, without even a rational case. And it certainly would go against Eusebius’ narrative if Josephus’ text were to say “he was crucified for insurrection against Rome, as he was trying to become King of the Jews, disacknowledging the Emperor”.

Ken Olson, in *A Eusebian Reading of the Testimonium Flavianum* (http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5871) has made a analysis of the *Testimonium* wording
that appears in the Greek received texts of *Antiquities* and concluded that the language is extensively Eusebian (ie., key Greek phrases used in the *Testimonium* are also in use by Eusebius throughout his works).

The Testimonium itself reaks with themes that were raging during the time of Eusebius. Recall that Eusebius was the most critical partner to emperor Constantine in enabling the standardization of Christian dogma, to form what would become Constantinian “orthodoxy” throughout the empire. Key topics that were raging among Christians of the time were things like “how human was Jesus” and “how do we know that he was more than just any man”. Most Jews, Josephus included, would not require the Messiah to perform miracles. Most Jews, Josephus included, would never bother to discuss the Messianic status of a dead person who did not achieve the Kingdom of God here on Earth. But the Testimonium strives to prove precisely these things about Jesus. It even invokes almost verbatim the Pauline formula of 1Corinthians (15:4 ...*that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*), including lock-stock-and-barrel the faux pas that: there ARE no Jewish scriptures predicting the Messiah dying and resurrecting.

For completeness, let us provide the texts where Eusebius “quotes” Josephus. They are almost identical to the received Greek text of *Antiquities*.

The oldest manuscript that we have is the Latin translation by Jerome in De viris illustribus (On illustrious men), written ca. 392 CE, dating to the sixth or seventh century; thus said manuscript is several centuries older than our earliest Greek manuscripts of Book 18 of Josephus’ Antiquities and of the books by Eusebius where he “quotes” the Testimonium.

Jerome’s rendering of Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Ch 3, section 3, follows (it is probably taken from Eusebius’ Historia Ecclesiastica, since Jerome tells us in *De Viris* that he is making extensive use of Eusebius):

De Viris Illustribus (On Illustrius Men), Ch 13.14: (Translation: Ben C. Smith, Text Excavation, The Testimonium Flavianum)

*In the eighth book of his Antiquities he most openly acknowledges that Christ was slain by the Pharisees on account of the greatness of his miracles, that John the Baptist was truly a prophet, and that Jerusalem was destroyed because of the murder of James the apostle. He wrote also concerning the Lord after this fashion:*

At the same time there was Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is proper to say that he was a man; for he was an accomplisher of marvelous works and a teacher of those who freely receive true things; he also had very many followers, as many from the Jews as from the gentiles, and *he was believed to be Christ*. When by the envy of our principal ones Pilate had affixed him to a cross, those who had first loved him nevertheless persevered {in the faith}; for he appeared to them on the third day living; many things, both these and other marvelous things, are in the songs of the prophets who made predictions about him. Even until today the race of Christians, having obtained the word from him, is not extinct.

The Testimonium In Jerome’s original Latin:

*Eodem tempore fuit Iesus, sapiens vir, si tamen virum eum oportet dicere; erat enim mirabilium patrator operum et doctor eorum qui libenter vera suscipiunt; plurimos quoque tam de ludentis quam de gentilibus habit sectatores, et credebatur esse Christus. cumque invidia nostrorum principum cruci eum Pilatus adfixisset, nihilominus qui primum dilexerant perseverarunt (in fide); apparuit enim eis tertia die vivens; multa et haec et alia mirabilia carminibus prophetarum de eo vaticinantibus. et usque hodie Christianorum gens ab hoc sortita vocabulum non defect.*

The received Greek texts of Eusebius’ references to the *Testimonium* follow:

Demonstration of the Gospel (written ca. 311 CE) Book 3, Chapter 5 (Against those that disbelieve the Account of Our Saviour’s Miracles given by His Disciples.), Section 106
Their evidence then may be considered sufficient about our Saviour. And here it will not be inappropriate for me to make use of the evidence of the Hebrew Josephus as well, who in the eighteenth chapter of The Archaeology [Antiquities] of the Jews, in his record of the times of Pilate, mentions our Saviour in these words:

"And Jesus arises at that time, a wise man, if it is befitting to call him a man. For he was a doer of no common works, a teacher of men who reverence truth. And he gathered many of the Jewish and many of the Greek race. This was Christus; and when Pilate condemned him to the Cross on the information of our rulers, his first followers did not cease to revere him. For he appeared to them the third day alive again, the divine prophets having foretold this, and very many other things about him. And from that time to this the tribe of the Christians has not failed."

If, then, even the historian's evidence shows that He attracted to Himself not only the twelve Apostles, nor the seventy disciples, but had in addition many Jews and Greeks, He must evidently have had some extraordinary power beyond that of other men. For how otherwise could He have attracted many Jews and Greeks, except by wonderful miracles and unheard-of teaching? And the evidence of the Acts of the Apostles goes to show that there were many myriads of Jews who believed Him to be the Christ of God foretold by the prophets. And history also assures us that there was a very important Christian Church in Jerusalem, composed of Jews, which existed until the siege of the city under Hadrian. The bishops, too, who stand first in the line of succession there are said to have been Jews, whose names are still remembered by the inhabitants. So that thus the whole slander against His disciples is destroyed, when by their evidence, and apart also from their evidence, it has to be confessed that many myriads of Jews and Greeks were brought under His yoke by Jesus the Christ of God through the miracles that He performed.

Historia Ecclesiastica (written ca. 324 CE) 1,11.7-9:

7. After relating these things concerning John [the Baptist], he [Josephus] makes mention of our Saviour in the same work, in the following words:

"And there lived at that time Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be proper to call him a man. For he was a doer of wonderful works, and a teacher of such men as receive the truth in gladness. And he attached to himself many of the Jews, and many also of the Greeks. He was the Christ. 8. When Pilate, on the accusation of our principal men, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him in the beginning did not cease loving him. For he appeared unto them again alive on the third day, the divine prophets having told these and countless other wonderful things concerning him. Moreover, the race of Christians, named after him, continues down to the present day."

9. Since an historian, who is one of the Hebrews themselves, has recorded in his work these things concerning John the Baptist and our Saviour, what excuse is there left for not convicting them of being destitute of all shame, who have forged the acts against them? But let this suffice here.

Theophania (written between 324 and 337 CE) 5.43-45

(Translated by Samuel Lee into English from a Syriac translation from the Greek, Cambridge University Press, 1853; Digitized by Roger Pearse, http://www.tertullian.org/fathers ):

43...There is nevertheless, nothing to prohibit our availing ourselves, even the more abundantly, of the Hebrew witness Josephus; who, in the Eighteenth Book of his Antiquities of the Jews, writing the things that belonged to the times of Pilate, commemorates our Saviour in these words: --

(The testimony) of Josephus respecting the Christ:

44. " At this period then was Jesus, a wise man, if it be right to call Him a man; for He was the doer of wonderful works, and the teacher of those men who, with pleasure, received Him in truth. And He brought together many (both) of the Jews, and many of the profane (Gentiles). And this was the Messiah (Christ). And, when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal ancient men among ourselves, laid on Him the punishment of the Cross, those who formerly loved Him were not reduced to silence. For He appeared again to them, on the third day, alive: things which,
with many others, the Prophets had said respecting Him: so that from thence, and even until now, the race of the Christians has not been wanting to Him."

45. If therefore, as (this) author [Josephus] attests of Him, He was the doer of wonderful works, and that He made His Disciples,--not only the twelve Apostles, or the seventy Disciples, but also attached to Himself,--myriads of others both of the Jews and Gentiles; it is clear, that He possessed something excellent beyond the rest of mankind. For, How could He have otherwise attached to Himself the many, both of the Jews and Gentiles, unless He had made use of miracles and astonishing deeds, and of doctrines (till then) unknown? The Book of the Acts of the Apostles also attests, that there were many thousands of the Jews, who were persuaded that He was that Christ of God, who had been preached of by the Prophets. It is also on record, that there was a great Church of Christ at Jerusalem; which had been collected from among the Jews, even to the times of its reduction by Hadrian. The first Bishops too who were there, are said to have been, one after another, fifteen (in number), who were Jews; the names of whom are published to the men of that place, even until now. So that by these, every accusation against the Disciples may be undone; since, what was prior to them, and independent of their testimony, these attest of Him, (viz.), that He, the Christ of God, did by means of these wondrous works which He performed, reduce many, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, beneath His power.

Writing circa 370 or 375 CE, Pseudo-Hegesippus, despite using the Testimonium as a polemic for the divinity of Christ, never notes that Josephus called Jesus "the Christ." (in fact calls him a non-believer!):

_De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae_ (On the destruction of the city of Jerusalem) Book 2 Chapter 12:

They were suffering the punishments for their crimes, those who, after having crucified Jesus, the arbiter of divine affairs, then were also persecuting his disciples. For many Jews and even more Gentiles believed in him and were attracted by his teaching of morals and performance of works beyond human capability. Not even his death put an end to their faith and love, but rather it increased their devotion. And so they brought in murderous bands and conducted the originator of life to Pilatus to be killed, they began to press the reluctant judge. In which however Pilatus is not absolved [non excusator Pilatus], but the madness of the Jews is piled up, because he was not obliged to judge, whom not at all guilty he had arrested, nor to double the sacrilege to this murder, that by those he should be killed who had offered himself to redeem and heal them. Of this the Jews themselves give the testimony, as appears by Josephus, the writer of their history, who says thus: 'That there was at that time a wise man, if (says he) it be lawful to have him called a man, a doer of wonderful works, who appeared to his disciples after the third day from his death, alive again according to the writings of the prophets, who foretold these and innumerable other miraculous events concerning him: from whom began the congregation of Christians, even infiltrating every race of humans, nor does there remain any nation in the Roman world that is without his religion. If the Jews do not believe us, they might believe one of their own. Thus spoke Josephus, whom they esteem a very great man, and nevertheless so devious in mind was he who spoke the truth about him, that he did not believe even his own words. Although he spoke for the sake of fidelity to history because he thought it wrong to deceive, he did not believe because of his hardness of heart and faithless intention. Nevertheless it does not prejudice truth because he did not believe, rather it adds to the testimony because, unbelieving and unwilling he did not deny it. In this the eternal power of Jesus Christ shone forth, that even the leading men of the synagogue who delivered him up to death acknowledged him to be God [his divinity].
(Also: Translation by Wade Blocker, [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/hegesippus_02_book2.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/hegesippus_02_book2.htm)).
Obviously Pseudo-Hegesippus quotes liberally. He has rearranged the order of the sentences. However he has preserved all the points made in our other versions, except that there is no rendering of “He was believed to be Christ” or “He was Christ”. However he does say that Josephus was no believer, which would only make sense if his source did not have “He was Christ”, although it could have had “He was believed to be Christ”.

A discovery in the 1970’s by Medieval Arabic literature historian Shlomo Pines, gives us another citation of the Testimonium, which appears in the Chronicle of tenth century scholar Agapius, Melkite Bishop of Hierapolis, quoting from a earlier source (as noted by Alice Whealey in The Testimonium Flavianum in Syriac and Arabic, 2006, Agapius himself mentions that his Chronicle is reliant on a Syriac Chronicle by Theophilus of Edessa; presumably it would have contained a Syriac translation of either one of Eusebius’ three Testimonia or Josephus’):

There was about this time a man called Jesus. His conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from amongst the Jews and the Gentiles became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was possibly the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.

The reader will notice that Agapius' quote does not blame “the principal men amongst us [Jews]” for Jesus' crucifixion. Nor does it state certainly whether Jesus was the Messiah/Christ. It also does not reproduce the last sentence (containing “the tribe of the Christians”). Knowing that Agapius was a 10th century Christian, it is very unlikely that he would have purposely curtailed these three sentences if they indeed had been present in his source. Whether his Syriac source was Christian (likely) or Muslim, it is also unlikely that the source would have curtailed a reference to Jesus being Messiah (as Islam, like Christianity, also considers Jesus as Messiah). There would appear to be a stronger case for “he was possibly the Messiah” of Agapius’ source being authentic, rather than the “he was the Christ” of the Greek textus receptus of Josephus and Eusebius. Also note that “he was possibly the Messiah” is closer to “he was believed to be Christ” found in our earlier-quoted oldest Testimonium manuscript: Jerome’s Latin translation in De Viris Illustribus (likely made from Eusebius’ Historia Ecclesiastica which Jerome uses extensively in that chapter of De Viris Illustribus).

Michael the Syrian, Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch from 1166 to 1199, in his Chronicles, also provides a Testimonium, from a Syriac source (Shlomo Pines, An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its Implications, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971; See also Alice Whealey, The Testimonium Flavianum in Syriac and Arabic, 2008, Cambridge University Press, for a discussion on the commonality of this source and Agapius’):

The writer Josephus also says in his work on the Institutions of the Jews, “In these times there was a wise man named Jesus, if it is fitting for us to call him a man. For he was a worker of glorious deeds and a teacher of truth. Many from among the Jews and the nations became his disciples. He was thought to be the Messiah. But not according to the testimony of the principle men of our nation. Because of this, Pilate condemned him to the cross, and he died. For those who had loved him did not cease to love him. He appeared to them alive after three days. For the prophets of God had spoken with regard to him of such marvelous things as these. And the people of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared till this day.

Pines and Whealy have pointed out that the “But not” that precedes “according to the testimony…” is a copyist error due to the similarity of law (but not) and leh (upon) in Syriac script. Correcting this, we render:

The writer Josephus also says in his work on the Institutions of the Jews, “In these times there was a wise man named Jesus, if it is fitting for us to call him a man. For he was a worker of glorious deeds and a teacher of truth. Many from among the Jews and the nations became his disciples. He was thought to be the Messiah. Upon the testimony of the principle men of our nation, Pilate condemned him to the cross, and he died. For those who had loved him did not cease to love him. He appeared to them alive after three days. For the prophets of God had spoken with regard to him of
such marvelous things as these. And the people of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared till this day.

Douglas Glabi in http://www.purplemotes.net/2014/04/20/syriac-chronicle-michael-the-great/
has this instead for Michael’s rendition:

In his Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus says, “There was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works — a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and the gentiles. It is believed that he was the Christ, and not as the leaders of the peoples say. When Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, condemned him to the cross, those who loved him from the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day.”

If Eusebius forged the Testimonium, perhaps his original wording had “he was believed to be the Messiah”, as we have in the oldest manuscript (from Jerome), and the readings from PseudoHegesippus, and from Agapius and from Michael the Syrian; and then, over time, the Church Hierarchy decided to “tighten” the text even more towards Church dogma.

One can also posit that such a text with “he was believed to be Christ” or “he was called Christ” (and perhaps other “lighter” language such: as not wondering whether he was a man, or not having the three-day resurrection formula), COULD have reasonably been authored by Josephus and only later tampered with (before, during, or after Eusebius).

- In favor of such a hypothesis we have that, such a version:
  - would be perfectly consistent with (in fact necessary for) the later reference to “James brother of Jesus, so called-Christ”.
  - would be consistent with Origen’s allegations that Josephus made statements that showed him to be a non-believer.

- Against such a hypothesis however would be two obstacles mentioned before:
  - No authors (other than Eusebius) until the late fourth century refer to the Testimonium. This includes authors quite familiar with Josephus.
  - The text provides no idea to the reader on the charges against Jesus.

With the above in mind, the reader will need to decide whether a “lighter” version of the Testimonium could have been authored by Josephus or not.

Chapter Note 1B.


1. BUT now Pilate, the procurator of Judea, removed the army from Cesarea to Jerusalem, to take their winter quarters there, in order to abolish the Jewish laws. So he introduced Caesar’s effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city; whereas our law forbids us the very making of images; on which account the former procurators were wont to make their entry into the city with such ensigns as had not those ornaments. Pilate was the first who brought those images to Jerusalem, and set them up there; which was done without the knowledge of the people, because it was done in the night time; but as soon as they knew it, they came in multitudes to Cesarea, and interceded with Pilate many days that he would remove the images; and when he would not grant their requests, because it would tend to the injury of Caesar, while yet they persevered in their request, on the sixth day he ordered his soldiers to have their weapons privately, while he came and sat upon his judgment-seat, which seat was so prepared in the open place of the city, that it concealed the army that lay ready to oppress them; and when the Jews petitioned him again, he gave
a signal to the soldiers to encompass them routed, and threatened that their punishment should be no less than immediate death, unless they would leave off disturbing him, and go their ways home. But they threw themselves upon the ground, and laid their necks bare, and said they would take their death very willingly, rather than the wisdom of their laws should be transgressed; upon which Pilate was deeply affected with their firm resolution to keep their laws inviolable, and presently commanded the images to be carried back from Jerusalem to Cesarea.

2. But Pilate undertook to bring a current of water to Jerusalem, and did it with the sacred money, and derived the origin of the stream from the distance of two hundred furlongs. However, the Jews were not pleased with what had been done about this water; and many ten thousands of the people got together, and made a clamor against him, and insisted that he should leave off that design. Some of them also used reproaches, and abused the man, as crowds of such people usually do. So he habited a great number of his soldiers in their habit, who carried daggers under their garments, and sent them to a place where they might surround them. So he bid the Jews himself go away; but they boldly casting reproaches upon him, he gave the soldiers that signal which had been beforehand agreed on; who laid upon them much greater blows than Pilate had commanded them, and equally punished those that were tumultuous, and those that were not; nor did they spare them in the least: and since the people were unarmed, and were caught by men prepared for what they were about, there were a great number of them slain by this means, and others of them ran away wounded. And thus an end was put to this sedition.

3. Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

4. About the same time also another sad calamity put the Jews into disorder, and certain shameful practices happened about the temple of Isis that was at Rome. I will now first take notice of the wicked attempt about the temple of Isis, and will then give an account of the Jewish affairs. There was at Rome a woman whose name was Paulina; one who, on account of the dignity of her ancestors, and by the regular conduct of a virtuous life, had a great reputation: she was also very rich; and although she was of a beautiful countenance, and in that flower of her age wherein women are the most gay, yet did she lead a life of great modesty. She was married to Saturninus, one that was every way answerable to her in an excellent character. Decius Mundus fell in love with this woman, who was a man very high in the equestrian order; and as she was of too great dignity to be caught by presents, and had already rejected them, though they had been sent in great abundance, he was still more inflamed with love to her, insomuch that he promised to give her two hundred thousand Attic drachmae for one night's lodging; and when this would not prevail upon her, and he was not able to bear this misfortune in his amours, he thought it the best way to famish himself to death for want of food, on account of Paulina's sad refusal; and he determined with himself to die after such a manner, and he went on with his purpose accordingly. Now Mundus had a freed-woman, who had been made free by his father, whose name was Ide, one skillful in all sorts of mischief. This woman was very much grieved at the young man's resolution to kill himself, (for he did not conceal his intentions to destroy himself from others,) and came to him, and encouraged him by her discourse, and made him to hope, by some promises she gave him, that he might obtain a night's lodging with Paulina; and when he joyfully hearkened to her entreaty, she said she wanted no more than fifty thousand drachmae for the entrapping of the woman. So when she had encouraged the young man, and gotten as much money as she required, she did not take the same methods as had been taken before, because she perceived that the woman was by no means to be tempted by money; but as she knew that she was very much given to the worship of the goddess Isis, she devised the following stratagem: She went to some of Isis's priests, and upon the strongest assurances [of concealment], she persuaded them by words, but chiefly by the offer of money, of twenty-five thousand drachmae in
hand, and as much more when the thing had taken effect; and told them the passion of the young man, and persuaded them to use all means possible to beguile the woman. So they were drawn in to promise so to do, by that large sum of gold they were to have. Accordingly, the oldest of them went immediately to Paulina; and upon his admittance, he desired to speak with her by herself. When that was granted him, he told her that he was sent by the god Anubis, who was fallen in love with her, and enjoined her to come to him. Upon this she took the message very kindly, and valued herself greatly upon this condescension of Anubis, and told her husband that she had a message sent her, and was to sup and lie with Anubis; so he agreed to her acceptance of the offer, as fully satisfied with the chastity of his wife. Accordingly, she went to the temple, and after she had supped there, and it was the hour to go to sleep, the priest shut the doors of the temple, when, in the holy part of it, the lights were also put out. Then did Mundus leap out, (for he was hidden therein,) and did not fail of enjoying her, who was at his service all the night long, as supposing he was the god; and when he was gone away, which was before those priests who knew nothing of this stratagem were stirring, Paulina came early to her husband, and told him how the god Anubis had appeared to her. Among her friends, also, she declared how great a value she put upon this favor, who partly disbelieved the thing, when they reflected on its nature, and partly were amazed at it, as having no pretense for not believing it, when they considered the modesty and the dignity of the person. But now, on the third day after what had been done, Mundus met Paulina, and said, "Nay, Paulina, thou hast saved me two hundred thousand drachmæ, which sum thou sightest have added to thy own family; yet hast thou not failed to be at my service in the manner I invited thee. As for the reproaches thou hast laid upon Mundus, I value not the business of names; but I rejoice in the pleasure I reaped by what I did, while I took to myself the name of Anubis." When he had said this, he went his way. But now she began to come to the sense of the grossness of what she had done, and rent her garments, and told her husband of the horrid nature of this wicked contrivance, and prayed him not to neglect to assist her in this case. So he discovered the fact to the emperor; whereupon Tiberius inquired into the matter thoroughly by examining the priests about it, and ordered them to be crucified, as well as Ide, who was the occasion of their perdition, and who had contrived the whole matter, which was so injurious to the woman. He also demolished the temple of Isis, and gave order that her statue should be thrown into the river Tiber; while he only banished Mundus, but did no more to him, because he supposed that what crime he had committed was done out of the passion of love. And these were the circumstances which concerned the temple of Isis, and the injuries occasioned by her priests. I now return to the relation of what happened about this time to the Jews at Rome, as I formerly told you I would.

5. There was a man who was a Jew, but had been driven away from his own country by an accusation laid against him for transgressing their laws, and by the fear he was under of punishment for the same; but in all respects a wicked man. He, then living at Rome, professed to instruct men in the wisdom of the laws of Moses. He procured also three other men, entirely of the same character with himself, to be his partners. These men persuaded Fulvia, a woman of great dignity, and one that had embraced the Jewish religion, to send purple and gold to the temple at Jerusalem; and when they had gotten them, they employed them for their own uses, and spent the money themselves, on which account it was that they at first required it of her. Whereupon Tiberius, who had been informed of the thing by Saturninus, the husband of Fulvia, who desired inquiry might be made about it, ordered all the Jews to be banished out of Rome; at which time the consuls listed four thousand men out of them, and sent them to the island Sardinia; but punished a greater number of them, who were unwilling to become soldiers, on account of keeping the laws of their forefathers. Thus were these Jews banished out of the city by the wickedness of four men.

Chapter 4 HOW THE SAMARITANS MADE A TUMULT AND PILATE DESTROYED MANY OF THEM; HOW PILATE WAS ACCUSED AND WHAT THINGS WERE DONE BY VITELLIUS RELATING TO THE JEWS AND THE PARTHIANS.

1. BUT the nation of the Samaritans did not escape without tumults. The man who excited them to it was one who thought lying a thing of little consequence, and who contrived every thing so that the multitude might be pleased; so he bid them to get together upon Mount Gerizzim, which is by
them looked upon as the most holy of all mountains, and assured them, that when they were come thither, he would show them those sacred vessels which were laid under that place, because Moses put them there. So they came thither armed, and thought the discourse of the man probable; and as they abode at a certain village, which was called Tirathaba, they got the rest together to them, and desired to go up the mountain in a great multitude together; but Pilate prevented their going up, by seizing upon file roads with a great band of horsemen and foot-men, who fell upon those that were gotten together in the village; and when it came to an action, some of them they slew, and others of them they put to flight, and took a great many alive, the principal of which, and also the most potent of those that fled away, Pilate ordered to be slain.

2. But when this tumult was appeased, the Samaritan senate sent an embassy to Vitellius, a man that had been consul, and who was now president of Syria, and accused Pilate of the murder of those that were killed; for that they did not go to Tirathaba in order to revolt from the Romans, but to escape the violence of Pilate. So Vitellius sent Marcellus, a friend of his, to take care of the affairs of Judea, and ordered Pilate to go to Rome, to answer before the emperor to the accusations of the Jews. So Pilate, when he had tarried ten years in Judea, made haste to Rome, and this in obedience to the orders of Vitellius, which he durst not contradict; but before he could get to Rome Tiberius was dead.
Chapter Note 2: Earliest uses of the term “Christian” (and other terms used to variously denote followers of Jesus).

There is no evidence of the term “Christian” in the three oldest gospel sources: Paul of Tarsus’ letters, “Q” and Mark. Nor does it appear in the canonical Matthew or Luke. In fact, in the entire NT it appears only three times: twice in Acts, and once in 1Peter (a later work?). Acts 11:26 tells us that it was in Antioch of Syria that this term first came to be used (most probably by outsiders) to denote the communities of Jesus-followers (as we shall see, this would have been around 44CE, at the time of the community of diaspora Jews and gentile God-fearers that assembled in Antioch under the joint oversight of James’ emissary Barnabas and Paul of Tarsus). Acts (in 17:28) uses the term a second time, now in the lips of King Herod Agrippa II: “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’” (that event would have happened circa 60-61CE, that is, after Paul is captured, and before Herod Agrippa II was expelled by Jewish revolutionaries at the onset of the Jewish War in 66CE). The third NT use (1Peter 4:16, “If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God”) is likely from after the time of Acts. Besides the NT references, we have four important early references to the term “Christian” (other than Josephu’s):

- Roman historian Tacitus, writing in 116 CE records its usage in the first century: he tells us that Nero in 64CE blamed “the Christians” for the great fire that burned in the city of Rome. Annales XLIV: Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Chrestianos by the populace. Chapter Note 3

- Roman historian Suetonius, writing in 122 CE, also records the punishments inflicted by Nero on the Christians. Further in the section on Nero, Suetonius (as did Tacitus before) reports on Nero’s punishments of a group called “Christians”.

Lives of the Twelve Caesars - Nero 16: Punishment was inflicted on the Christians [afflictis suppliciis christianis], a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.

- We have a reference from a graffito on a wall in Pompeii, preserved for two thousand years, since 79CE, when Mt. Vesuvius erupted and buried the city in ash. The graffito contains the word “Christianos” written in Latin characters, part of a cryptic sentence referring to an individual whose beliefs have been overtaken by the “Christians/Christianos”.

![Graffito in Pompeii](image-url)
Then is a letter from Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bithynia-Pontus (now in northern modern Turkey) to Emperor Trajan around 112 CE, discussing Pliny’s dealings with Christians. The letter, and Trajan’s reply, are the earliest surviving secular documents to describe the emerging Graeco-Roman Christianity in the cities of the empire. The letter (Epistulae X.96) details an account of how Pliny conducted trials of suspected Christians who appeared before him as a result of anonymous accusations and asks for the Emperor’s guidance on how they should be treated. Neither Pliny nor Trajan mention Jesus. Nor do they discuss the crime that the Christians have committed, except for being Christians. Pliny does not associate them with Judaism. It is likely that their “crime” was to belong to a non-sanctioned belief system ("superstitio" in Roman terminology), one that refused allegiance to Roman gods (including at times the emperor). Pliny states that he gives Christians multiple chances to affirm they are innocent and if they refuse three times, they are executed. He states that his investigations have revealed nothing on the Christians’ part but harmless practices and a "depraved, excessive superstition". However, Pliny seems concerned about the rapid spread of this "superstition"; and views Christian gatherings as a potential starting point for sedition. In his reply, Trajan agrees with Pliny’s course of action and gives additional instruction.

From the above sources we can surmise that the term “Christianos” was known in many circles (even popularly known) by the time when Josephus wrote Antiquities. Hence it is not necessarily the case that the last sentence of the Testimonium in the textus receptus should have to be a later Christian interpolation. Rather, in all likelihood, the term “Christian” began as a sarcastic or derogatory slam by opponents in the 40’s CE (such as Antiochene Graeco-Roman pagans and/or diaspora Jews who dismissed Jesus as a failed messianic claimant) and its use spread thus, mainly by outsiders. Since it
does not appear at all in Paul, “Q”, Mark (written ca. 70CE) or Matthew (written ca. 80CE), it is clear that the term was not claimed (or even used) by Jesus or by any type of Jesus-followers in the decades of the 30’s thru 80’s. By the 90’s CE however, the author of Acts is not only aware of its wide usage, but one can even say he now claims it with pride, taking time to recount its inception in Antioch. Subsequent Pauline-school Jesus-followers and authors certainly followed suit.

Now, if none of the various communities of Jesus-followers from the 30’s thru the 80’s claimed the term “Christian” for themselves, are there other terms that some of those communities might have claimed? In the canonical NT sources, we find references to three terms:

“The Way”:

Acts 9:1-2 : 1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to The Way, [της οδού/tes odou or την οδον/ten odon] both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (See also Acts 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Only in Acts do we find the movement referred to thus. Neither Paul’s epistles, nor the oldest Gospel (Mark), nor “Q” have it (except for one indirect reference in Mark 12:14/Mt 22:16/Lu20:21 : Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth...”). It is certainly plausible (probable?) that the community called itself by this name, given the emphasis from both John the Baptist and Jesus on Isaiah’s injunction: “Clear the way for YH-H in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God...”, Isaiah 40:3). On the other hand, only Acts seems to know about it.

“Nazorean/Nazarenes” -

Acts 24:5 (Paul is accused before Roman Procurator Felix) : For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes [Ναζωραιων/Nazoraion].

Mt 2:23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean [ναζωραιος/nazoraios]."

The above are the only two references to this term in the entire canonical NT. None of the oldest portions of the canonical NT (that is, Paul’s epistles, “Q”, and Mark) use it. Although the term “Nazareth” is used 29 times, “Nazoraios” only twice.

We shall later see that the use of “Nazoraios” will resurface in later years (second thru fourth centuries), as a term used by one of the communities descending from these original Jesus people.

“The Poor”:

We shall also see another term come into use in those same later years: “The Poor / Ebionim”. However, the references in the canonical NT are even more sparse: Galatians 2:10 They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor [των πτωχων/ton ptoxon], which was actually what I was eager to do. The term “The Poor” may be a reference to the community in Jerusalem (led by James in those days), or it may simply be the plain use of the word “poor”. The author of James uses the term in a manner that may (or may not) refer to the community of Jesus-followers:

James 2:5-6 Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court?

Given the emphasis in the Torah regarding taking care of the poor, and given Jesus’ own likewise emphasis (e.g. “Blessed are the poor for theirs is the Kingdom...”), it is plausible that the community could have used this term in those early years. Another famous community is also known to have used it: the Essenes who authored the Dead Sea Scrolls.

As we shall see in later chapters, during the second, third, and fourth centuries, the terms “Christian”, “Nazarene”, and “Ebionim” shall be claimed by different groups of Jesus followers, with quite unique and different beliefs. For now, we conclude our brief parenthesis.
Chapter Note 3. Tacitus’ reference.

The manuscript shown is the Second Medicean manuscript, a copy of Tacitus’ Annals, Book 15, Ch 44, containing the reference to Christians. This is the oldest extant manuscript of Tacitus’ Annals, dating from 11th century. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacitus_on_Christ#The_passage_and_its_context.

The manuscript uses 11th century Latin script. Ultraviolet analysis reveals the word “Chrestianos”, where the “e” was subsequently modified by the scribe to a “i”. The spelling of Christians in Acts 11:26 and 26:28 and in 1 Peter 4:16 in the uncial codex Sinaiticus (oldest NT written in Greek) also uses “e” : Xrestianous/χρηστιανοῦς.

Chapter Note 4. Pliny the Younger’s letter to Trajan about handling of Christians in his governorship of Bythinia et Pontus around 112CE. Also Trajan’s reply.
XCVII

To THE EMPEROR TRAJAN

It is my invariable rule, Sir, to refer to you in all matters where I feel doubtful; for who is more capable of removing my scruples, or informing my ignorance? Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to ages, or no distinction is to be observed between the young and the adult; whether repentance entitles them to a pardon; or if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist from his error; whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession are punishable; on all these points I am in great doubt.

In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished: for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction.

There were others also brought before me possessed with the same infatuation, but being Roman citizens, I directed them to be sent to Rome. But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same nature occurred. An anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances: I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them.

Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, uttering imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites: but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighbouring villages and country. Nevertheless, it still seems possible to restrain its progress. The temples, at least, which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred rites, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for the victims, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed if a general pardon were granted to those who shall repent of their error.
You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundtis, in investigating the charges against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Anonymous informations ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age.

Same in original Latin:

C. PLINIUS - TRAiano imperatori

Sollemne est mihi, domine, omnia de quibus dubito ad te referre. Quis enim potest melius vel cunctationem meam regere vel ignorantiam instruere? Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui numquam: ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat aut quaeri. Nec mediocriter haesitavi, sitne aliud quad discrimen aetatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differat; detur paenitentiae venia, an ei, qui omnino Christianus fuit, desisse non prosit; nomen ipsum, si flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohaerentia nominis punitur. Interim, in iis qui ad me tamquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus modum. 3 Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani. Confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi supplicium minutas; perseverantes duci iussi. Neque enim dubitabam, qualemque esset quod faterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexiblem obstinationem debere puniti. 4 Fuerunt alii similis amentiae, quos, quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos. Mox ipso tractatu, ut fieri solet, diffundente se crimine plures species inciderunt. 5 Propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens. Qui negabant esse se Christianos aut fuisse, cum praeeunte me deos appellarent et imaginii tuae, quam propter hoc iusseram cum simulacris numinum afferri, ture ac vino supplicarent, praeterea male dicentem Christo, quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur qui sunt re vera Christiani, dimittendos putavi. 6 Alii ab indice nominati esse se Christianos dixerunt et mox negaverunt; fuisse quidem sed desisse, quidam ante triennium, quidam ante plures annos, non nemo etiam ante viginti. 7 Quique omnes et imaginem tuam deorum simulacrurn venerati sunt et Christo male dixerunt. Affirmabam autem hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suae vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem sequacramento non in seculis alienum obstringere, sed ne furti ne latrocinia ne adulteria committeterent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegaret. Quibus peractis moret sibi desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum mandata tua hetaerias esse vetueram. 8 Quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministrasse dicebantur, quid esset veri, et per tormenta quaerere. Nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam et immoedicam.

9 Ideo dilata cognitione ad consulendum te decucurri. Visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium numerum. Multii enim omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus etiam vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur. Neque civitates tantum, sed vicis etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est; quae videtur siti et corrigi posse. 10 Certe satis constat prope iam desolata templo coepisse celebrari, et sacra sollemnia diu intermessa repeti passimque venire <carnem> victimarum, cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebat. Ex quo facile est opinari, quae turba hominum emendari possit, si sit paenitentiae locus.
TRAIANUS - PLINIO

1 Actum quem debuisti, mi Secunde, in excutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, secutus es. Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest. 2 Conquirendi non sunt; si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt, ita tamen ut, qui negaverit se Christianum esse idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est supplicando dis nostris, quamvis suspectus in praeteritum, veniam ex paenitentia impetret. Sine auctore vero propositi libelli <in> nullo crimine locum habere debent. Nam et pessimi exempli nec nostri saeculi est.
THE FAMILY

Amazingly (and much de-emphasized by normative Christianity thru the centuries) we find that Jesus' immediate family (particularly his siblings and cousins) formed a key part of the leadership of the Jesus movement, especially after Jesus' crucifixion. From the NT we know that Jesus had four brothers named Yaakov (Iakobos in Greek, James in English), Yosef (Joseph, nicknamed Joses), Shimeon (Simon or Simeon), and Yehudah (Jude/Judas; this may also be the same as the one called Judas Thomas, ie Judas the twin, where ‘Thomas’ is Aramaic for 'Twin'). Jesus also had several sisters, including one named Salome.

[Note: the name “James” is English for the Greek “Iakobos”, i.e. the Hebrew “Yaakov”/”Jacob”. All Greek texts say Iakobos. The spelling “James” is a evolution from Yaakov in Hebrew, to Iakobos in Greek, to Giacomus in Latin, to James in English. In Spanish it is Iago (or Sant-Iago and San-Tiago/San-Diego). In French it is Jacques (or Saint-Jacques)].

These are the relevant quotes from the NT:

Mark 6:3: Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" (Same text also copied in Matthew 13:55: Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us?).

Mark 15:40: There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem. When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a
tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

Mark 16:1: And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

Jerome, in his “Pelagians”, Ch3.2, quotes from “a Gospel according to the Hebrews, written in the Chaldaic and Syriac language but with Hebrew letters, and used by the Nazareans, (it is a gospel according to the Apostles, or as many maintain, according to Matthew, which is available in the Library of Caesarea)”’. The quote includes mention of Jesus’ brothers: See, the mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him: John the Baptist baptizes for the remission of sins; Let us go be baptized by him. ……

In his letter to Galatians it is clear that Saul of Tarsus is writing as a contemporary of Jesus' brother James, and refers to him as such:
Galatians 1:18-19: Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Kephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother.

In 1 Corinthians, Saul of Tarsus defends his need to ask for food and drink. In doing so he compares his situation to that of Jesus' apostles, Jesus’ brothers, and Peter/Kephas, all of whom travel with their respective wives: 1Corinthians 9:5 Do we [Barnabas and I, Paul] not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Kephas [Kefas]? Of particular note is that Paul here expects that the Corinthians already are familiar with the fact that Jesus’ brothers along with “the other apostles” and “Kephas” are travelling, i.e., visiting congregations. Where are they going, and who are they visiting? As we shall later see, Paul’s letters tell us (actually angrily complain) that the Jerusalem contingent is visiting assemblies outside the land of Israel (i.e. outside Judea, Samaria, Galilee), including those where Paul is preaching his own message (of “Atonement by faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection”), and they are proclaiming Jesus’ original (very unpauline) message of Repentance, Return to the Commandments, and the imminent advent of God’s Rule. As we shall see these congregations include Antioch of Syria, Corinth, Galatia, Thesalonika (most of the places where Paul writes!). In all likelihood, the Jerusalem contingent of “brothers, the other apostles, and Kephas” are focused on the Jewish communities of the diaspora (which also include God-fearing gentiles associated to them). The epistle written in James’ name opens thus:
James 1:1: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion…
Even if written pseudoepigraphically, the author of “James” reflects the common understanding that James was focused on the Jewish communities, and not just limited to Judea, Galilee, but also abroad.

The family will remain a very important element of the original Jesus movement. As we shall see in the subsequent chapters:
5 - The Family

- Between 33CE and 135CE many of these family members take on the leadership role of the Jesus movement.
- Even beyond 135CE, as late as 240CE, Julius Africanus (quoted by Eusebius) will write about Jesus’ family being known as the “Desposyni” (“relatives of the leader/king”) and keeping records of their genealogy.
AFTER JESUS' DEATH, THE MOVEMENT WAS LED BY HIS FAMILY, STARTING WITH HIS BROTHER YAAKOV HA TSEDEQ ("IAKOBOS IUSTUS" OR "JAMES THE JUST").

Jerome, in De Viris Illustribus (On Illustrious Men) written approx. 380CE, writes the following:

Chapter 2, On James the brother of Jesus:

The Gospel also which is called the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin and which also Origen often makes use of, after the account of the resurrection of the Saviour says, "but the Lord, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from among those that sleep)" and again, a little later, it says "'Bring a table and bread,' said the Lord." And immediately it is added, "He brought bread and blessed and broke and gave to James the Just and said to him, 'my brother eat your bread, for the son of man is risen from among those that sleep.'"

Church historian Eusebius writes, in his History of the Church (written between 300 and 324), about the events related to James. He draws from existent works of Clement of Alexandria, Egypt (from 150 to 215), from Hippolytus (the most important third century theologian of gentile Christianity; lived from approx 170 to 236), and from Hegesippus (Jewish Christian chronicler and historian, born ca 110, died ca 180CE). Eusebius also had access to Josephus' writings. Eusebius tells us the following:

Eusebius, in 'History of the Church', chapter 2.1.2-2.1.4 (including quote from Clement of Alexandria's 'Hypotyposes'/'Outlines'):

2.1.2 Then there was James, who was called the Lord's brother; for he too was named Joseph's son ... This James, whom the people of old called the Just because of his outstanding virtue, was the first, as the records tell us, to be elected to the episcopal throne of the Jerusalem Church. 2.1.3 Clement [of Alexandria], in his "Outlines", book six, puts it as follows: "After the ascension of the savior, Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the son of Zebedee did not claim pre-eminence because the savior had specifically them, but chose James the Just as Bishop of Jerusalem." 2.1.4 In book seven of the same work,
the writer [Clement] makes this further statement: "James the Just, John [the son of Zebedee] and Peter were entrusted by the Lord after his resurrection with the higher knowledge. They imparted it to the other emmisaries [apostolos] , and these emmisaries to the Seventy, one of whom was Barnabas. There were two Jameses: one the Just, who was thrown down from the parapet [of the Temple] and beaten to death with a fuller's club; and the other James who was beheaded." James the Just is also mentioned by Paul when he writes, "Of the other emmisaries I saw no one except James the brother of the Lord."

Eusebius, in 'History of the Church' 2.23.4-2.23.7 (quoting from Hegesippus' 'Memoranda' (dated 150 to 180 CE)):
Control of the church passed together with the apostles, to the brother of the Lord, James, whom every one from the Lord's time until our own has named "The Just", for there were many Iakobos, but this one was holy from birth; he drank no wine or intoxicating liquor and ate no animal food; no razor came near his head; he did not smear himself with oil, and he took no baths. He alone was permitted to enter the Holy Place [Holy of Holies] , for his garments were not of wool but of linen. He used to enter the Sanctuary alone, and was often found on his knees beseeching forgiveness for the people, so much so that his knees became as hard as a camel's, in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. Because of his unsurpassable righteousness he was called 'The Just' and Oblias, or 'Zaddik' and 'Ozleam' ["Bulwark of the people"] fulfilling the declarations of the prophets regarding him. [Editorial: Hegesippus has largely described James here as a Nazirite. See Chapter Note 1, on the definition of Nazirite.]
In the Hebrew Bible, a Nazirite or Nazarite, (in Hebrew left-to-right: נזיר, nazir), refers to one who voluntarily took a vow described in Numbers 6:1–21. The proper noun "Nazarite" comes from the Hebrew word nazir meaning "consecrated" or "separated". This vow required the man or woman to:

- Abstain from wine, wine vinegar, grapes, raisins, intoxicating liquors, vinegar distilled from such substances, and eating or drinking any substance that contains any trace of grapes.
- Refrain from cutting the hair on one's head; but to allow the locks of the head's hair to grow.
- Not to become impure by corpses or graves, even those of family members.
  [editorial: could this also apply to animals, thus causing the nazirite to avoid eating meat ?].

After following these requirements for a designated period of time (which would be specified in the individual's vow), the person would immerse in a mikveh and make three offerings: a lamb as a burnt offering (olah), a ewe as a sin-offering (hatat), and a ram as a peace offering (shelamim), in addition to a basket of unleavened bread, grain offerings and drink offerings, which accompanied the peace offering. They would also shave their head in the outer courtyard of the Temple (the Jerusalem Temple for Judaism) and then place the hair on the same fire as the peace offering. (Numbers 6:18)

The Nazirite is described as being "holy unto YHWH" (Numbers 6:8), yet at the same time must bring a sin offering. This has led to divergent approaches to the Nazirite in the Talmud, and later authorities, with some viewing the Nazirite as an ideal, and others viewing him as a sinner.

In Modern Hebrew the word "nazir" is commonly used for monks, both Christian and Buddhist - this meaning having largely displaced the original Biblical meaning.
7
THE MOVEMENT UNDER JAMES’ LEADERSHIP; JAMES VS SAUL

From circa 33CE to circa 35CE

After Jesus’ death, the High-Priesthood (Caiaphas and his father-in-law Ananias Bar Seth) maintain the pressure on the Jesus Movement. Caiaphas now hires a formidable opponent to persecute the Movement, which is now under the leadership of Jesus’ brother James.

It is difficult with words to express the magnitude of the impact of this single action, on the history of humanity. For this one individual, Saul of Tarsus, singlehandedly created a new religion that would eventually:

- eclipse the Jesus Movement,

- eradicate the entire Roman empire’s ancestral pagan religion, and

- unleash a virus of anti-Judaism to the entire Western civilization, culminating in the almost extermination of the entire Hebrew race.

Even the corrupt High-Priest would have contained himself, had he known the magnitude of the forces that he was about to unleash.

But let’s take a step back. Why is the High-Priest taking these measures? There is only one possible answer: because the Jesus Movement was becoming too popular! Had Jesus and his followers not presented a threat to the establishment of the High-Priest and his Roman patrons, there would be no reason for persecuting it. The Jesus Movement (or that of John Baptist and Jesus viewed together) had unleashed a nationalistic fervor unseen since the Maccabean revolution or the Zealot Movement of Judas the Zealot. What made Jesus’ movement strong was precisely its reliance on Israel’s religion and Israel’s God. What made it dangerous was that religion’s uncompromising loyalty to a covenant that refuses the type of assimilation that Rome (and previously Alexander’s Greece) demanded.
In this chapter we will see the first phase of Saul’s attacks: a rather unsophisticated brute force approach of dragging Jesus followers from their homes and organizing stonings. In the next chapter we shall turn to the lethal phase of the enemy Saul, where he morphs into a new person (Paul) and manages to infiltrate the Movement from within, planting the embryo of a leviathan designed to seek and destroy for hundreds and thousands of years the one thing that made this movement strong: the Torah. Paul’s letters, calling the Torah (Greek Nomos, or Law) a curse which Paul’s cosmic Christ has rid the world of, need no introduction here. Paul tackled the God of Israel….. And won! But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let us return to the present phase, the years 33CE to 40CE, where James has just taken the leadership of the movement, and Saul begins his original assignment to persecute Jesus’ followers.

Our first reference is from Saul/Paul himself: Galatians 1:13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it.

Luke’s Acts (who also uses Paul’s letters as a source) documents Saul’s involvement during the killing of the first martyrdom of a Jesus follower (the Greek speaking Jew Stephen):

Acts 6:1-15 NRSV 1 Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists [i.e. Jews from Greece] complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. 2 And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, 4 while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." 5 What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. 8 Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. 11 Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." 12 They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. 13 They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." 15 And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Acts 7:1-2 NRSV 1 Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" 2 And Stephen replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me. [Here then Stephen is
recorded by Luke to give a long speech about the entire history of Judaism (Luke inserts this probably for benefit of his mainly Gentile readership].

Acts 7:51-60 NRSV  

51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do.  
52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers.  
53 You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it."  
54 When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen.  
55 But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.  
56 "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"  
57 But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him.  
58 Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.  
59 While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."  
60 Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

Acts 8:1-3 NRSV:  

1 And Saul approved of their killing him. That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.  
2 Devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him.  
3 But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.

There is no mention about procuring permission from the Roman Governor to put Stephen to death. Either Pilate declared open season for the High-Priest’s henchmen to hunt down Jesus’ followers, or there is a vacuum of authority. We do know that around this time (34-36CE) Pilate has his hands full with sedition in Samaria. In 36CE he is recalled back to Rome on account of his brutality in quelching the Samaritan revolt. From 36 to 41 CE, the subsequent two Prefects (Marcellus, 36-37CE, and Marullus, 37-41CE) are largely uneventful.

Luke then narrates that, in parallel to the persecutions organized by the High Priest under Saul, the Jesus movement evolves into a organization of emmisaries (Greek: *apostolos*) that carry on the mission of their teacher. Note also the reference to two practices: baptizing in the name of Jesus (as opposed to just “baptizing”, after Yohannan’s movement), and the laying of hands to impart the Holy Spirit. Here we already see the shapings of a sectarian identity of the Jesus Movement within Judaism. To some extent these are also early trappings of hierarchy (where the imparting of the Holy Spirit can only come by the laying of hands from those already within the Movement):

Acts 8:4-25 NRSV Philip, Peter, and John in Samaria (and the encounters there with Simon Magus)
4 Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. 6 The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, 7 for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured. 8 So there was great joy in that city. 9 Now a certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. 10 All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." 11 And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place. 14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit 16 (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). 17 Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money! 21 You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness." 24 Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may happen to me." 25 Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.

Acts 8:26-36 NRSV. Philip baptizes the Ethiopian Queen's Eunuch:

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." 34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom,
may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"
35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" 37 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Eusebius, probably sourcing partly from Luke, narrates a similar sequence of events, first that of the conflict with Saul and the resulting stoning of Stephen, and secondly the activities of the Movement’s emissaries. Notice that Eusebius contributes one new event, not known to Luke/Acts, that of the healing of King Abgarus of Edessa, capital of the kingdom of Osrhoene (bordering the Euphrates to the east, Osrhoene was a kingdom “sandwiched”, literally and figuratively, between the Romans and the Parthian Persians, at times loyal to Parthia, at times absorbed into Rome’s orbit but still with lingering loyalties to Parthia/Persia; The kingdom also has a overlapping history with Armenia, located to its immediate north).

Eusebius Historia Ecclesiastica 2.1.5-13 :

5. At that time also the promise of our Saviour to the king of the Osrhoenians was fulfilled. For Thomas, under a divine impulse, sent Thaddeus to Edessa as a preacher and evangelist of the religion of Christ, as we have shown a little above from the document found there. [see Chapter Note 1].

7. When he came to that place he healed Abgarus by the word of Christ; and after bringing all the people there into the right attitude of mind by means of his works, and leading them to adore the power of Christ, he made them disciples of the Saviour’s teaching. And from that time down to the present the whole city of the Edessenes has been devoted to the name of Christ, offering no common proof of the beneficence of our Saviour toward them also.

8. These things have been drawn from ancient accounts; but let us now turn again to the divine Scripture. When the first and greatest persecution was instigated by the Jews against the church of Jerusalem in connection with the martyrdom of Stephen, and when all the disciples, except the Twelve, were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, some, as the divine Scripture says, went as far as Phœnicia and Cyprus and Antioch [Acts 11:19-22], but could not yet venture to impart the word of faith to the nations, and therefore preached it to the Jews alone.
9. During this time Paul was still persecuting the church, and entering the houses of believers was dragging men and women away and committing them to prison.

10. Philip also, one of those who with Stephen had been entrusted with the diaconate, being among those who were scattered abroad, went down to Samaria, and being filled with the divine power, he first preached the word to the inhabitants of that country. And divine grace worked so mightily with him that even Simon Magus with many others was attracted by his words.

11. Simon [Magus] was at that time so celebrated, and had acquired, by his jugglery, such influence over those who were deceived by him, that he was thought to be the great power of God. But at this time, being amazed at the wonderful deeds wrought by Philip through the divine power, he feigned and counterfeited faith in Christ, even going so far as to receive baptism.

12. And what is surprising, the same thing is done even to this day by those who follow his most impure heresy. For they, after the manner of their forefather, slipping into the Church, like a pestilential and leprous disease greatly afflict those into whom they are able to infuse the deadly and terrible poison concealed in themselves. The most of these have been expelled as soon as they have been caught in their wickedness, as Simon himself, when detected by Peter, received the merited punishment.

13. But as the preaching of the Saviour's Gospel was daily advancing, a certain providence led from the land of the Ethiopians an officer of the queen of that country, for Ethiopia even to the present day is ruled, according to ancestral custom, by a woman. He, first among the Gentiles, received of the mysteries of the divine word from Philip in consequence of a revelation, and having become the first-fruits of believers throughout the world, he is said to have been the first on returning to his country to proclaim the knowledge of the God of the universe and the life-giving sojourn of our Saviour among men; so that through him in truth the prophecy obtained its fulfillment, which declares that "Ethiopia stretches out her hand unto God."

The Pseudo-Clementines, considered a later work from the third century, but containing material from earlier in time, contain a core that most scholars today call “Ebionite” in deference to the priority given to Torah observance, to the pre-eminence of James the Just as leader of the Movement, to a abstinence of eating meat, and finally to Saul as the enemy of the Jesus Movement. The reader must keep in mind that the Pseudo-Clementines as we have received them, reflect other layers from later communities (e.g. possibly Arian Christians, who held that Jesus is Savior, yet not God).

Pseudo-Clementines: Recognitions
Chapter XLIII. -- Success of the Gospel.
"Nevertheless, the truth everywhere prevailed; for, in proof that these things were done by divine power, we who had been very few became in the course
of a few days, by the help of God, far more than they. So that the priests at one time were afraid, lest haply, by the providence of God, to their confusion, the whole of the people should come over to our faith. Therefore they often sent to us, and asked us to discourse to them concerning Jesus, whether he were the Prophet whom Moses foretold, who is the eternal Christ. For on this point only does there seem to be any difference between us who believe in Jesus, and the unbelieving Jews. But while they often made such requests to us, and we sought for a fitting opportunity, a week of years was completed from the passion of the Lord, the Church of the Lord which was constituted in Jerusalem was most plentifully multiplied and grew, being governed with most righteous ordinances by James, who was ordained bishop in it by the Lord."

Chapter L.V.--Public Discussion.

"However, as we were proceeding to say, when the high priest had often sent priests to ask us that we might discourse with one another concerning Jesus; when it seemed a fit opportunity, and it pleased all the Church, we went up to the temple, and, standing on the steps together with our faithful brethren, the people kept perfect silence; and first the high priest began to exhort the people that they should hear patiently and quietly, and at the same time witness and judge of those things that were to be spoken. Then, in the next place, exalting with many praises the rite or sacrifice which had been bestowed by God upon the human race for the remission of sins, he found fault with the baptism of our Jesus, as having been recently brought in in opposition to the sacrifices. But Matthew, meeting his propositions, showed clearly, that whosoever shall not obtain the baptism of Jesus shall not only be deprived of the kingdom of heaven, but shall not be without peril at the resurrection of the dead, even though he be fortified by the prerogative of a good life and an upright disposition. Having made these and such like statements, Matthew stopped."

Chapter LXI.--Caiaphas Answered.

"Then Caiaphas attempted to impugn the doctrine of Jesus, saying that He spoke vain things, for He said that the poor are blessed; and promised earthly rewards; and placed the chief gift in an earthly inheritance; and promised that those who maintain righteousness shall be satisfied with meat and drink; and many things of this sort He is charged with teaching. Thomas, in reply, proves that his accusation is frivolous; showing that the prophets, in whom Caiaphas believes, taught these things much more, and did not show in what manner these things are to be, or how they are to be understood; whereas Jesus pointed out how they are to be taken. And when he had spoken these things, and others of like kind, Thomas also held his peace."

Chapter LXVI.--Discussion Resumed.

"Now [at the end of that day] when we had come to our James, while we detailed to him all that had been said and done, we supped, and remained with him, spending the whole night in supplication to Almighty God, that the discourse of the approaching disputation might show the unquestionable truth of our faith. Therefore, on the following day, James the bishop went up to the temple with us, and with the whole church. There we found a great multitude, who had been waiting for us from the middle of the night. Therefore we took our stand in the same place as before, in order that, standing on an elevation, we might be seen by all the people. ....
Chapter LXIX.--Two Comings of Christ.

"To him [Caiaphas] our James began to show, that whatsoever things the prophets say they have taken from the law, and what they have spoken is in accordance with the law. He also made some statements respecting the books of the Kings, in what way, and when, and by whom they were written, and how they ought to be used. And when he had discussed most fully concerning the law, and had, by a most clear exposition, brought into light whatever things are in it concerning Christ, he showed by most abundant proofs that Jesus is the Christ, and that in Him are fulfilled all the prophecies which related to His humble advent. For he showed that two advents of Him are foretold: one in humiliation, which He has accomplished; the other in glory. …

Chapter LXX.--Tumult Raised by Saul.

"And when matters were at that point that they [i.e. many of the audience] should come and be baptized, some one of our enemies, entering the temple with a few men, began to cry out, and to say, 'What mean ye, O men of Israel? Why are you so easily hurried on? Why are ye led headlong by most miserable men, who are deceived by Simon, a magician?' While he was thus speaking, and adding more to the same effect, and while James the bishop was refuting him, he began to excite the people and to raise a tumult, so that the people might not be able to hear what was said. Therefore he began to drive all into confusion with shouting, and to undo what had been arranged with much labour, and at the same time to reproach the priests, and to enrage them with revilings and abuse, and, like a madman, to excite every one to murder, saying, 'What do ye? Why do ye hesitate? Oh sluggish and inert, why do we not lay hands upon them, and pull all these fellows to pieces?' When he had said this, he first, seizing a strong brand from the altar, set the example of smiting. Then others also, seeing him, were carried away with like readiness. Then ensued a tumult on either side, of the beating and the beaten. Much blood is shed; there is a confused flight, in the midst of which that enemy attacked James, and threw him headlong from the top of the steps; and supposing him to be dead, he cared not to inflict further violence upon him."

Chapter LXXI.--Flight to Jericho.

"But our friends lifted him up, for they were both more numerous and more powerful than the others; but, from their fear of God, they rather suffered themselves to be killed by an inferior force, than they would kill others. But when the evening came the priests shut up the temple, and we returned to the house of James, and spent the night there in prayer. Then before daylight we went down to Jericho, to the number of 5000 men. Then after three days one of the brethren came to us from Gamaliel, whom we mentioned before, bringing to us secret tidings that that enemy had received a commission from Caiaphas, the high priest, that he should arrest all who believed in Jesus, and should go to Damascus with his letters, and that there also, employing the help of the unbelievers, he should make havoc among the faithful; and that he was hastening to Damascus chiefly on this account, because he believed that Peter had fled thither. And about thirty days thereafter he stopped on his way while passing through Jericho going to Damascus. At that time we were absent, having gone out to the sepulchres of two brethren which were whitened of themselves every year, by which miracle the fury of
many against us was restrained, because they saw that our brethren were had in remembrance before God."

We have seen already to some extent a certain affinity of the Jesus followers for the area near the Jordan (escape to Jericho after Saul’s attack on James, described in the Pseudo-Clementines) and east of the Jordan (for example Thomas sending Thaddeus to Eddessa), and we shall encounter references to this again later. The presence of Jesus followers east of the Jordan must have been significant at this time (whether because of the persecutions from Jerusalem’s High-Priesthood, or because of a missionary predilection for the area, or perhaps even due to considering that area a “home base” not so different than John Baptist using the area near the Jordan as his “home base”). At any rate, the presence of Jesus followers east of the Jordan is sufficiently large at this stage that the High-Priest sends Saul to persecute them in Damascus.

We depart from the Pseudo-Clementines here and return to where we left off with Luke’s Acts: Saul’s commission to Damascus:


**Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,** 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

On the road to Damascus, the enemy Saul will morph into his most lethal form (“Paul”), one whose ideas will steer the Roman empire to persecute the very Commandments that Jesus called a Return to. Here are the conversion accounts (from Saul/Paul, and the author of Acts):

Acts 9:3-4 :

3 Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Galatians Ch 1:

11 For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; 12 for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. 14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me, [editor’s note: this would be around 35CE, shortly after the stoning of Stephen, if Acts is to be accepted] so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles…
Saul’s new-found revelation, according to him, is direct from “the risen Jesus” and not from Jesus’ apostles. As we shall see, Saul’s conversion will usher in a time of competition between the mission of Jesus’ apostles (led by James and the Jerusalem community) and Saul’s new-found mission.
Chapter Notes

1. Eusebius’ account of Theudas and the healing of King Abgarus of Edessa, Osrhoene. Historia Ecclesiastica Book I, Ch 13

1. The divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ being noised abroad among all men on account of his wonder-working power, he attracted countless numbers from foreign countries lying far away from Judea, who had the hope of being cured of their diseases and of all kinds of sufferings.
2. For instance the King Abgarus, who ruled with great glory the nations beyond the Euphrates, being afflicted with a terrible disease which it was beyond the power of human skill to cure, when he heard of the name of Jesus, and of his miracles, which were attested by all with one accord sent a message to him by a courier and begged him to heal his disease.
3. But he did not at that time comply with his request; yet he deemed him worthy of a personal letter in which he said that he would send one of his disciples to cure his disease, and at the same time promised salvation to himself and all his house.
4. Not long afterward his promise was fulfilled. For after his resurrection from the dead and his ascent into heaven, Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, under divine impulse sent Thaddeus, who was also numbered among the seventy disciples of Christ, to Edessa, as a preacher and evangelist of the teaching of Christ.
5. And all that our Saviour had promised received through him its fulfillment. You have written evidence of these things taken from the archives of Edessa, which was at that time a royal city. For in the public registers there, which contain accounts of ancient times and the acts of Abgarus, these things have been found preserved down to the present time. But there is no better way than to hear the epistles themselves which we have taken from the archives and have literally translated from the Syriac language in the following manner.

Copy of an epistle written by Abgarus the ruler to Jesus, and sent to him at Jerusalem by Ananias the swift courier.

6. “Abgarus, ruler of Edessa, to Jesus the excellent Saviour who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem, greeting. I have heard the reports of thee and of thy cures as performed by thee without medicines or herbs. For it is said that thou makest the blind to see and the lame to walk, that thou cleansest lepers and castest out impure spirits and demons, and that thou healest those afflicted with lingering disease, and raisest the dead.
7. And having heard all these things concerning thee, I have concluded that one of two things must be true: either thou art God, and having come down from heaven thou doest these things, or else thou, who doest these things, art the Son of God.

The answer of Jesus to the ruler Abgarus by the courier Ananias.

9. “Blessed art thou who hast believed in me without having seen me. For it is written concerning me, that they who have seen me will not believe in me, and that they who
have not seen me will believe and be saved. But in regard to what thou hast written me, that I should come to thee, it is necessary for me to fulfill all things here for which I have been sent, and after I have fulfilled them thus to be taken up again to him that sent me. But after I have been taken up I will send to thee one of my disciples, that he may heal thy disease and give life to thee and thine.”

10. To these epistles there was added the following account in the Syriac language. “After the ascension of Jesus, Judas, who was also called Thomas, sent to him Thaddeus, an apostle, one of the Seventy. When he was come he lodged with Tobias, the son of Tobias. When the report of him got abroad, it was told Abgarus that an apostle of Jesus was come, as he had written him.

11. Thaddeus began then in the power of God to heal every disease and infirmity, insomuch that all wondered. And when Abgarus heard of the great and wonderful things which he did and of the cures which he performed, he began to suspect that he was the one of whom Jesus had written him, saying, ‘After I have been taken up I will send to thee one of my disciples who will heal thee.’

12. Therefore, summoning Tobias, with whom Thaddeus lodged, he said, I have heard that a certain man of power has come and is lodging in thy house. Bring him to me. And Tobias coming to Thaddeus said to him, The ruler Abgarus summoned me and told me to bring thee to him that thou mightest heal him. And Thaddeus said, I will go, for I have been sent to him with power.

13. Tobias therefore arose early on the following day, and taking Thaddeus came to Abgarus. And when he came, the nobles were present and stood about Abgarus. And immediately upon his entrance a great vision appeared to Abgarus in the countenance of the apostle Thaddeus. When Abgarus saw it he prostrated himself before Thaddeus, while all those who stood about were astonished; for they did not see the vision, which appeared to Abgarus alone.

14. He then asked Thaddeus if he were in truth a disciple of Jesus the Son of God, who had said to him, ‘I will send thee one of my disciples, who shall heal thee and give thee life.’ And Thaddeus said, Because thou hast mightily believed in him that sent me, therefore have I been sent unto thee. And still further, if thou believest in him, the petitions of thy heart shall be granted thee as thou believest.

15. And Abgarus said to him, So much have I believed in him that I wished to take an army and destroy those Jews who crucified him, had I not been deterred from it by reason of the dominion of the Romans. And Thaddeus said, Our Lord has fulfilled the will of his Father, and having fulfilled it has been taken up to his Father. And Abgarus said to him, I too have believed in him and in his Father.

16. And Thaddeus said to him, Therefore I place my hand upon thee in his name. And when he had done it, immediately Abgarus was cured of the disease and of the suffering which he had.

17. And Abgarus marvelled, that as he had heard concerning Jesus, so he had received in very deed through his disciple Thaddeus, who healed him without medicines and herbs, and not only him, but also Abdus the son of Abdus, who was afflicted with the gout; for he too came to him and fell at his feet, and having received a benediction by the imposition of his hands, he was healed. The same Thaddeus cured also many other inhabitants of the city, and did wonders and marvelous works, and preached the word of God.

18. And afterward Abgarus said, Thou, O Thaddeus, doest these things with the power of God, and we marvel. But, in addition to these things, I pray thee to inform me in regard
to the coming of Jesus, how he was born; and in regard to his power, by what power he performed those deeds of which I have heard.

19. And Thaddeus said, Now indeed will I keep silence, since I have been sent to proclaim the word publicly. But tomorrow assemble for me all thy citizens, and I will preach in their presence and sow among them the word of God, concerning the coming of Jesus, how he was born; and concerning his mission, for what purpose he was sent by the Father; and concerning the power of his works, and the mysteries which he proclaimed in the world, and by what power he did these things; and concerning his new preaching, and his abasement and humiliation, and how he humbled himself, and died and debased his divinity and was crucified, and descended into Hades, and burst the bars which from eternity had not been broken, and raised the dead; for he descended alone, but rose with many, and thus ascended to his Father.

20. Abgarus therefore commanded the citizens to assemble early in the morning to hear the preaching of Thaddeus, and afterward he ordered gold and silver to be given him. But he refused to take it, saying, If we have forsaken that which was our own, how shall we take that which is another’s? These things were done in the three hundred and fortieth year.”

I have inserted them here in their proper place, translated from the Syriac literally, and I hope to good purpose.
19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed [ca 34CE] traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch [of Syria], spreading the word only among Jews.

20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Establishing the communities mentioned above would have taken place during the few years after Stephen’s death, say from 35 to 38CE.

In parallel, we have during those same years Paul in Arabia and Damascus. During that time Paul would have elaborated the meaning of his new faith, particularly the implications to humanity and the religion of the Jews. After that, he finally dares to contact the Jesus followers. Here is Paul’s account written ca 50CE:

Galatians 1:15–24 : 15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me, [ca 35CE] so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. 18 Then after three years [ca 38CE] I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Kephas and stayed with him fifteen days; 19 but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord’s brother. 20 In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! [Is Paul, writing here to the Galatians in the early 50’s CE, defending himself against allegations of lying? If so, such allegations could only originate from one source: James and the Jerusalem community. Evidently by the time of his writing “Galatians”, things have already soured since his early “reconciliation” with the Jesus movement ca 38CE. We will shortly understand why.]
Galatians 1 (cont’d.): 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; 22 they only heard it said, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God because of me.

After his visit ca 38CE to James and Kephas (Peter), Paul goes back to the Gentile areas that he is familiar with: Syria (Damascus probably), and Cilicia (probably his home town of Tarsus). Things during his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem must have gone well for Paul, as he seems to have at first earned James’ trust. This, to the point that Paul is asked to help out at Antioch! (It is certainly probable that already during his trip to Jerusalem ca 38CE, Paul had indicated to James his desire to reach out to the Gentile world.)

Acts 11 tells us: 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. …

The time in Antioch referred to, above, would have been ca 41CE, before the famine that Acts 11 then tells us about:

27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius). [We know from other sources, including Josephus, that a famine happened in 41-42CE in Rome and in 45CE in Judea, then in Greece in 50CE, and again in Rome in 52CE.] 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Meanwhile we have the rise of Herod Agrippa I:
- In 37CE his childhood friend Caius Caligula, now Roman emperor after Tiberius’ death, gives Agrippa I the kingship over Gaulanitis, Auranitis, Batanaea, and Trachonitis (areas east of the Jordan, which his uncle Herod Philip had held until his death).
- In 39CE, he is given Galilee and Peraea, after his uncle Herod Antipas is banished by Rome.
- In 41CE, after Caligula’s death, Emperor Claudius gives Agrippa I the rule over Judea, Samaria, along with the title “King of Jews”.

With Agrippa I (who rules Judea from 41 thru 44CE), things will take a turn for the worse for the Jerusalem community as he gives new energy to the persecution of the followers of Jesus, that would-be aspirant to David’s throne.
Acts 12:1-4: It was about this time that King Herod [Agrippa I] arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James [son of Zebedee], the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

Eusebius (writing ca 325CE) relates the same, and adds a additional story which he quotes from Clement of Alexandria (lived from ca 150 to ca 215CE):

Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 2, Ch 9:1-3: 1. “Now about that time” (it is clear that he [the author or Acts] means the time of Claudius) “Herod the King stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” 2. And concerning this James, Clement [of Alexandria], in the seventh book of his Hypotyposes, relates a story which is worthy of mention; telling it as he received it from those who had lived before him. He says that the one who led James to the judgment-seat, when he saw him bearing his testimony, was moved, and confessed that he was himself also a Christian. 3. They were both therefore, he says, led away together; and on the way he begged James to forgive him. And he, after considering a little, said, “Peace be with thee,” and kissed him. And thus they were both beheaded at the same time.

As for Peter, as it turns out, he escapes from his arrest. Acts tells us matter-of-factly who needs to know about his escape, i.e. the boss, James bother of Jesus:

Acts 12:12-17: 12 … he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!” 15 “You're out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.” 16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. 17 Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.

With the very tight situation under Agrippa I, it is understandable, yet unfortunate, that so little is known about the goings on of the Jamesian communities within Judea, Galilee, Samaria, or even east of the Jordan, during the 40's CE.
Even the activities of the apostles outside Eretz Israel during this period are only known via our just quoted reference from Acts (11:19-22) and from Paul’s letters complaining about them. That is, we have no records of the Jerusalem community’s dialogues with the emerging assemblies at Phoenicia, Cyprus, even Antioch of Syria, not to mention Rome, which was already very well established by the time Paul writes his letter to them (ca 57-58CE).

Be that as it may, Paul’s letters and Acts are very revealing about the utmost importance that James (and his leadership) had in the Jesus movement. As we shall see, James’ Torah-zealousness will be diametrically opposite to Paul’s new-found revelation.

45 to 50CE

From the Slavonic Josephus we have an account on the goings-on after the death of Agrippa I in 44CE:

THE TREATMENT OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS. [Follows on B. J. II. xi. 6, after the notice on the death in 44CE of Herod Agrippa I] 1. Again Claudius sent his authorities to those states—Cuspius Fadus [Procurator of Judea 44-46CE] and Tiberius Alexander [Procurator of Judea 46-48CE], both of whom kept the people in peace, not allowing them to depart in anything from the pure laws. 2. But if anyone diverged from the word of the Law, plaint was brought before the teachers of the Law. 3. Often they expelled him and sent him to the Emperor’s presence. 4. And at the time of these two many had been discovered as servants of the previously described wonder-doer; and as they spake to the people about their teacher,—that he is living, although he is dead, and that he will free you from your servitude,—many from the folk gave ear to the above-named and took upon themselves their precept,—5. not because of their reputation; they were indeed of the humbler sort some just cobbiers, others sandal-makers, others artisans. 6. And [yet] as marvelous signs they accomplished in truth what they would. 7. But when those noble governors [i.e. Fadus and Alexander. Editorial: calling Alexander a “noble governor” betrays a non-Josephan source. Alexander was a Romanized Jew who helped Titus in the campaign against Jerusalem, and later helped Vespasian acquire the Roman Emperorship; in the Greek text of Josephus, Josephus is quite dismissive of Alexander] saw the misleading of the people, they deliberated with the scribes to seize and put them to death, for fear lest the little be not little if it have ended in the great. 8. But they shrank back and were alarmed over the signs, saying: "In the plain course such wonders do not occur. 9. But if they do not issue from the counsel of God, they will quickly be convicted." 10. And they gave them [the Jesus followers] authority to act as they would. 11. But afterwards, becoming pestered by them, they had them sent away, some to the Emperor, but others to Antioch, others again to distant lands,—for the testing of the matter. [Editorial: That Alexander would have allowed the Jesus people, suspicious of rebelliousness, to “act as they would” seems unlikely; As a case in point, Alexander was responsible for putting to death by crucifixion the two sons of Judas the Galilean, founder of the Zealots: Simon and James] 12. But Claudius removed the two
governors, [and] sent Cumanus [in 48CE], under whom there was lamentation and ruin for the Jews.

Far from the grip of Agrippa I (ruled thru 44CE) and Fadus (44-46CE) and Alexander (46-48CE) in Eretz Israel, much of the movement’s activity is focused outside of Judea/Samaria/Galilee.

Things seem to start reasonably well circa 44CE after Barnabas procures the “renewed” Paul for assistance in Antioch. They work there together for one year, then both travel to Jerusalem for the famine relief of 45CE. After returning to Antioch, they sail off (ca 45CE) on the well known “first journey” of Paul, which takes them to Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Iconium, Lystra, Attalia, Antioch of Pisidia, and finally (prior to 50CE) back to Antioch of Syria. However, by 50CE it is clear that Paul's new religion will not sit well in communities that are loyal to the Jerusalem leadership and its priority on following the Commandments. The reason? Paul’s message. The letters he would write later (in the late 40’s, early 50’s) clearly articulate his philosophy:

One of the clearest articulation of Paul’s new philosophy comes from one of his earliest letters, Galatians. Chapter 3:

- 10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law. [Deut 27:26]"...
- 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us -- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree [Deut 21:23]."

In short, something new has happened to the order of the universe as relates to God's relationship with humanity: For those who will benefit from Jesus’ death, the Torah Law has lost its vigor. That is, if you are the beneficiary of Jesus’ death, failure to uphold God’s Commandments no longer risks foregoing the Promise of the Sinai Covenant (i.e., entrance to the Kingdom to Come). And how does one become the beneficiary of Jesus’ death? Paul tells us:

Romans 10:9: If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Even though Paul’s Galatians address is intended for that Gentile community, his statement about Redemption has enormous (negative) repercussions to Israel as well, because he is not just talking about Torah Laws that apply to Gentiles (i.e., the Noahide Laws of Genesis). Rather, in his reference to “the Law” in “Christ redeemed us from the consequences of not observing the Law” he is also including the Sinai Law (which is applicable to Israel only); this is clear, since:

- his pivotal quote in Gal 3:10 is from Deuteronomy, which deals completely with Sinai Law.
- the original basis for his entire letter to Galatians is that they have started to follow Sinai Commandments, i.e., Paul talks to them as “wanna-be Jews” (Ga 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the Law…), telling them how futile it is even for Jews to strive to observe the Commandments of the
Law, now that it has lost its vigor because (according to Paul) Redemption through Christ’s death is available: Ga 2:15-16 We ourselves are Jews by birth …, yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the Law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

So that there is no confusion, Paul explicitly depicts the Sinai Covenant as a “temporary measure” implemented by God because of Israel’s repeated misbehavior: Ga 3:19 “Why then the Law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator.” This is in direct contradiction to the Torah stating that the Sinai Covenant is eternal.

But let us step back. Why would a Jew not see Paul’s message as “good news”? After all, who wouldn’t want to be freed from God’s fury (“curse”) when failing to meet the least of the Commandments? Well, the Torah is clear that the Commandments are eternal. And is it true that a Jew is condemned if he or she does not obey all the applicable Commandments? The prophets of Israel had long answered this question before Paul: God forgives. If you call God’s name and repent (i.e., sincerely strive to return to his Commandments), then God will forgive. Jesus taught the same, as we have seen. In short, for a Jew, Paul’s injunction that the Sinai Law has lost its “teeth” actually means that Paul is obliterating Israel’s God-given Constitution, that is, the Covenant that defines it as a nation.

But the Torah’s process for Reconciliation (or At-one-ment) with God was not enough for Paul. Paul wants forgiveness for trespassing the Law’s Commandments, but without the injunction to strive to return to them. He has invented a “perpetual forgiveness machine”. Why has Paul done this?

Because Paul wants a world where there is neither Jew nor Greek. He is unhappy that the Law treats different nations according to different Commandments (especially ritual ones), which is a barrier to the fellowship that he wants between Jews and Gentiles. By removing the vigor of the Law, and replacing it with a single “commandment” (“confess Jesus as your savior”) Paul aims for a universal (katholicoς

---


2 For example: 2Chronicles 7:12 : "Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer… When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Joel 2: 31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 32 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.
History of the Original Jesus Movement

in Greek) religion, a world united in homogeneity of belief and praxis. The problem, of course, is that this is not God’s idea (as reflected in the Torah); that is, God allows that different nations have their own Covenants with Him. Paul COULD have said: “Galatians, there is no need for you to observe the Sinai Commandments. They are for Jacob’s tribe. But God has decreed to all nations that they shall live by observing the Commandments given to Noah.”. But Paul would rather call the end of the vigor of the Sinai Law.

To some extent, Paul’s problem with “the Law” stems from cultural and perhaps even Pharisaic/Rabbinical traditions which further separated Jews from Gentiles. But as we shall see, his extreme position may have also been triggered as a result of the extreme position of the (Jamesian?) circumcision party, which advocated that Gentiles should join Jacob’s covenant (or at least Abraham’s) in order to partake in the Messianic-age Kingdom. It would appear that both Paul and James (and perhaps culturally all Jews of the time?) assume Judaism as the only valid covenant with God. James’ zealots’ solution? Have all Gentiles convert (including Circumcision). Paul’s solution? Obliterate the need for the Sinai Covenant. As we shall see shortly, the conflicts at Antioch will prompt the Jerusalem council, where James will temper the position of his zealots by ruling that Gentiles only need observe the Noahide Laws.

Does Paul have any biblical base to suggest that Jesus’ dying a accursed death can become what redeems people from the penalty for failing to meet the requirements of the Law? Paul may well be building on the idea of Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, which triggers God to forgive Israel for its trespasses. That in-and-of-itself may have already been a belief held by the Apostles, as we discussed in our chapter on Jesus. But Paul goes beyond: For him, Jesus’ death has become the embodiment of a everlasting atonement sacrifice, one would say in the manner of the Yom Kippur atonement offering of the sacrificial goats per Leviticus 16, although Paul prefers the analogy to the Passover lambs, the blood of which saved Israel from God’s wrath against Egypt:

1 Corinthians 11:23-29  **23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was handed over took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."**

1 Corinthians 5:7  **Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.**

To Paul, this one-time sacrifice becomes the end-all-be-all sacrifice that is perpetually accessible to all who will seek salvation (as opposed to the Yom Kippur sacrifice, which is a yearly resetting of one’s debts with God). Moreover, not only a perpetually accessible atonement avenue, but in fact **mandatory pre-requisite for**
salvation, i.e., one must confess belief that Jesus (enabled by his death) can save, in order to gain the salvation made available by Jesus’ sacrifice:

1 Corinthians 15:1-31: Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures… … 17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. 19 If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. 21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; 22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

The result? This renders unnecessary any other atonement vehicles (like the Temple rituals, and also Immersion), and in fact making striving to keep the Torah commandments needless in the first place, since now Jesus’ sacrifice-enabled-intercession is the single necessary and sufficient vehicle for salvation. Paul says so explicitly:

Galatians 2:16 Yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

---

3 This alone is a double innovation. Even if Paul could successfully argue that Jesus’ suffering could count as an everlasting atonement vehicle which perpetually releases a person from having to observe the Commandments (such a concept is not to be found in the Torah), still: the idea that a person must correctly identify the Messiah and yield to him the divine attribute of “Savior” (something God reserves for Himself) is also not to be found in the Torah (in fact, assigning God’s attributes to a form, namely that of Jesus) is the most straightforward case of idolatry. Let us present the case in the reverse order: Even if one accepts Paul’s claim that “Mesiah Jesus is in fact the full embodiment of God” (Paul in Colossians 2:9: “For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily”; Paul in Philippians 2:6: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not consider seizing being equal to God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father.”) (why not? Did not God manifest like a visitor to Abraham once? Or show “his face” to Moses?), and even if one could overlook the injunction of Deuteronomy 4:15-26 to not address or depict God using forms, still: the idea that God-manifesting-as-Jesus would deprecate the Commandments which He swore as eternally binding is not to be found in the Torah (by the way, the vision of Jeremiah 31:31 speaks of God imparting the Commandments in people’s hearts; it does not speak of annulling them).
Romans 3:20-28  

20 For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the Law, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.  
21 But now, apart from Law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the Law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.  
26 He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.  
27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith.  
28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

Even the Immersion of John Baptist and the Apostles, which Jesus himself underwent, is obsolete for Paul:

1 Corinthians 1:14-17 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

Perhaps it is in Antioch of Syria (in the late 40's, after returning from that First Journey) that things begin to boil over: the growing number of Gentiles in Antioch and Paul's ideas about the need (or lack thereof) to observe the ritual Commandments could have easily caused heated debates with the Jews of the community, and even with the original gentile God-fearers, who were probably accustomed to follow the guidance of the Jewish, Torah-observant, leaders. At any rate, Paul and Barnabas decide it is time for a showdown, and head to Jerusalem. Paul tells us…

Galatians 2:1-10 : 1 Then after fourteen years [that is ca 51-52CE, fourteen years after his first amicable visit to the Jerusalem leadership, which Paul covered in Galatians Ch. 1] I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.  
2 I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the reputed [dokou'sin, as in “seeming” or “co-called”] leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. 4 But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us-- 5 we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with
you. 6 And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) --those reputed leaders contributed nothing to me. 7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised 8 (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), 9 and when James and Kephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor [ayyonim, in Hebrew], which was actually what I was eager to do.

As Paul continues his narration, we can see that the dispute was not resolved, for it erupts vociferously between Paul (who is against Jews separating from Gentiles for ritual reasons), versus Peter (and Barnabas siding with Peter):

Galatians 2:11-21: 11 But when Kephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; 12 for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. 13 And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Kephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

Thus far one might say that Paul is being critical of cultural bigotry. After all, there is no Sinai Law forbidding Jews and God-fearing Gentiles from sitting at the same table, even if Jews avoided commensality with Gentiles as a way to prevent unintentional mixing of Kosher with unKosher. But as Paul continues, it is clear that this is not just about cultural bigotry:

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the Law, because no one will be justified by the works of the Law. 17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. 19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the Law, then Christ died for nothing."

Paul in Galatians chapter 2 grudgingly and sarcastically acknowledges James' role as a pillar of the Jerusalem church. From this epistle we also have the most clear
documentation that James the Just himself was actively acting against the Pauline innovation of enticing Jews to forego the Sinai Torah Law (Paul calls it “spying on our freedom”). In fact, as we shall see shortly as we delve more into Galatians and the reason for Paul writing that epistle, it would seem that those from James were quite happy to not only put the brakes on Paul’s “justification without the Torah” religion, but also to do the opposite: encouraging the Gentile God-fearers to become fully converted to Judaism, or if not fully, then to follow the extensive Sinai Torah Commandments applicable to the Ger Toshav (that is, “Resident Aliens”, Gentiles living among Jews in Eretz Israel), or as a minimum to observe the Abrahamic Covenant, which calls for circumcision in addition to the ethical behaviors of the Noachide Covenant.

In spite of the Jerusalem Council, the dispute was not resolved and the conflict continues down to the very last communications that come from Paul. This conflict becomes a hallmark of the nascent Christian religion, a conflict that will haunt not only the Jewish followers of Jesus, but also (as Christianity rises thru the centuries) the entire Jewish people all the way to the Inquisition and beyond.

The author of Luke/Acts also records the Council of Jerusalem. The reader must bear in mind that the language reflects the author’s Christian mindset and his agenda of harmonizing Pauline teachings and those of the Apostles. For example here the author has Peter introduce Paul’s argument to James and the Council (“why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 11 On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will”). At any rate, what is clear from Luke/Acts is that Paul is told by James to not dissuade Jews from the Sinai Law, and at the same time reaffirms the Torah’s instructions for Gentiles (to keep the Noaachide Laws). What is also clear is that it is James who is in charge, as the ruling comes from him.

Acts 15:1-41 1 Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. 3 So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses." 6 The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. 8 And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; 9 and in cleansing their hearts by faith
he has made no distinction between them and us. 10 Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 11 On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." 12 The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 After they finished speaking, James replied, "My brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. 15 This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, 16 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, 17 so that all other peoples may seek the Lord— even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things 18 known from long ago.' 19 Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, 20 but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. 21 For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues." 22 Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, 23 with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24 Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, 25 we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." 30 So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. When they gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 When its members read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. 32 Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. 33 After they had been there for some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers to those who had sent them. 34 35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many others, they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord. 36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. 39 The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. 40 But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers
commending him to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

The above account from Luke/Acts also has an episode in Antioch immediately following the Council of Jerusalem. This time, instead of Paul chastising Peter for keeping the kashrut laws and/or separating from table fellowship with Gentiles, it is a disagreement with Barnabas about John Mark. One has to wonder whether the reason for the parting of the ways between Paul and Barnabas is something broader than this. In fact in Galatians, Paul has just told us what happened between him and Barnabas: Barnabas had sided with Peter in the showdown over the dietary laws and table fellowship.

This state of affairs is later recalled with lamentation, by a Jewish Jesus follower, whose writing (dating perhaps from around 500 to 800 CE) has survived when incorporated by Abd al-Jabbar into his book (“Tathbit…”, written around 1010 CE). This Jewish Jesus follower evidently has access to Acts and the other books of the Christian canon (all of which books, his language shows us, he considers “theirs”, i.e., not followed by himself):


(70a) He (Isha, or Yeshua) and his companions behaved constantly in this manner, until he left this world: He said to his companions: "Act as you have seen me act, instruct people in accordance with instructions I have given you, and be for them what I have been for you." His companions behaved constantly in this manner and in accordance with this. And so did those who (came) after the first generation of his companions, and (also) those who came long after (the second generation). Then they began to make changes and alterations, (to introduce) innovations into the religion (al-din), to seek dominion (ri`asa), to make friends with people by (indulging) their passions, to (try) to circumvent the Jews and to satisfy the anger (which) they (felt) against the latter, even if (in doing so) they (had) to abandon the religion. This is clear from the Gospels which are with them and to which they refer and from their book, known as the Book of Praxeis (Acts).

It is (written) there [i.e. in Acts] that a group (qawm) of Christians left Jerusalem (bayt al-maqdis) and came to Antioch and other towns of Syria (a1-Sham). They called upon the people (to obey) the Law (al-sunna) of the Torah, to forbid offering sacrifices to those who have not the necessary qualifications (laysa min abliha), (to practise) circumcision, to observe the Sabbath, to prohibit pork and other things (forbidden) by the Torah. These things were regarded as burdensome by the Gentiles and they took little notice (of the exhortations). Thereupon, the Christians of Jerusalem forgathered to take counsel as to the stratagems which were to be employed with regard to the Gentiles in order (to make) the latter respond and obey them. They were of the opinion that it was necessary to mix with the Gentiles, to make them concessions (rukhs), to descend to (the level of) their erroneous beliefs, to eat (a portion) of the sacrifices they offer, to adopt their customs and to approve of their way (of life). [Editorial: it is of interest that our author here seems to be even more strict that James himself, as he
deplores James’ decision to encourage the Gentiles to be integral members of the Movement as Noahides instead of as converted Jews. The reader should notice that the author of the texts that have survived in al-Jabbar’s book is never referencing to James or his leadership of the Jesus Movement. That he was a Jesus follower is evident, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, as he laments that the Jesus followers are by his time mainly Christians, i.e. Graeco-Romans or Romanized ex-Jews who have abandoned Jesus’ Torah teaching, as well as Hebrew]. And they composed a book on this.

Paul’s account in Galatians about his conflict in Antioch with James’ Torah-zealots is only the tip of the iceberg. As we have seen, the reason he writes to the Galatians about the topic is precisely because they too, even after the Jerusalem Council, are still being persuaded by the Jerusalem community to observe Sinai (or at least Abrahamic) Commandments, in spite of the Galatians being by-and-large a Gentile congregation. This is of course terribly frustrating to Paul, who writes to them, circa 51CE:

Galatians 1:1-10 : 1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers and sisters[a] with me, To the churches in Galatia:
3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse! 10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Galatians 3 1-14: 
1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the sin-prone flesh [Greek: sarx]? 4 Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? 5 So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? 6 So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” [Genesis 15:6. We shall encounter this again in Romans; Also, the opposite argument is made by the author of James: it was Abraham’s action of lifting his hand to the verge of sacrificing Isaac that proved his faith in God, enabling it to be counted as a deed of Righteousness.] 7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in
advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” [Deuteronomy 27:26] 11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” [Habakuk 2:4] 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” [Leviticus 18:5] 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” [Deuteronomy 21:23] 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 4: 8-20 :
8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

12 I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. 13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, 14 and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. 15 Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17 Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. 18 It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. 19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, 20 how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Galatians 5:1-13 : 1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. 4 You who want to be justified by the Law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. 7 You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? 8 Such persuasion does not come from
the one who calls you. 9 A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. 10 I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. 11 But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

Paul’s frustration with the Sinai Law (and by association, with the Jewish people) pervades his corpus. In 1 Thessalonians, written around the same time as Galatians, we can even begin to see the earliest stereotypification that would eventually give rise to Christian anti-semitism: the blaming of all Jews for the death of Jesus:

1 Thessalonians 2:1-20 1 You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. 3 For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; 6 nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, 7 though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. 8 So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. 9 You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. 11 As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, 12 urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 13 We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God’s word, which is also at work in you believers. 14 For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God’s wrath has overtaken them at last. 17 As for us, brothers and sisters, when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you--in person, not in heart--we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face. 18 For we wanted to come to you--certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again--but Satan blocked our way. 19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 Yes, you are our glory and joy!
Paul feels the need to also exhort the Corinthians against the Torah Law. His language reflects the urgency of one who is worried about the competing faction. In 1 Corinthians Paul shows us that his community is developing factions:

1 Corinthians 1:11-15  **11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. 12 What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)**

Paul continues, and this should not surprise, yet one can not help but be surprised, that here Paul makes complete nil of the ritual of Baptism (Immersion in water being perhaps the most visible ritual of the Movement, since John Baptist and in fact Jesus himself). Why? He tells us: for Paul, any Torah ritual takes away from the power of the cross, i.e. from the free gift of salvation thru Jesus’ sacrificial death.

1 Corinthians 9:1-3  **1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2 If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 3 This is my defense to those who would examine me.**

In his second letter we shall see his need to commend himself again; the Corinthians must be dabbling with the teachings of those other competing “super apostles”, like Apollos and Cephas/Peter. Paul goes quite far here; In 2 Corinthians Paul calls the Torah Law a ministry of death, something to be set aside, and Moses a hypocrite who hid this fact by veiling his face:

2 Corinthians 3:1-18  **1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? 2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; 3 and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, 6 who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but...**
the Spirit gives life. 7 Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, 8 how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory! 10 Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory; 11 for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory! 12 Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, 13 not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. 14 But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. 15 Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; 16 but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Also: 2 Corinthians 11:1-33 1 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! 2 I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. 5 I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. 6 I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge; certainly in every way and in all things we have made this evident to you. 7 Did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I proclaimed God's good news to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for my needs were supplied by the friends who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will continue to refrain from burdening you in any way. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. 11 And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 12 And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about. 13 For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their works [\(\textit{erga/\varepsilon\gamma\alpha}, \text{same term that Paul uses when condemning "the works of the Law"}]. 16 I repeat, let no one think that I am a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 What I am saying in regard to this boastful confidence, I am saying not with the Lord's authority, but as a fool; 18 since many boast according to human standards, I will also boast. 19 For you gladly put up with fools, being wise
2 Corinthians 12:1-21  

1 It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. 3 And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—

4 was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. 5 On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. 6 But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. 7 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 8 but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 9 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. 10 I have been a fool! You forced me to it. Indeed you should have been the ones commending me, for I am not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. 12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works. 13 How have you been worse off than the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong! 14 Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children
ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15 I will most gladly spend and be spent for you. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? 16 Let it be assumed that I did not burden you. Nevertheless (you say) since I was crafty, I took you in by deceit. 17 Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? 18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves with the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? 19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? We are speaking in Christ before God. Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up. 20 For I fear that when I come, I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish; I fear that there may perhaps be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 I fear that when I come again, my God may humble me before you, and that I may have to mourn over many who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practiced.

Paul also ventures to address the Jesus followers in Rome, in the late 50’s. Paul seems to know quite a bit about the Roman assembly (after all, ten years earlier, in the late 40's, he came to know Aquila and his wife Prisca in Corinth after they and other Jews were expelled from Rome by Claudius), yet we know that he played no role in the founding of that community because he says so:

Romans 15:18-33 18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ. 20 Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, 21 but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand." 22 This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. 23 But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you 24 when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while.

In the case of the Roman community, the only other option is that it was founded by emissaries approved by James (such as Peter, or others unknown to us).

So, if Paul did not found the community and normally stayed away from building on someone else’s foundation, what urgent matter overrides his restraint and compels Paul to address the Roman community? His opening remarks do show a urgent matter:

Romans 1:16-19 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith." 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

His closing statement also summarizes his struggle:
Romans 16:17-20 : 17 I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; Avoid them. 18 For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. 19 For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil. 20 The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet.

Who is “them” that are to be avoided? Is Paul eager to protect “the teaching that you have learned” from “those to be avoided”? Or is he the one looking to nudge the community away into a different teaching, that of his own? Let's take a look.

First, we can see that by the time of Paul’s writing, the Roman community is now mostly made up of Gentiles (perhaps the Jewish majority never reconstituted itself after Claudius’ expulsion):

Romans 1:13-15 : I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, … 15 --hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

But there are some Jews too. We know this because, when making an exhortation that Gentiles should not be arrogant vis a vis Israel (since most of the Jewish nation have not accepted Jesus as Messiah), Paul needs to clarify that he is addressing the Gentiles of the community:

Romans 11:13-36 13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry 14 in order to make my own people jealous, and thus save some of them. 15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead! 16 If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy. 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, 18 do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you.

Now let's get back to “what is Paul wanting so urgently to tell the Roman community?” Romans Chapter 2 gets to the heart of the matter: the community is relying on the Law, yet, for Paul, the demands of the Law are impossible to meet and thus can not save you; but salvation by faith in Jesus is now here:

He first exhorts both Jews and Gentiles: “If you rely on the precepts of the Law, and you expect people to meet those precepts, and moreover you judge people on their adherence to the Law, get ready because you yourself surely will fail and be condemned”. Here is what he tells those who rely on Commandments:

Romans 2:1-29 1 You have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. 2 You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." 3 Do you
imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 For he will repay according to each one's deeds: 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality. 12 All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. 15 They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all. 17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law [Is Paul talking to the Jews of the community? Certainly that, but is it also that the Gentiles of the community are relying on the Sinai Commandments? Perhaps! Why else does he say “if you call yourself” and not “if you are”?] and boast of your relation to God 18 and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, 19 and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, 21 you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." 25 Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law. 28 For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. 29 Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart--it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.

To the above argument, any Jew (then and now) replies: “God requires that people strive to follow the Commandments (Sinai Commandments for Israel, Noah’s Commandments for the nations); but God will not condemn anyone who falls short, if that person calls out to God’s name sincerely:
Joel 2:32 And everyone who calls on the name of YH-H will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as YH-H has said, even among the survivors whom YH-H calls.

For Paul, the times for thinking this way are gone. According to Paul, by the act of Jesus’ death and resurrection, God is telling us that striving for the Commandments is no longer necessary because the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31 is at hand (Jeremiah 31:31-34: 31 The days are surely coming, says YH-H, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says YH-H. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says YH-H: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know YH-H," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says YH-H; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.). Moreover, Paul is telling us that becoming a beneficiary of that prophecy only comes by calling, not on YH-H, but on YH-H’s anointed:

Romans 3:21-31 21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Paul says “A person is justified apart of the Law. Or is God the God of the Jews only?” When Paul talks about “the Law” he means “the Sinai Law”. Implicitly he is telling us what is behind his teaching: If God ONLY had salvation for the Jews, then, YES, God would justify the Jew according to the Law (!!). But Paul wants Gentiles to be saved and on equal footing with the Jews, and since Paul can’t imagine that God can establish different paths for different nations, Paul’s only answer is: let God depose the need for the Law, and replace it with something that works the same way for all nations: Faith in Jesus.

Paul threw the baby out with the bathwater. He could have accepted what James said at the Jerusalem Council: Let the Jews follow the Sinai Law, and let the Gentiles...
follow their own path, as long as they are consistent with the Noahide Laws. And let all call out YH-H’s name when we fall short.

But perhaps Jewish extremists (within James’ community or outside of it) continued to argue (also incorrectly) that only by becoming a Jew and following the Sinai Covenant can a Gentile join the remnant to be saved, pushing Paul to advocate for the other extreme: the complete annulment of the Sinai Law.

A document by an unknown Roman writer, named “Pseudo Ambrose” or “Ambrosiaster” by modern scholarship, gives additional support to the case that the initial Roman community consisted of Jews, and not only that, but that they even taught Gentile members to keep the law.

Ambrosiaster, prologue to Commentary on Romans (written between 366 and 384CE):

It is evident, therefore, the Jews in the times of the apostles, as they were under Roman rule, also dwelt in Rome; From them who had believed, they taught to the Romans to profess Christ, keep the Law. However, the Romans, having heard of the fame and virtues of Christ, were easily persuaded to believe; the wise ones, with good reason to be discrete, immediately corrected the error of those who are sick, and remained faithful to him.

[Constat itaque temporibus apostolorum Judaeos, propterea quod sub regno Romano agerent, Romae habitasse ; ex quibus bi qui crediderant, tradiderunt Romanis ut Christum profitterent, legem servarent : Romani autem, audita fama virtutum Christi, faciles ad credendum fuerunt, utpote prudentes : nec immerito prudentes, qui male inducti statim correcti sunt, et permanserunt in eo.]

Editorial: What is unclear is whether Ambrosiaster’s information is based on independent sources, or whether he has deduced his insights from reading Paul’s letter to the Romans. Evidently Ambrosiaster, a Catholic Roman, considers it a “sickness” to profess Christ and keep the Law. But that is, of course, beside our point here. Rather, the point is: Paul's main struggle is to contradict the Apostles’ main teaching, that only by striving to DO the Commandments does one demonstrate one’s allegiance to the Creator.

Let us provide a final examination of Paul’s teachings with two topics: his stance on Food Regulations, and his stance on Taxes.

Paul on food regulations:

The issue of “unclean animals” was not the only issue about food regulation. Perhaps a more delicate issue was that of foods previously sacrificed to idols. In Exodus 34:15 God tells Israel: “You should not forge a treaty with the locals, then stray after their idols, slaughter to those idols, and be invited by them to eat from such offerings.” So, the Commandment is not only about not dedicating food to false gods; it is also about not partaking in any social circumstance that condones the dedication (even by Gentiles) of food to idols. As we shall see, Paul circumvents this.

In Graeco-Roman times, it was common practice for butcheries to accompany the slaughtering with a dedication to the (pagan) divinities. In such case, it would be very difficult for a Jew to mix with Gentiles, especially in the cities of the diaspora. As we
saw already, in Antioch Peter immediately reverts to a separate table when those from James come to “check in” on things, much to Paul’s frustration. That dispute was not about Peter eating or not eating pork. (He most certainly would not have!). It was most likely about Peter risking eating of the food brought in by Gentiles, which would have been purchased at a market that dedicates to Greek (or other) deities. But for Paul this is not a problem. His case: since false gods are false, they don’t exist, so no harm done! He’s missing the point: God forbids partaking in social gatherings where such food is eaten because it condones the practice of idolatry, which God abhors. Thus, God not only expects Israelites to abstain from condoning it (ie that is the direct prohibition of Exodus 34:15, addressed to Israel specifically), but we can say the implication is that God considers an offense in general and hence forbidden to Jews as well. That is where James was coming from, when he ruled at the Jerusalem Council that Gentiles should abstain from food sacrificed to idols. But here’s what Paul tells the (non-Jewish) Corinthians and the mixed Jewish and Gentile assembly in Rome:

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 NRSV

1 Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; 3 but anyone who loves God is known by him. 4 Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." 5 Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 7 It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8 "Food will not bring us close to God." We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. 9 But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? 11 So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. 12 But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

Romans 14:1-23 NRSV

1 Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. 2 Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables [author’s note: these ‘weak ones’ are observant to Torah, and thus avoid meat sacrificed to idols that represent gods (gods can be pagan deities or earthly powers like the Roman emperor, etc). Paul calls them weak, as if to say “you avoid those gods because you think they exist and have power, but I know that ALL power only comes from God and Jesus.” James would have likely called them “strong ones”. James knows that ALL power comes from God, but he also knows that God commands that one take no part in rituals that proclaim otherwise.]. 3 Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not
pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. 5 Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. 6 Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. 7 We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." 12 So then, each of us will be accountable to God. 13 Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. 19 Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. 20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; 21 it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. 22 The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. 23 But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

In short, Paul will not let food come in the way of Greeks and Jews coming together. There is something to be said for this. Paul’s solution: If there are weak ones (i.e. those who think they could be sinning by eating certain things) it’s nice if you also abstain (i.e. for the sake of the “weak”, you should become like the “weak”), but, to paraphrase Paul, “ideally all are strong (strong in faith that all foods are clean) and can forget the Torah Laws about food”.

Paul on paying Taxes to Caesar:  

Romans 13:1 - 14:22  1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; 4 for it is
God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

A final word on Romans, as Paul closes his epistle. Paul may not have been a founder of the community of Jesus followers in Rome, but he sure seems to know many people there. Witness Paul's closing farewell address in that letter:

Romans 16:1-21 1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my relative Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. 12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother—a mother to me also. … 21 Timothy, my co-worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

Several very key data points come out from the above:

(1) Paul has relatives in Rome.

(2) One of those relatives is a Herodian. Who is “the family of Aristobulus” and is it connected with the immediately following “greet my relative, Herodion”? The reader will recall that after Herod the Great killed his own son Aristobulus, Aristobulus’ son (Agrippa I) was raised in Rome. So was Agrippa I’s son, Agrippa II, also raised in Rome. Hence, we have the household of Aristobulus home-based in Rome. This kinsman Herodion must be a member of this household. No other Jewish family (let alone Roman) would have used the appellation “Herodion” if they did not descend from Herod the Great. Recall also that it is Agrippa II who in 59CE, ruling from Caesarea, agrees to protect Paul from the grip of the Jewish zealots and send him to his “house arrest” in Rome. This same Agrippa II would later show his allegiance to Rome by fully siding with Rome and Vespasian during the Jewish War of 66CE-70CE. If indeed Paul is related to the Herodians, it would certainly explain the rights given him while in “house arrest” in Rome. Recall that previously Paul has already shown his respect for the Roman authorities and Roman rule.

(3) Some of those named by Paul (Andronicus and Junia) are Jews (they are relatives of Paul) who have not only experienced prison sentences, but have been part of the
Jesus-followers in Rome, since before Paul’s conversion (around 35CE ??). That means that the community in Rome is very old, probably one of the first to be assembled outside Eretz Israel and the Jordan area.

(4) Paul greets some twenty people in Rome that are a part of the community there. Without deep statistical insights, we can still surmise from this that the community (if Paul knew no more than ten percent of them) must have been numerous, a couple-hundred at least ? In fact, they must have been numerous enough, that they are already seen as a threat to local authorities and are facing imprisonment for being Jesus-followers. In fact, we saw already that by circa 49CE, emperor Claudius, “since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chresto, he expelled them from Rome.” [Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit.]

(5) Paul greets Prisca and Aquila. Acts tells us that they met Paul for the first time in Corinth, AFTER having been left due to Claudius’ expulsion of the Jews because of ‘Chrestus’. This means that by the writing of ‘Romans’, Prisca and Aquila have been able to return to Rome. This makes sense, since the expulsion decree was expired once Claudius died in 54CE. Hence, Paul is writing ‘Romans’ some time after 54CE.

(6) Interesting that Paul has a relative “Lucius” (λουκιος/Loukios). In all likelihood this is not the same as the λουκας/Loukas, i.e. “Luke”, of Colossians 4:14/Philemon 1:24/2 Timothy 4:11 (held by canonical tradition as the author of this gospel), but in the unlikely case he is the same, and in the unlikely case Loukas is indeed the author of the gospel, that would make the author of “Luke” a relative of Paul and could explain this gospel’s thematic as an apologist for Paul and Pauline-thought. This certainly a long-shot, however.

The debate exemplified by Paul’s letter to the Roman community would continue for a very long while, and (as well shall see) we will find it for many centuries forward where-ever we find followers of the original Jesus Movement. The Pseudo-Clementines, although dating from no earlier than 100CE (final redactions may date as late as late third century), presents a story of the Roman community’s connection to James from the very beginning, reinforcing, in the mouth of Peter and Clement (bishop of Rome), the primacy of James and the Mosaic Law, and the counterattack to Paul’s “If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted [from me], let them be under God’s curse!” (Gal 1:9). In the Pseudo-Clementines Paul is referred to as “the Enemy”, and “with his Lawless teaching”, and a long portion is dedicated to a series of confrontations between Peter and Paul (code named “Simon Magus” so as to avoid Christian attention). The Pseudo-Clementines are pseudo-epigraphs, written by a Torah-observant community (not necessarily in Rome and probably later than Paul’s time. The story was probably preserved by Torah-abiding Jesus followers well into the Constantinian era, if not later. The author narrates the clashes between Saul/Paul and the original Jesus Movement led by the Apostles, starting with Saul’s persecutions (ca 35CE) presumably thru the culmination of Peter’s and Paul’s known activities, ca 60CE. In particular, the following passages warn against the teachings of the converted Paul to the communities addressed by the twelve apostles and the their leadership under James. If the story is true, the clashes between Peter and Paul in Rome would have taken place between ca 51CE (the falling apart event in Antioch of Syria, shortly after the Jerusalem Council) and ca 60CE, the culmination of Paul’s activities in Rome. In reality, because we know that the Pseudo-Clementines were being edited and published
thru the mid third century, it is clear that the authors felt a need for it; hence even if the story of Peter versus Paul in Rome is fictitious, it is evidence of a clash between Pauline and Jamesian/Apostolic schools at least thru the late 200's CE.

Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, Book IV, Chs. XXXIV & XXXV:

XXXIV … And he [Satan], terrified by this answer, and fearing lest the true religion of the one and true God should be restored, hastened straightway to send forth into this world false prophets, and false apostles, and false teachers, who should speak indeed in the name of Christ, but should accomplish the will of the demon. XXXV-False Apostles. Wherefore observe the greatest caution, that you believe no teacher, unless he bring from Jerusalem the testimonial of James the Lord's brother, or of whosoever may come after him. For no one, unless he has gone up thither, and there has been approved as a fit and faithful teacher for preaching the word of Christ,—unless, I say, he brings a testimonial thence, is by any means to be received. But let neither prophet nor apostle be looked for by you at this time, besides us. For there is one true Prophet, whose words we twelve apostles preach; for He is the accepted year of God, having us apostles as His twelve months. But for what reason the world itself was made, or what diversities have occurred in it, and why our Lord, coming for its restoration, has chosen and sent us twelve apostles, shall be explained more at length at another time. Meantime He has commanded us to go forth to preach, and to invite you to the supper of the heavenly King, which the Father hath prepared for the marriage of His Son, and that we should give you wedding garments, that is, the grace of baptism; which whosoever obtains, as a spotless robe with which he is to enter to the supper of the King, ought to beware that it be not in any part of it stained with sin, and so he be rejected as unworthy and reprobate.

Pseudo-Clementine Homilies,

Homily XI, Chapter XXXV.—"Beware of False Prophets."

Then after three months were fulfilled, he [Peter] ordered me [Clement] to fast for several days, and then brought me to the fountains that are near to the sea, and baptized me as in ever-flowing water. Thus, therefore, when our brethren rejoiced at my God-gifted regeneration, not many days after he turned to the elders in presence of all the church, and charged them, saying: "Our Lord and Prophet, who hath sent us, declared to us that the wicked one, having disputed with Him forty days, and having prevailed nothing against Him, promised that he would send apostles from amongst his subjects, to deceive. Wherefore, above all, remember to shun apostle or teacher or prophet who does not first accurately compare his preaching with that of James, who was called the brother of my Lord, and to whom was entrusted to administer the church of the Hebrews in Jerusalem,—and that even though he come to you with witnesses: lest the wickedness which disputed forty days with the Lord, and prevailed nothing, should afterwards, like lightning falling from heaven upon the earth, send a preacher to your injury, as now he has sent Simon upon us, preaching, under pretence of the truth, in the name of the Lord, and sowing error. Wherefore He who hath sent us, said, 'Many shall come to me in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them.'"
Pseudo-Clementine Homilies – the Letter from Peter to James

Peter to James, the lord and bishop of the holy Church, under the Father of all, through Jesus Christ, wishes peace always.

Chapter I.—Doctrine of Reserve.

Knowing, my brother, your eager desire after that which is for the advantage of us all, I beg and beseech you not to communicate to any one of the Gentiles the books of my preachings which I sent to you, nor to any one of our own tribe before trial; but if any one has been proved and found worthy, then to commit them to him, after the manner in which Moses delivered his books to the Seventy who succeeded to his chair. Wherefore also the fruit of that caution appears even till now. For his countrymen keep the same rule of monarchy and polity everywhere, being unable in any way to think otherwise, or to be led out of the way of the much-indicating Scriptures. For, according to the rule delivered to them, they endeavour to correct the discordances of the Scriptures, if any one, haply not knowing the traditions, is confounded at the various utterances of the prophets. Wherefore they charge no one to teach, unless he has first learned how the Scriptures must be used. And thus they have amongst them one God, one law, one hope.

Chapter II.—Misrepresentation of Peter’s Doctrine.

In order, therefore, that the like may also happen to those among us as to these Seventy, give the books of my preachings to our brethren, with the like mystery of initiation, that they may indoctrinate those who wish to take part in teaching; for if it be not so done, our word of truth will be rent into many opinions. And this I know, not as being a prophet, but as already seeing the beginning of this very evil. For some from among the Gentiles have rejected my legal preaching, attaching themselves to certain lawless and trifling preaching of the man who is my enemy. And these things some have attempted while I am still alive, to transform my words by certain various interpretations, in order to the dissolution of the law; as though I also myself were of such a mind, but did not freely proclaim it, which God forbid! For such a thing were to act in opposition to the law of God which was spoken by Moses, and was borne witness to by our Lord in respect of its eternal continuance; for thus he spoke: ”The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” And this He has said, that all things might come to pass. But these men, professing, I know not how, to know my mind, undertake to explain my words, which they have heard of me, more intelligently than I who spoke them, telling their catechumens that this is my meaning, which indeed I never thought of. But if, while I am still alive, they dare thus to misrepresent me, how much more will those who shall come after me dare to do so!

Chapter III.—Initiation.

Therefore, that no such thing may happen, for this end I have prayed and besought you not to communicate the books of my preaching which I have sent you to any one, whether of our own nation or of another nation, before trial; but if any one, having been tested, has been found worthy, then to hand them over to him, according to the initiation of Moses, by which he delivered his books to the Seventy who succeeded to his chair; in order that thus they may keep the faith, and everywhere deliver the rule of truth, explaining all things after our
tradition; lest being themselves dragged down by ignorance, being drawn into error by conjectures after their mind, they bring others into the like pit of destruction. Now the things that seemed good to me, I have fairly pointed out to you; and what seems good to you, do you, my lord, becomingly perform. Farewell.

57CE

The record in Luke/Acts of Paul’s final interaction with the Jerusalem leadership gives us great pause. Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem also results in a bitter ending, the final parting of the ways (literally, but also sealing the ideological chasm too) between James and Paul:

Acts 21:17-34: 17 When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us warmly. 18 The next day Paul went with us to visit James; and all the elders were present. 19 After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 When they heard it, they praised God. Then they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. 21 They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. 22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23 So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. 24 Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law. 25 But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having purified himself, he entered the temple with them, making public the completion of the days of purification when the sacrifice would be made for each of them. 27 When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, who had seen him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd. They seized him, 28 shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. 30 Then all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. 31 While they were trying to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Immediately he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the tribune came, arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; he inquired who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing, some another; and
as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.

One can not help but notice a most amazing fact: the crowd of Jewish zealots who attempt to kill Paul do not touch James. Knowing James’ zealousness for the Sinai Covenant, it should not surprise us that the crowd is after Paul only. One may even wonder whether James’ own followers were among those Jewish zealots that go after Paul. Paul’s duality in the end catches up with him. Recall Paul’s famous admission, that for him the Torah rituals Commandments are a nuisance, something he will pay lip service to, as long as he can get people to “confess Jesus as savior” (very reminiscent of today’s Messianic Judaism, which goes thru the motions of the Sinai Commandment rituals, yet holds that what is really important is to accept Jesus as divine savior):

1 Corinthians 9:19-27  
19 For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak ["weak" is Paul’s euphemism for “those to are weak in faith, and therefore rely on works of the Law for their salvation.”] I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

58 to 60CE

But Paul’s story does not end here. For Paul continues his missionary activities from his imprisonment in Rome. Let us recall that Paul is a Roman citizen. A Jew with Roman citizenship is a rare sight in the first century CE. It would seem that Paul’s credentials are quite impressive.

Paul’s imprisonment (if we accept Acts’ account) seems more akin to a house arrest, as he is allowed correspondence and even active personal dialogue with people, and none other than imperial circles:

Philippians 1:12-14 :

12 I want you to know, beloved that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole Imperial Guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; 14 and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

Likewise Paul’s farewell in Phillipians ends thus:

Philippians 4:20-23 : 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. 21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor's household. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
Paul has access to the Imperial Guard and Caesar’s household? We have seen already in ‘Romans’, Paul’s connections in Rome, including family and possible relatives from the Herodian line. His reference in Philippians to his friendship with the emperor’s household does not surprise.

As for Paul in Rome (that is, 61CE and later), down to his final letters written from Rome, he continues to be plagued by the influence exerted in the diaspora by “those of the circumcision”:

Philemon 1:14-18 NSRV 14 and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear. 15 Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. 16 These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; 17 the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. 18 What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.

Philippians 3:1-21 NRSV 1 Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard. 2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh—4 even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 Yet whatever gains I had, the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard. 2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh—4 even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. 17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18 For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior,
the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

If 1 Timothy be authentic, we also have:

1 Timothy 4:1-16: 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. 3 They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer. 6 If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness, 8 for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 9 The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 11 These are the things you must insist on and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I arrive [Did Paul expect a imminent release from house-arrest in Rome?] , give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. 15 Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

One thing is clear: James' Jerusalem community was not only present within Judea/Galilee/Samaria (i.e. Eretz Israel), but also very active with the Jewish communities in the diaspora. Already in John the Baptist's time and Jesus' time, the movement was acquainted with the cities just east of the Jordan (perhaps using them more as home-bases away from Herodian and Roman watch). Then we hear of their presence in Damascus during Saul's persecution. Later we see them further north in Antioch of Syria (ca 41 to 44CE). From there on, we have seen that the reach of the Jerusalem community was manifest in most communities addressed by Paul: Galatia, Thessalonika, Corinth, Rome, Philippi (and recall also that the community of Rome is one where Paul was not involved in starting; i.e. it must have been founded by emmisaries under James’ umbrella).

Was the conflict avoidable? Can two cultures come together without merging?

The prophets of Israel highlighted the primacy of the ethical Commandments over the ritual Commandments. To love one's neighbor, to protect the widow and the
orphan, were always better than sacrifices. Paul envisioned a world of Love, and a world of Love without borders where “Greek” and Jew would relate to the Deity in the same way (that is without commandments specific to a nationality). One might say that this is a lofty vision (“Imagine” by John Lennon comes to mind). Yet, one thing stands in the way of Paul’s vision: nations have unique cultures and self-identify with unique ways to approach the Creator. The Torah’s counter-view to Paul’s “imagine a world with one religion”, is “imagine a world where each nation upholds it’s own God-given covenant”. Paul’s vision in time became the anti-religion against all religions. Rather than foster different avenues for nations to approach the Creator, Paul’s catholic (universal) vision calls all cultures’ ways a bunch of “profane myths and old wives’ tales” (1 Timothy 4:7) and of Judaism his school says “pay no attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth” (Titus 1:14). Ironically (and here is Paul’s second abomination), he himself introduces a new dogma: that it is not works of Love that enables your communion with the Creator, but instead (so that you might not think in arrogance that you are capable of making it to God by your own means) that it is ONLY thru “confessing Jesus as savior” that you are enabled to commune with God.

Many have written on the famous “parting of the ways”, and unfortunately the usual assumption that is implicit in this phrase is that “at some point in time, the community of Jesus followers stepped away from their Jewish roots”. The history of James vs Paul tells us exactly the opposite. The original Way taught by Jesus (and honored by James and his subsequent successors) NEVER parted from Judaism. Rather, with Paul a NEW “way” was born whose central tenet (that salvation depends on confessing Jesus as Savior) went exactly against THE most fundamental tenet in Judaism: that salvation depends on one’s faith in the Creator as evidenced by striving to DO His Torah Commandments (especially Love of neighbor, Leviticus 19:18). With Luke/Acts (ca 90 CE), this “new way” would claim the term “Christian” and never look back.

Our mystery Jewish Jesus follower behind Al-Jabbar’s Tathbit summarizes it well, first on Jesus, and then on Paul:

On Jesus, he wrote (Reynolds 2010, pg 87) :

Christ read his prayers as the prophets and the Israelites did both before him and in his era when they read from the word of God, from God’s word in the Torah and the psalms of David. Yet these Christian sects simply recite prayers that were put to melody by those who preceded them and prayed with them. They carry out lamentations or songs, and they say, “This is the Mass of the Eucharist of so and so”, assigning it to the one who put it down in writing.

They pray to the East, yet Christ, until God took him, only prayed to the West, to Jerusalem, as David and the prophets, and the Israelites before him.

Christ was circumcised and required circumcision, just as those before him – Moses, Aaron, and the prophets – required it.

He and his companions, to the day that he left the world, only fasted on the day that the Israelites fasted. As for the fifty days on which the Christians fast, the Fast of Nineveh and the Fast of the Virgins, he never fasted on any of these ever. During the fast he did not eat what they eat, nor did he prohibit doing what they prohibit.
He never took Sunday as the holiday, ever, nor did he ever build a church. He did not annul the Sabbath, even for one hour.

He never ate pork, but forbade it and cursed those who eat it, just as the prophets did before him. The Christians claim that he cured Mary Magdelene, casting out seven demons from her. The demons said to him, “Where do we seek shelter?” He said to them, “Go into these unclean beasts”, meaning pigs.

He forbade meat slaughtered by those other than ahl al-kitab, as he forbade intermarriage with them.

He conducted himself, in regard to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and punishments, in the way of the prophets before him.

These Christians have no punishment at all for one who fornicates, sodomizes, slanders, or gets drunk. They are threatened with no suffering in this world or the next.

In a word, Christ only came to revive the Torah and to establish it. He said, “I have come to you only to act in accordance with the Torah and the Commandments of the prophets before me. I did not come to abolish but to complete. For with God it is easier for the sky to fall upon the earth than for anything to be abolished from the Law of Moses. Whoever abolishes anything from it will be called missing from the kingdom of heaven.”

He and his companions continued in this way until he left the world. He said to his companions, “Act as you say me acting. Command the people that which I have commanded you. Be with them as I was with you. Be for them what I was with you”. …

And on Paul, Shlomo Pines summarizes, actually paraphrases, (1966, pg 26, folios 73a) our source: [comments in brackets, mine, not Pines’.] As is evident, Al Jabbar’s source, our mystery Jewish Jesus follower, evidently has access to Acts and possibly other Christian canonical books like Paul’s epistles, particularly 2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Here is Pines’ summary:

Paul, who is described as a villainous Jew with a passion for dominion, is said to have at first helped the Jews against the [Jesus followers]. However, when he returns to Jerusalem after a prolonged absence, he changes sides, helps the [Jesus followers] and tells them to separate from the Jews and to associate with people hostile to the Jews [i.e. anti-Jewish Graeco-Romans]. … Paul (who as a Jew was called Sha’ul) also says to the Jews that he spent fourteen days with God in heaven, who gave him many injunctions and told him ‘many shameful things about you [the Jews], which I will not tell you.’ … According to our text, the Jews were amazed at these stupid tales and took him to the companion (sahib) of Caesar (qaysar) who was their king, having been appointed by the Romans (al-Rum). The king ordered him to be beaten, but learning from him that he was a Roman, sent him instead to Constantinople [evidently our Jewish author is writing after 330CE, and is ignorant in that he confuses Rome of Paul’s time with Constantinople, the Byzantine capital since 330CE.]. There he associated with the Romans and tried to stir them up against the Jews. Among other things, he scraped an acquaintance with the queen [if true, this would refer to Poppaea, Nero’s second wife]. He denied validity to the laws of Moses, which were repugnant to the Romans, declaring among other things,
that circumcision was an obligation for the Jews only and that the eating of pork was permitted, as nothing which enters into man is forbidden [see Romans 14:14 where Paul attributes it to Jesus (consistent with Jesus’ sayings in Mark 7:15, Matthew 15:10-11, and Thomas 14).] He also denied validity to the commandments concerning ritual cleanliness. … In short, no Roman customs and also no benefits held by the Romans were opposed by him, whereas the Torah was described by him as being wholly evil.

Paul spoke to the Romans of the asceticism, grace, and miracles of Jesus and people listened to him. However, if one considers that he denied the religious teachings of Christ and adopted those of the Romans, one must come to the conclusion that the Christians became Romanized (tārwāwāmī), whereas the Romans were not converted to [the original Jesus movement]. It was in consequence to Paul’s anti-Jewish propaganda that the Romans, led by Titus, marched against the Jews, killing great multitudes and carrying away their treasures [!! Here is the precise text, from Reynolds, 2010, pg 103: Then one of the Kings accepted Paul’s denunciation of the Jews and adopted his opinion of them. He marched against them and killed a great number of them, took their possessions, and declared them without rights. He brought back previous objects from their region. Paul’s popularity was established among them and their love for him increased. This king who raided the Israelites was called Titus.] [see Chapter Note 1, where Josephus also has a intriguing segment with respect to a similar person, a Saulus.].

This increased Paul’s popularity. His prestige was high among the common people as he practiced magic and medicine. For both the Romans and Armenians [another anachronism of our Jewish Jesus follower author] are excessively ignorant, though they are skillful in certain crafts. …

One of these kings, Nero, found out what kind of a person Paul was, had him brought into his presence, and asked him about circumcision. Paul expressed his disapproval of this rite and of those who practiced it, but had to admit that Jesus and the apostles were circumcised. And he was found to be circumcised himself. Thus the king discovered that Paul encouraged the Romans to practice a religion opposed to the religion of Christ. The king ordered him to be crucified after various indignities had been inflicted on him. His wish that he be crucified horizontally, rather than vertically, as was Jesus, was granted [clearly our author has picked up a variation of the legend of Peter’s alleged up-side-down crucifixion in Rome].

Reynolds’ translation gives us additional insight (comments in brackets mine, not from our Al Jabbar source nor Reynolds):

Reynolds 2010, pg 90:

Paul declared in a book that they call “The Apostle” [this refers to “The Acts of the Apostles”]: “I have said to them: for how long will you make the people Jews?” Paul declared in “The Apostles”, “With the Jew I was a Jew, with the Roman a Roman, with the Arama-I and Arama-I’? The Arama-I is one who worships the planets and idols.

This Paul, according to them, is more exalted than Moses, Aaron, David, and all of the prophets. When his letters and discourse are read in the church,
they stand, venerating and exalting him and his discourse. The do not do this for the Tawrat, which according to them is the speech of Christ, who wrote it for Moses, sent him to his people, split the sea for him, and transformed his staff into a snake for him. They do not do this during the Gospels, in which is the discourse of Christ.

Paul said to the Jews: “The Tawrat is a good guide for the one who acts according to it”. Then he said to the Romans and others who were the enemies of Moses and the prophets: “The Tawrat stirs up evil. When the laws of the Tawrat are put away from people, God’s goodness will be perfected and His benevolence will be completed”. The Christians have all of this, along with things even more terrible and obscene. They knew Christ acted according to the Tawrat and urged people to act accordingly”.

Reynolds 2010, pg 98-103:

This Paul was a wicked and evil Jew who incited evil and worked for evil people, anxious to cause disorders. He desired leadership and dominion and used every kind of plot to this end. When he was a Jew he was called Saul, and he worked against the [Jesus followers]. Then he left Jerusalem and was absent for a long time. He returned to Jerusalem and began to work with the [Jesus followers] against the Jews. He said to them: “Say this, do this; separate from the Jews and seek favor with the Gentiles, the enemies of the Jews”.

The Jews asked him, “How did you become a [Jesus follower] ? What led you to this?” He said: “God – Blessed and Most High – called me to this. My story is that I left Jerusalem, heading for Damascus. A dark night came upon me, a great wind blew, and I lost my sight. The Lord called me and said: ‘O Saul! Would you afflict the siblings and hurt the companions of my son?’. I replied, ‘O Lord, I repent.’ Then He said to me, ‘If it is as you say, go to Chaim, the Jewish priest, that he might return your vision to you.’ I went to him and informed him. Then he wiped his hand across my eyes. Something like egg shells or fish scales fell from them and I could see as before. Then God summoned me to heaven and I stayed with Him in heaven fourteen days. He entreated many things of me and told me many unpleasant things about you, which I will not say to you.” The Jews made fun of him. They were amazed at his foolishness and impudence.

They [the Jews] took him to an official of Caesar, the king of the Romans (they [the Jews] were at that time subject to the Romans). They said to him, “Do you know this man Saul?” He replied, “Of course. I know he is evil. He comes to us and slanders people.” They said to him, “He has claimed this and that” (mentioning to him what he said). The Roman became infuriated with him and ordered that he be thrown down to be beaten.

At this he [Paul] said to him, “Would you beat a Roman?” He replied, “Are you are Roman?” He [Paul] said, “Yes, I follow the religion of Caesar, king of the Romans. I am innocent of Judaism.” The official was forced to stop, since he [Paul] had taken refuge in the religion of the king, and he said to
him, “Here is a boat to take you to Constantinople. If you are Roman and follow the Roman religion, then go there, if it is as you say.”

He [Paul] said, “I will do it. Dispatch me to the land of the Romans.”

He went to Constantinople and spent time among the Romans. He attached himself to the king’s retinue and incited the Romans against the Jews. He reminded them of their enmity towards them, of what the Israelites had done to them and of [the Romans] whom they had killed.

He instilled among them fear of the evil of the Jews and made them feel that they were not secure from [the Jews’] coming to power and assaulting them. He also mentioned to them their great wealth.

It is Roman convention that their women do not veil themselves before men. The wife of the king rides in the king’s procession with an uncovered face. She addresses the people, giving orders and prohibitions. This Paul gained her favor and spoke to her about the affair of the Jews.

It is a Roman convention that a man is not permitted to marry more than one woman. They may not be separated by divorce, old age, or any type of fault. Only she is permitted to him until she dies. The Roman women often detest the religious practices of the Israelite prophets for deeming divorce lawful and allowing a man to marry as many women as he can support. Saul was asked, “Are you from a people of this way?” He said, “No. A man is not permitted more than one woman, as according to the decrees of the Romans.” He played the hypocrite with the women about this and became close to the king’s wife. She spoke to the king about raiding the Israelites, mentioning to him what Saul said. She asked him to listen to him and he did so.

He took the name Paul, which is a Roman name, to win them over.

The Romans have a severe aversion to circumcision of men and women and detest those nations that practice it. They asked Paul about it and he replied, “Yes, it is as you consider it. Circumcision is not necessary for you. It is only necessary for the Israelites since they are a nation whose foreskin is in their heart.”

The Romans eat pork. He [Paul] announced, “It is not forbidden. Nothing which enters the inside of a person is forbidden. Only lies, which exit him, are forbidden.”

The Israelites do not eat what is slaughtered by idolaters, or by those who are not ahl al-kitab, but the Romans are not like this. Paul concurred with them in this. He played the hypocrite with them in everything and did not oppose them in anything.

At that time, the Roman religious traditions were widespread. Most of them venerated the planets and believed that they brought life and death, benefit and harm. They had temples and sacrifices for them. Some of them were of the Greek religion, holding that these planets are living, rational, providing, and that they are lords. They believed in magic. In summary, all of their religions were invalid, weak, and corrupt. Paul would recount to them Christ’s virtue and asceticism, that his supplications were answered,
and that he brought the dead to life. They would gather around him and listen to him, yet he was deceptive and wicked.

The Romans prayed towards the rising sun. They did not hold the necessity of ritual cleansing or major ablution for intercourse or menstruation. Nor did they keep themselves clean of urine, feces, or blood; they did not consider these things impure.

The Romans also married pagans and the rest of the nations, which the Israelites do not do. The Romans spoke to Paul about this and he announced, “Let the believing woman marry an unbelieving man, for she will purify him. He will not make her impure, and their child will be pure.” He added, “This was only forbidden by the Tawrat, but the Tawrat is entirely evil. When the laws of the Tawrat are removed from the people, God’s goodness will be perfected and His benevolence will be completed.”

Thus Paul tore himself away from the religion of Christ and entered the religions of the Romans. If you scrutinize the matter, you will find that the Christians became Romans and fell back to the religions of the Romans. You will not find that the Romans became Christian.

Then one of the kings accepted Paul’s denunciations of the Jews and adopted his opinion of them. He marched against them and killed a great number of them, took their possessions, and declared them licit [to be robbed or killed]. He brought back precious objects from their region. Paul’s popularity was established among them, and their love for him increased. This king who raided the Israelites was Titus.

Three hundred years after Jesus, Constantine will legalize Christianity (313CE), and shortly thereafter (starting 380CE) Rome will insist that all other religions are hogwash, paving the way for Christianity becoming the instrument of conquest and death that we have witnessed with the Inquisition, Pogroms, forced Christianizations in Europe, America, Africa, and the hatred of things Jewish (especially the Jewish people and the Sinai Covenant). Ironically, Rome surrounded Paul’s religion (the religion of “Jewish rituals are mid-wives tales” and “no one can be saved by Works”) with its own formal list of obligatory rituals and “sacraments” (like Sunday rest and worship, Sunday Eucharist, Confession, Easter, etc etc.). What ever happened to “no one can be saved by works, particularly rituals”?

A second irony: the spread of Paul’s religion (starting late first century, but especially after Constantine), also marked the end of the Pauline religion as a single system of thought, and the beginning of ongoing splintering and endless infighting on subjects of dogma. Much (certainly not all) of the splintering that happened stems from Paul’s fundamental dogma: that ultimate atonement and salvation can only come from Jesus. Said differently:

- The Torah tells us that (A) the Deity is one; and (B) only the Deity can forgive and provide salvation.
- When Paul claims that Jesus Christ is, both, a unique, i.e., separate being, AND capable of providing Salvation (recall Romans 10:9 If you confess with your
lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.), Paul is, either:
   o foregoing “B” (assuming that Paul did not assign to Jesus a status of “Deity”; recall 1Corinthians 8:6: For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.)
   OR
   o foregoing “A” (if one does give Jesus the status of “Deity”; recall Colossians 2:9-10: For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.

Those Christians who professed that Jesus was not the same as “the Deity” (best known among these were the Arians, after Arius, the priest who championed this view to Constantine circa 325CE) were accused of making ineffective Jesus’ power to Save (since, according to the Torah, only God can save) and were eventually anathemized. Another group, the Marcionites (after Marcion, circa 144CE) also maintained that Jesus Christ was different than the Deity, but they resolved the issue of foregoing “B” by foregoing the entire Torah lock-stock-and-barrel, labelling it as a work of a Jewish god, evil to the core. Now we don’t have to worry about God being the only one who can provide Salvation.

“Orthodoxy” (Greek for “right doctrine”) then became that group in favor of Jesus’ deification (which led to today’s Trinity, once we add the Holy Spirit to the collection of “God-beings” or “Persons”).

There were also those who explored other ways to preserve “A” and “B”, even if it meant foregoing Jesus Christ as a separate being: The Sabellians (named after Sabellius, ca. 215 CE) and the Docetists (from the Greek dokein, “to seem”) argued that Jesus Christ was a manifestation of the One God (akin to how God appeared earlier in history to Abraham before the destruction of S’dom and G’morrah, or to Jacob at Peniel, or to Moses “face to face” at the Tent of the Meeting). This did manage to preserve the Torah’s teaching that God is One and that Only God Saves. But they threw away the teaching from the Torah that the Messiah is an own unique being (e.g. see Daniel’s Son-of-Man prophecy), which Paul also honored. But Sabellian and Docetist thinking would run into further problem.

Once Orthodoxy (and Sabellianism and Docetism for that matter) equated Jesus Christ with Deity, a next question arose: can the Deity undergo suffering and even experience death (as Jesus Christ did on the Cross)? On the other hand, if Jesus Christ did not suffer, his sacrifice is ineffective and he can not be the agent of Salvation (the cornerstone of Pauline thought). In addressing this question, the Orthodox party would now break into three parties:
- One group (later called “Nestorian”) argued that Jesus and Christ are really two separate beings, and that Christ is Deity, while Jesus is human. Therefore, Jesus suffered and experienced death, but Christ did not. Jesus’ human-only sacrifice was deemed acceptable to enable Christ to provide Salvation to those
who confess Jesus Christ as Savior. Opponents argued that this would mean that such a sacrifice is not effective enough (i.e.: “if it was just a human who suffered and died, well, that is no different to countless of well-intended people of history; it can not possibly be enough to enable the Salvation of humanity).

- A second group (later called “Jacobite” or “Miaphysite”, meaning “one nature”) argued that Jesus and Christ are one and the same being. Not only were they “ok” with Christ suffering, but considered that that was necessary in order for the Sacrifice to be effective. Now we have a different problem: Since Jacobites still held Christ as Deity, we have made God to suffer and experience death.

- Roman Orthodoxy could not accept either view, and at Chalcedon (451CE) came up with it’s own approach, a linguistic non-solution: Jesus Christ was one “being” but containing two inextricably linked “natures”: human and Divine. Diaphysite (“two nature”) proponents could now have it both ways (or at least they thought so).

After Chalcedon, the empire squelched Jacobite and Nestorian Christianities, both of which survived only in the lands east of the Jordan, in areas like Armenia and Mesopotamian Osrhoene (which were sometimes part of Rome, sometimes part of Parthia/Persia, sometimes independent), and as far east as Persia, India, China, remaining there even to today (although in dwindling numbers), as well as in Egypt (today’s Copts are Miaphysite Christians). East of the Jordan the Nestorians and Jacobites would refer to Orthodoxy by a different name: Melkite (“of the Emperor”).

For their part, the Sabellians were quite content with Deity (which they considered indistinguishable from Jesus Christ) to undergo suffering and experience death and were often accused of patripassianism (making the Father suffer thru the Passion) by their Trinitarian adversaries (Nestorians, Jacobites, Chalcedonians); Anathema once again. The Docetists on the other hand preferred to forbid God’s suffering, and instead posited that God/JesusChrist pretended (dokein, “to seem”) to suffer and die. Anathema as well (for obliterating Paul’s number one dogma: that Jesus Christ suffered, bringing Salvation within reach of humanity).

Neither the Arian nor the Marcionite doctrines, with their considering Christ as “greater than all living beings, but less than God”, implied the suffering of God in the first place. And they themselves certainly did not consider Christ’s lower-than-God pedigree insufficient to grant Salvation. So, they stood untouched on the margins; Anathema that they already were, still marching to oblivion.

Orthodoxy will split once again (in 1014CE), this time due to differences on the nature of the Holy Spirit (prompted by political motives between the Eastern and Western parts of the Empire). The empire’s Orthodox position since 381CE had been that the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father. A Western (Roman Catholic) position, however, arose in 1014CE: that the Holy Spirit should be stated in the Orthodox creed as proceeding from the Son (the famous filioque clause). Again, at the root of the splintering debate is one of Paul’s central dogmas that Jesus is the exclusive entity between God the Father and the created universe. 1 Corinthians 8:6: For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom
we exist; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. Then, if “all things” exist in this world through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit (the entity par-excellence “in this world”) must exist through Jesus Christ. The result of the splintering? Today’s Greek Orthodox versus Roman Catholic denominations of Christianity.

In summary, Pauline religion wants a Jesus Christ that is tangibly in the created world (to the point of being able to suffer and experience death) and autonomous in his own right (willingly submitting to the Passion, not being moved like God’s puppet); Yet it also wants a Jesus Christ that exhibits many of the functionalities attributed in the Torah as exclusive to God (i.e., provides Salvation, is unable to suffer to the point of death, creates everything in the universe). Reconciling these incompatible concepts (that is, incompatible with the Torah’s teaching of One God, and Only God Saves) brought equally imperfect solutions as we’ve seen with Arians, Marcionites, Sabellians, Docetists, Nestorians, Jacobites, Catholics, and Byzantine/Greek Orthodox. Many more splinters would eventually come (Protestants painfully birthing from Roman Catholicism).

Is it really so problematic for Judaism to accept that God could manifest in the world thru a being like the Messiah? Judaism has never had a problem with God manifesting in the world (recall God appearing as a visitor to Abraham, or God appearing as a angel wrestling with Jacob, or God appearing as a voice from a burning bush to Moses, etc etc). But Judaism carefully guards against turning those manifestations into actual persistent entities in their own right (imagine Jews approaching God thru the image of a burning bush, saying things like “eternal bush, you came to Moses and strengthened him, giving us Salvation from Pharaoh’s hand!”). There is a word for ascribing divine functionality to a entity (whether living being or inanimate object): idolatry. The Torah forbids Israel from using forms to address the Creator (even in cases where were are told that God did manifest thru a form, e.g. Abraham’s visitor, or the Burning Bush, etc) because it is a slippery slope that easily leads people to confusing the form used in worship with the object of worship (the Creator). Recall Deut 4:15-19:

Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of ANY figure - the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. And when you look to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them...

Of course, there’s a practical reason too: no form can satisfy all people. When people confuse the Creator with a form used in worshipping the Creator, they will start to believe that the attributes of the form are God’s absolute attributes (and witness the endless roster of conflicts between peoples who fight to “uphold” their view of God’s attributes, e.g. “God is Jesus”, “God is Krishna”, “God is three”, “God is a jealous God”, “God is only love”, etc etc). But God has no form. God can not be ascribed attributes in any absolute way. After God created all things, including attributes
themselves. God only has Covenants with specific nations; When talking about God, all we can expect to be able say is how God behaves with respect to a Covenant established with a particular nation. In the Torah’s worldview, no nation can evangelize another because no one has the absolute grasp on God. All one can do is help others abide by God’s Covenant with them.

Paul (perhaps rightly so?) could not conceive of preaching a formless God to the very pagan Graeco-Roman world. Nor could he imagine preaching a limited Messiah. So he tried a semi-human savior god, and the fish took bait. Paulanity (with a good push from Constantine) would become the world’s largest religion for centuries to come.

But let us return to the late fifties and early sixties, where one of Jesus’ own emissaries is now missing in action.
Chapter Notes

1. Robert Eisenman has pointed out in his “James, the brother of Jesus” the possibility of Paul being the same as a “Saul” named by Josephus as aiding Titus in the destruction of the Temple during the Jerusalem siege between 66 and 70CE.

Antiquities Book 20, CHAPTER 9. CONCERNING ALBINUS UNDER WHOSE PROCURATORSHIP JAMES WAS SLAIN; AS ALSO WHAT EDIFICES WERE BUILT BY AGrippa.

1. AND now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrim without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa [that is, Agrippa II ] took the high priesthood from him,
when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

2. Now as soon as Albinus was come to the city of Jerusalem, he used all his endeavors and care that the country might be kept in peace, and this by destroying many of the Sicarii. But as for the high priest, Ananias he increased in glory every day, and this to a great degree, and had obtained the favor and esteem of the citizens in a signal manner; for he was a great hoarder up of money: he therefore cultivated the friendship of Albinus, and of the high priest [Jesus], by making them presents; he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of the people, and went to the thrashing-floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give these tithes to them. So the other high priests acted in the like manner, as did those his servants, without any one being able to prohibit them; so that [some of the] priests, that of old were wont to be supported with those tithes, died for want of food.

3. But now the Sicarii went into the city by night, just before the festival, which was now at hand, and took the scribe belonging to the governor of the temple, whose name was Eleazar, who was the son of Ananus [Ananias] the high priest, and bound him, and carried him away with them; after which they sent to Ananias, and said that they would send the scribe to him, if he would persuade Albinus to release ten of those prisoners which he had caught of their party; so Ananias was plainly forced to persuade Albinus, and gained his request of him. This was the beginning of greater calamities; for the robbers perpetually contrived to catch some of Ananias's servants; and when they had taken them alive, they would not let them go, till they thereby recovered some of their own Sicarii. And as they were again become no small number, they grew bold, and were a great affliction to the whole country.

4. About this time it was that king Agrippa [i.e. Agrippa II] built Cesarea Philippi larger than it was before, and, in honor of Nero, named it Neronias. And when he had built a theater at Berytus, with vast expenses, he bestowed on them shows, to be exhibited every year, and spent therein many ten thousand [drachmae]; he also gave the people a largess of corn, and distributed oil among them, and adorned the entire city with statues of his own donation, and with original images made by ancient hands; nay, he almost transferred all that was most ornamental in his own kingdom thither. This made him more than ordinarily hated by his subjects, because he took those things away that belonged to them to adorn a foreign city. And now Jesus son of Gamaliel, became the successor of Jesus son of Damneus, in the high priesthood, which the king had taken from the other; on which account
a sedition arose between the high priests, with regard to one another; for they got together bodies of the boldest sort of the people, and frequently came, from reproaches, to throwing of stones at each other. But Ananias was too hard for the rest, by his riches, which enabled him to gain those that were most ready to receive. Costobarus also, and Saulus, did themselves get together a multitude of wicked wretches, and this because they were of the royal family; and so they obtained favor among them, because of their kindred to Agrippa; but still they used violence with the people, and were very ready to plunder those that were weaker than themselves. And from that time it principally came to pass that our city was greatly disordered, and that all things grew worse and worse among us.

Josephus, Jewish Wars, Book 2 Chapter 20:

1. AFTER this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink; Costobarus, therefore, and Saul, who were brethren, together with Philip, the son of Jacimus, who was the commander of king Agrippa's forces, ran away from the city, and went to Cestius. But then how Antipas, who had been besieged with them in the king's palace, but would not fly away with them, was afterward slain by the seditious, we shall relate hereafter. However, Cestius sent Saul and his friends, at their own desire, to Achaia, to Nero, to inform him of the great distress they were in, and to lay the blame of their kindling the war upon Florus, as hoping to alleviate his own danger, by provoking his indignation against Florus.
If Paul is now under house-arrest in Rome, and James is in Jerusalem, where is Peter? Notice that in his letter to the Romans (written ca 56-57CE) Paul does not mention Peter as being in Rome. Nor does Acts mention Peter in the account of Paul’s visit to James in Jerusalem (58-60 CE). In fact, the last event where the canonical sources mention Peter is the Jerusalem Council (ca 50CE). This is very telling. If Peter, as tradition has it, had gone to Rome and been martyred there, the author of Acts (who is well aware of Paul being there in the early sixties) would have surely mentioned it.

The next document (in terms of date of authorship) to examine is Clement’s own writing. The letter, 1 Clement, was written in the late nineties as a fraternal letter enjoining the Corinthians to repair relationships within their community. It is the first Christian document authored after the canonical New Testament documents. Clement makes virtually no mention of Peter. Only once. He does mention Paul a couple of times and he is aware of Paul’s earlier letter to the Corinthians (which Clement quotes from) but again provides no account of any personal interaction with either of them. One would think that if Peter had indeed met and ordained Clement (as Catholic tradition today has it), we would hear Clement providing personal accounts of teachings or advice from Peter. There is none of that, even though the letter is replete with references from the Torah, and a few from the canonical synoptics, and once from Paul’s letter to Corinthians. Clement does make one mention of Peter and Paul’s lives: that they died after lives of sacrifice:

4:13 By reason of jealousy David was envied not only by the Philistines, but was persecuted also by Saul [king of Israel].

5:1 But, to pass from the examples of ancient days, let us come to those champions who lived nearest to our time. Let us set before us the noble examples which belong to our generation. 5:2 By reason of jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church were persecuted, and contended even unto death. 5:3 Let us set before our eyes the good Apostles.

5:4 There was Peter who by reason of unrighteous jealousy endured not one but many labors, and thus having borne his testimony went to his appointed place of glory.

5:5 By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, 5:6 having taught
righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of
the West [Is the author referring to Spain? Recall that Paul in his letter to Romans
indicated his desire to one day reach Spain.] ; and when he had borne his testimony
before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place,
having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance.

On the one hand, the author does not say that Peter ever was in Rome. On the
other hand, why mention Peter (and not others who also suffered, such as James)?
One can argue that the author IS more closely acquainted with Peter and Paul, and if
indeed the letter is from a Roman author (even if not Clement himself) then one can
argue that it points to Peter and Paul having been in Rome in the years recounted by
the author.

In short, not only does 1 Clement not give us much on Peter or Paul (two people
that he would have met, if indeed he was ordained by Peter and was part of the
community in the sixties), but indeed if it be authentic it casts doubt on the claim that
Clement knew Peter at all (or conversely, if Clement did know Peter and/or Paul,
perhaps 1 Clement is not actually from Clement!). We have a missing link. Be that as it
may, documents written after the late nineties, DO reflect a understanding of Peter
teaching and dying in Rome:

As we have discussed before, the Pseudo-Clementines are a type of novel, depicting
in the mouth of Clement of Rome, the primacy of James in Jerusalem, and the acts of
Peter in Rome (against a enemy, cryptically named Simon Magus but in reality denoting
Paul). The date of authorship is unclear, probably containing layers developed between
the late first century and the mid third century. Whether they are a accurate historical
record or not, they do reflect a tradition that Peter did spend his later years in Rome,
and that he died there.

Pseudo-Clementine Homilies – The Epistle of Clement to James.

Clement to James, the lord, and the bishop of bishops, who rules Jerusalem,
the holy church of the Hebrews, and the churches everywhere excellently
founded by the providence of God, with the elders and deacons, and the rest of
the brethren, peace be always.

Chapter I.--Peter's Martyrdom.

Be it known to you, my lord, that Simon, who, for the sake of the true faith,
and the most sure foundation of his doctrine, was set apart to be the foundation
of the Church, and for this end was by Jesus Himself, with His truthful mouth,
named Peter, the first-fruits of our Lord, the first of the apostles; to whom first
the Father revealed the Son; whom the Christ, with good reason, blessed; the
called, and elect, and associate at table and in the journeyings of Christ; the
excellent and approved disciple, who, as being fittest of all, was commanded to
enlighten the darker part of the world, namely the West, and was enabled to
accomplish it,--and to what extent do I lengthen my discourse, not wishing to
indicate what is sad, which yet of necessity, though reluctantly, I must tell you,-
-he himself, by reason of his immense love towards men, having come as far as
Rome, clearly and publicly testifying, in opposition to the wicked one who
withstood him, that there is to be a good King over all the world, while saving
men by his God-inspired doctrine, himself, by violence, exchanged this present existence for life.

There is also a apocryphal text known as “The Acts of Peter”. Written in the mid-second century, it tells the story of how God sent Peter to Rome in the early 60’s, to oppose Simon Magus (mentioned in Acts and the Pseudo-Clementines), and how after succeeding, rather than returning to Jerusalem, is enjoined by a apparition of Jesus, to remain in Rome and undergo martyrdom.

The work referred to by scholars as “The Ascencion of Isaiah”, a composite work which in turn contains a section known as “The Martyrdom of Isaiah” (sometimes also referred to as “Testament of Hezekiah”) is dated to somewhere between 70 and 100CE. It contains a “prediction” that one of the twelve apostles would fall at Nero’s hands:

Ascencion of Isaiah Ch4.:
1. AND now Hezekiah and Josab my son, these are the days of the completion of the world.
2. After it is consummated, Beliar the great ruler, the king of this world, will descend, who hath ruled it since it came into being; yea, he will descent from his firmament in the likeness of a man, a lawless king, the slayer of his mother: who himself (even) this king.
3. Will persecute the plant which the Twelve Apostles of the Beloved have planted. Of the Twelve one will be delivered into his hands.
4. This ruler in the form of that king will come and there will come with him all the powers of this world, and they will hearken unto him in all that he desires.
...

Dyonisius, Bishop of Corinth ca 171 CE is quoted by Eusebius in Historia Ecclesiastica (written ca 325CE) Book IV, Ch.25, as mentioning the following:
8. And that they both suffered martyrdom at the same time is stated by Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his epistle to the Romans, in the following words:

You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time.

I have quoted these things in order that the truth of the history might be still more confirmed.

Tertullian, writing in Rome ca 180CE, makes his case against those he considers heretics, and one of his avenues is to present a uninterrupted chain directly from the apostle Peter to Clement in Rome. Clement became bishop of Rome in the early 90’s, but conceivably could have been ordained into the community in the 40’s, 50’s or early 60’s during Peter's lifetime.
De Praescriptione Haereticorum (Prescription Against Heretics), Ch. 32:
But if there be any (heresies) which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men,—a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter.

Later in the same work, Tertullian talks about Peter and Paul actually being martyred in Rome:

De Praescriptione Haereticorum (Prescription Against Heretics), Ch. 36:

Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally. Achaia is very near you, (in which) you find Corinth. Since you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi; (and there too) you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome, from which there comes even into our own hands the very authority (of apostles themselves). How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood; where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's; where Paul wins his crown in a death like John [the Baptist]'s…

Again Tertullian, tells us of his understanding that Peter was martyred in Rome (some time after Nero’s act against the Christians), and now he gives us more information: that he died crucified:

Scorpiace Ch 15 : Now, then, the epistles of the apostles also are well known. And do we, you say, in all respects guileless souls and doves merely, love to go astray? I should think from eagerness to live. But let it be so, that meaning departs from their epistles. And yet, that the apostles endured such sufferings, we know: the teaching is clear. This only I perceive in running through the Acts. I am not at all on the search. The prisons there, and the bonds, and the scourges, and the big stones, and the swords, and the onsets by the Jews, and the assemblies of the heathen, and the indictments by tribunes, and the hearing of causes by kings, and the judgment-seats of proconsuls and the name of Caesar, do not need an interpreter. That Peter is struck, that Stephen is overwhelmed by stones, that James is slain as is a victim at the altar, that Paul is beheaded has been written in their own blood. And if a heretic wishes his confidence to rest upon a public record, the archives of the empire will speak, as would the stones of Jerusalem. We read the lives of the Caesars: At Rome Nero was the first who stained with blood the rising faith. Then is Peter girt by another, when
he is made fast to the cross. Then does Paul obtain a birth suited to Roman citizenship, when in Rome he springs to life again ennobled by martyrdom.

Did Tertullian, writing ca 180CE, get his information from Church archives?, from imperial records? Or is he getting his information from the same sources that informed 1 Clement, Acts of Peter, Pseudo-Clementines, and Ascension of Isaiah?

It is entirely possible that Peter did visit the Jewish community in Rome at some point, and that then the community latched on to his person, to establish its legitimacy. In theory, it could have been in the 40’s, before the Claudian expulsion. We do know that the community was not founded by Paul. When Paul writes to them, ca 57CE, perhaps he makes no mention of Peter’s original work there, because after all Paul is writing to lessen the importance of the Circumcision party’s teachings (and recall that Paul has already had his clashes with Peter and James around the Antioch incident in the late 40’s, early 50’s). Still, why then would Acts not know about Peter in Rome at such a early time?

Alternatively, Peter could have come to Rome after 60CE and perhaps Acts’ ending has come to us incomplete (recall that Acts does end abruptly with “Paul preaching unemcumbered in Rome” and is completely unaware of Paul’s final days as well. We do not know.

At any rate, the “tradition” of Peter spending his last days in Rome continues after Tertullian.

The following is attributed to Caius writing during the time of Pope Zephyrinus (Pope from 199 to 217CE) by Eusebius in Historia Ecclesiastica Book II Ch.25:

6. It is confirmed likewise by Caius, a member of the Church, who arose under Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome. He, in a published disputation with Proclus, the leader of the Phrygian heresy, speaks as follows concerning the places where the sacred corpses of the aforesaid apostles are laid:

7. But I can show the trophies of the apostles. For if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian way, you will find the trophies of those who laid the foundations of this church.

The following is attributed to Origen (ca. 230 C.E.) by Eusebius in Ecclesiastical History, Book III Ch.1:

2. Peter appears to have preached through Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia, to the Jews that were scattered abroad; who also, finally coming to Rome, was crucified with his head downward, having requested of himself to suffer in this way. What do we need to say concerning Paul, who preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and afterwards suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero? These facts are related by Origen in the third volume of his Commentary on Genesis.

Eusebius himself adds (Ecclesiastical History Book II, Ch.:25):
5. Thus Nero publicly announcing himself as the chief enemy of God, was led on in his fury to slaughter the apostles. Paul is therefore said to have been beheaded at Rome, and Peter to have been crucified under him. And this account is confirmed by the fact, that the names of Peter and Paul still remain in the cemeteries of that city even to this day.

So says Eusebius, writing ca 325CE. Indeed the Roman catacombs, as can be witnessed today if one visits San Sebastiano and Callixto, do show second century frescoes of Peter and Paul, and we have large numbers of ceramic tiles containing prayers dedicated to them.

The Book of Popes mentions that Pope Anacletus built a "sepulchral monument" over the underground tomb of St. Peter shortly after his death. This was a small chamber or oratory over the tomb, where three or four persons could kneel and pray over the grave. The pagan Roman Emperor, Julian the Apostate, mentions in 363 A.D. in his work Three Books Against the Galileans that the tomb of St. Peter was a place of worship, albeit secretly.

Tradition in Rome has long (since ninth century) held that Peter’s skull was kept (along with Paul’s) at St John Lateran’s Church in Rome. Tradition also held that Peter’s body was buried under St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. Between 1939 and 1950, the Vatican conducted extensive excavations under the Basilica, uncovering a vast pagan and Christian burial space. In December 1950 Pope Pius XII announced that bones discovered during the excavation could not conclusively be said to be Peter’s. Two decades later, in 1968, Pope Paul VI announced that other bones previously unearthed in 1942 beneath the basilica — discovered in a marble-lined repository, covered with a gold and purple cloth and belonging to a man around 5′ 6″ tall who had likely died between the ages of 65 and 70 — were, in the judgment of “the talented and prudent people” in charge of the dig, indeed St. Peter’s. To this day, that claim has as many doubters as adherents.

With all the above said, one is tempted to finish the narrative on Peter with a tentative nod to the Roman martyrdom tradition, and his burial in Rome.

Except that…

In 1953, workers building a church sanctuary at the Franciscan property on the Mount of Olives (the property is called Dominus Flevit, named after Luke 19:37-42, where Jesus, standing at the Mount of Olives, weeps at the site of the Jerusalem Temple) discovered a Jewish burial ground, replete with ossuaries (burial bone boxes) from the first century. Excavations began promptly at the site, led by Friar Bellarmino Bagatti, whose report was published under the title “Gli Scavi Del Dominus Flevit” (The excavations at Dominus Flavit). To everyone’s surprise, many of the ossuaries contained symbols well recognized in modern Christianity. A stone contained a chi-rho symbol (previously thought to have been introduced by Constantine in 325CE), several ossuaries contained “crosses”, and some ossuaries contained names that match those of well known characters of the gospel stories, like “Mary and Martha”. Today
one can see these ancient stones at the Dominus Flevit museum. For our discussion here, what is relevant is that one ossuary’s inscription appears to say: “Shimon Bar Yonah”, which is of course, the name of Peter, not a common name at all (no other ossuary inscriptions have ever been found with that name).

Shimon Bar Yonah, in grafite writing in Aramaic.
We will cover the Dominus Flevit (and other burial ground) findings in more detail in a subsequent chapter. For now, coming back to Peter, although there is no doubt that Dominus Flevit contains the burial boxes of early Jesus followers who died before 70CE, there is still scholarly doubt on whether the alleged “Peter ossuary” really says “Shimon bar Yonah” or not. We will need to conclude our section on Peter with some doubt as to where he died and was buried.
We have covered the pressures faced by the Jesus Movement led by James, i.e. the persecutions ordered by the High-Priest (who as we shall see eventually succeeds in killing James), and then the antagonism with Paul as he founded his new anti-Torah religion.

However there was also the issue of antagonism between all the Jewish sects. Before Jesus, already in Judaism there was a deep doctrinal antagonism between Pharisees and Sadducees (certainly since Macabbean times, when the Macabbeans began appointing themselves to the office, but also in post Macabbean, i.e. Herodian, times, when the Temple was being ruled by purchased and/or political appointments such as that of Annanias Bar Seth in 6CE and his clan of sons and sons-in-law thru 66CE). The Essenes (who themselves may have been a Sadducee community who departed Jerusalem after the Macabbeans took over the Priesthood) have left for us via the Dead Sea Scrolls ample evidence of their doctrinal disagreements with the Pharisees, and their political rivalry against the incumbent Sadducees in Jerusalem.

The advent of John the Baptist and Jesus appears to also have resulted in a new movement that began to develop unique characteristics and areas of doctrinal emphasis, eventually having an identity as its own sect (either by their own choice or by other Jewish groups so labelling them). Hence, we start seeing that Jesus and his followers also start to see increasing difficulty in the synagogues, in spite of their insistence on Torah-observance.

Jesus himself is critical of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Some of the issues were doctrinal, as we have discussed, and some were about praxis and adherence (e.g. Jesus arguing that they were hypocrites in as much as they had the correct doctrines but only gave lip service to them). Certainly some were political, namely, the Jesus Movement as against the corrupt and illegitimate (non-Zadokite) priesthood of Ananias Bar Seth, not to mention this as one of the triggers for Jesus’ insurrectionist incident at the Temple Mount.

Mark (and the other gospels) also reminds us that, whether for defensive or other reasons, disciples of the Movement were sword-carrying members: Mark 14: “They laid hands on Him and seized Him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.” In other words, in spite of a large popular following (actually in large measure because of its large following), the Jesus Movement found itself at odds with the other politico-religious denominations.
By the time of James’ death and the start of the Jewish War, we can say that the original (Jewish) Jesus Movement had developed a number of areas of doctrinal emphasis within Judaism. These areas of doctrinal emphasis, we can state as follows:

- In addition to mandating Repentance and a Return to the Torah Commandments, the original Jesus Movement practiced the ritual of Baptism as not only a sign of having Repented and Returned, but also as a ritual necessary to complete the process of Return to God’s Way. This insistence on Baptism would have been seen by the other sects (except the Essenes perhaps, as they also practiced Baptism in a similar way) as the beginnings of a new splinter group in Judaism.

- As recorded in Acts, the practice of “Laying on of hands” was also institutionalized. It would seem that acceptance into the Movement was started to be gated by a ritual performed only by people from within the Movement. As with analogous (similar?) induction ceremonies recorded of the Dead Sea Scrolls community, this would have contributed to form the Movement into a proper “sect” within Judaism.

- The original Jesus Movement, especially after Jesus’ death, but possibly even before, placed key emphasis on the Resurrection. Historically, Sadducees disavowed the concept, while Pharisees agreed with it. However, unlike with the Pharisees, for the Jesus community of James (and his successors), the Resurrection process had started with the death of Jesus. Their eschatological beliefs were that the End-of-Days were imminent, and that Jesus would be soon returning to complete the process of judgement of the living and the (resurrected) dead. Needless to say, the idea of a crucified Messiah ushering in the advent of the Resurrection and the Kingdom of God would have been a great barrier between the Jesus community of James, and the Pharisees (not to mention Sadducees, who didn’t believe in the Resurrection to begin with).

We have other references on the polarization between the original Jewish Jesus Movement and the other Jewish sects of the time:

From the 10th century source by Abd al-Jabbar (referenced by Shlomo Pines, in The Jewish Christians According to a New Source, 1966, pg 41; see also Reynolds, 2010, pg 93):

(71a) After him [i.e. Jesus], his disciples were with the Jews and the Children of Israel in the latter’s synagogues and observed the prayers and the feasts of (the Jews) in the same place as the latter. (However) there was a disagreement between them and the Jews with regard to Christ.

Toledot Yeshu has a similar version, with more emphasis on the hostility between the ‘normative’ Jews and the new Jewish followers of Jesus (from Pines, 1966, pg 41):

There was a great war between them and great slaughter, many cases of confusion, many killings and loss of money, everyone was killing his relatives without pity. And yet they did not abandon the Torah of Israel. And the Jews could not enter the Temple because of the reprobates. [S.Krauss, Das Leben Jesus nach juedischen Quellen, Berlin 1902 p 82, as quoted by Shlomo Pines in 'The Jewish Christians according to a New Source'.] Did conflicts between Jesus followers and
other groups result in a internecine war and a secuestering of the Temple? Is it describing the event of 33CE when Jesus attempted a “insurrection” (Mark’s wording) at the Temple precinct? We know that in 66CE the Temple was secuestered by the Zealots (it was one of the events that sealed the start of the First Jewish-Roman War) and that indeed the Zealots fought amongst themselves (so much so, that the Romans used this to their advantage). Is this Toledot Yeshu quote referencing pre-66CE events?, or is it implying that Jesus followers were involved in the secuestering of the Temple in 66CE?).
The earliest non-gospel reference to James is from historian Josephus (writing in approx. 85-90CE), where he documents the circumstances around James’ death. The reader should note with interest the extensiveness of Josephus’ narrative on James, which is a testament to James’ importance and relevance. Josephus’ narratives on James (and, as we saw earlier, on John the Baptist) are significantly more detailed than his brief paragraph on Jesus, discussed earlier.

Josephus, Antiquities, Book 20, Chapter 9, Paragraph 1:

And now [Nero] Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus [Governor of Judea], sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. Now [at this time also] the king [Herod Agrippa] decided to deprive Joseph [also called Cabi, son of Simon (also former High Priest himself)] of the highpriesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus [bar Seth. Ananus bar Seth is called Anas in NT; during Jesus’ time Ananus bar Seth was the powerful former high priest and father in law of Joseph bar Caiaphas who was high priest during Jesus’ time]. This son of Ananus was also called Ananus. Now the report goes, that this elder Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons [and a son in law, Joseph bar Caiaphas, who collaborated with Pilate to put Jesus to death] who had all performed the office of high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened with any other of our high priests. But the younger Ananus ... was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent. He was also of the sect of the Saducees [Tzadukim in Hebrew], who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews... When therefore Ananus was of this disposition, he thought that he now had a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he [Ananus bar Ananus] assembled the sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James [Iakobos] and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned. But those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens [of Jerusalem], since they were most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done [by Ananus] and sent to the king [Herod Agrippa] requesting him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for what he had already done was not to be justified. More so, some of them went also to meet Albinus [Nero's newly appointed Governor of Judea], as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrin without his consent; whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus and threatened that we would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on
which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him when he had ruled as high priest only three months, and put in place Jesus bar Damneus as high priest.

Eusebius, in 'History of the Church', chapter 2.1.2-2.1.4 (quoting from book seven of Clement of Alexandria's 'Hypotyposes'/Outlines'):

2.1.4 In book seven of the same work, the writer [Clement] makes this further statement: "... There were two Jameses: one the Just, who was thrown down from the parapet [of the Temple] and beaten to death with a fuller's club; and the other James [son of Zebedee], who was beheaded."

Eusebius, quoting from Clement of Alexandria and from Hegesippus' 'Memoranda' (dated 150 to 180 CE), as well as from Josephus.

History of the Church, 2.23.1-24:

2.23.1 But after Paul, in consequence of his appeal to Caesar, had been sent to Rome by Festus, the Jews, being frustrated in their hope of entrapping him by the snares which they had laid for him, turned against James, the brother of the Lord [editorial: the reader will note here, and generally in Eusebius, his pervasive anti Judaism. In doing so, Eusebius perpetuates the 200 year-old casting of the Jewish people generically as Jesus' persecutors. A more accurate wording, instead of “the Jews”, would have been “the High-priest’s henchmen”; as we have seen from Josephus, it was the High-priest Ananus ben Ananus who specifically goes after James, YET for doing so he even gets deposed from the High-Priesthood AT THE REQUEST OF THE JEWISH CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM!], to whom the episcopal seat at Jerusalem had been entrusted by the apostles. The following daring measures were undertaken by them against him:

2.23.2 [Here Eusebius is sourcing from Clement, as he states at the end of the paragraph.] Leading him [James] into their midst, they demanded of him that he should renounce faith in Christ in the presence of all the people. But, contrary to the opinion of all, with a clear voice, and with greater boldness than they had anticipated, he spoke out before the whole multitude and confessed that our Saviour [Clement’s wording?, or Eusebius’?] and Lord Jesus is the Son of God. But they were unable to bear longer the testimony of the man who, on account of the excellence of ascetic virtue and of piety which he exhibited in his life, was esteemed by all as the most just of men, and consequently they slew him. [Now here Clement (or Eusebius’ quoting of Clement) may be based on Josephus:] Opportunity for this deed of violence was furnished by the prevailing anarchy, which was caused by the fact that Festus had died just at this time in Judea, and that the province was thus without a governor and head.

2.23.3 The manner of James' death has been already indicated by the above-quoted words of Clement, who records that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club. But Hegesippus, who lived immediately after the apostles, gives the most accurate account in the fifth book of his Memoirs. He writes as follows:
2.23.4-18 4 “James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of
the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all
from the time of our Saviour to the present day; for there were many that bore
the name of James. 5 He was holy from his mother’s womb; and he drank no
wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he
did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath. 6 He alone was
permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woolen but linen
garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was
frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his
knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly
bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people. 7.
Because of his exceeding great justice he was called the Just, and Oblias, which
signifies in Greek, ‘Bulwark of the people’ and ‘Justice,’ in accordance with what
the prophets declare concerning him. 8-18 Representatives of the seven [Jewish]
sects already described by me asked him what was meant by 'the door of Jesus',
and he replied that Jesus was the Savior. Some of them came to believe that
Jesus was the Christ: the sects mentioned above did not believe either in a
resurrection or in one who is coming to give every man what his deeds deserve,
but those who did come to believe did so because of James. Since therefore
many even of the ruling class believed, there was an uproar among the Judeans
and scribes and Pharisees, who said there was a danger that the entire people
would expect Iesus as the Christ. So they collected and said to James: ‘Be good
enough to restrain the people, for they have gone astray after Iesus in the belief
that he is the Christ. Be good enough to make the facts about Iesus clear to all
who come for the Passover Day. We all accept what you say. We can vouch for
it, and so can all the people, that you are a righteous man and take no one at his
face value. So make it clear to the crowd that they must not go astray as regards
to Iesus: the whole people and all of us accept what you say. So take your stand
on the Temple parapet, so that from that height you may be easily seen, and
your words audible to the whole people. For because of the Passover all the
tribes have come together, and the Gentiles too.‘ So the scribes and Pharisees
made James stand on the Sanctuary parapet and shouted to him: ‘Just one,
whose word we are all obliged to accept, the people are all going astray after
Jesus who was crucified; so tell us what is meant by “the door of Jesus”. ‘ He
[James] replied as loudly as he could: ‘Why do you question me about the Son of
Man? I tell you, he is sitting in heaven at the right hand of the great power, and
he will come on the clouds of heaven.’ Many were convinced and gloried in
James’ testimony, crying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’! Then again the
scribes and Pharisees said to each other: ‘We made a bad mistake in
affording such testimony to Iesus. We had better go up and throw him down,
so that they will be frightened and not believe him.’ ‘Ho, Ho!’, they called out,
even the Just one has gone astray!’, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘ “Let us
remove the Just one, for he is unprofitable to us.” Therefore they shall eat the
fruit of their works.’ So they went up and threw down the Just one. Then they
said to each other, ‘Let us stone James the Just’, and began to stone him, as in
spite of his fall he was still alive. But he turned and knelt, uttering the words ‘I
beseech Thee, Lord God and Father; forgive them, they do not know what they
are doing.” While they pelted him with stones, one of the descendants of Rechab the son of Rechabim – the priestly family to which Jeremiah the prophet bore witness, called ‘Stop! What are you doing? The just one is praying for you!’ Then one of them, a fuller, took the club which he used to beat clothes, and brought it down on the head of the Just one. Such was his martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot, by the temple, and his monument still remains by the temple. He became a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ. And immediately Vespasian besieged them.”

This last note that “Vespasian immediately besieged Jerusalem”, i.e. the implication that James’ death led to the fall of Jerusalem, is intriguing, as James’ death at the time of Albinus is calculated at 62CE, four years before the start of the Jewish War. However as the reader will see in the next paragraph, Eusebius claims to get the same information also from Josephus, in a reference that is simply not present in the received text of Josephus:

2.23.19-20: 19 These things are related at length by Hegesippus, who is in agreement with Clement. James was so admirable a man and so celebrated among all for his justice, that the more sensible even of the Jews were of the opinion that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem, which happened to them immediately after his martyrdom for no other reason than their daring act against him. 20. Josephus, at least, has not hesitated to testify this in his writings, where he says, “These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus, that is called the Christ. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man.”

Besides Hegesippus (as quoted by Eusebius), and Eusebius’ reading of a unknown version of Josephus, a third source with this testimony is Origen, also quoting a unknown version of Josephus (perhaps Eusebius took his information from Origen). Writing in the first two decades of the third century CE (i.e. after his teacher Clement of Alexandria, and after Hegesippus), Origen repeatedly cites Josephus (without reference to Book and Chapter) as stating that James’ death led to Rome’s advance against, and eventual destruction of, the Temple in Jerusalem. Here are Origen’s citations:

Origen, Commentary on Matthew 10.17 : And to so great a reputation among the people for righteousness did this James rise, that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the 'Antiquities of the Jews' in twenty books, when wishing to exhibit the cause why the people suffered so great misfortunes that even the temple was razed to the ground, said, that these things happened to them in accordance with the wrath of God in consequence of the things which they had dared to do against James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ. And the wonderful thing is, that, though he did not accept Jesus as Christ, he yet gave testimony that the righteousness of James was so great; and he says that the people thought that they had suffered these things because of James.

Origen, Contra Celsus (Against Celsus) 1.47 : Now, this writer [Josephus], although not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking after the cause of the fall of
Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless - being, although against his will, not far from the truth - that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus called Christ; the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice.

Origen, *Contra Celsus (Against Celsus)* 2.13 : … Now in these [the Gospels] it is recorded, that [Jesus said: ] "when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed about with armies, then shall ye know that the desolation thereof is nigh." But at that time there were no armies around Jerusalem, encompassing and enclosing and besieging it; for the siege began in the reign of Nero, and lasted till the government of Vespasian, whose son Titus destroyed Jerusalem, on account, as Josephus says, of James the Just, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, but in reality, as the truth makes dear, on account of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

There can be no doubt that Origen, a prolific and meticulous writer, had a reference in front of him which he understood to be a writing of Josephus stating that James’ death opened the door to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in general. The received text of Josephus’ *Antiquities* does proceed to narrate, immediately after the account on James’ death, how the political situation during Albinus’ procuratorship deteriorates, eventually leading to the terrorism of the Sicarii against the family of Ananias Bar Seth (High Priest clan leader), and that in turn to the beginning of the rebellion against Rome. Perhaps Origen stretches the connection to James’ death, although that is unlikely. Perhaps Josephus’ text did contain a explicit reference to James’s death being connected to the advent of the War, and the reference was later removed by Christian copyists after Origen’s time, as they would have seen it as a embarrassment to Christians, since they promulgated that it was Jesus’ death that eventually led to the Temple’s destruction (as we have seen, Origen himself expressed that opinion in the preceding two quotes).

At any rate, if the referenced Josephus statement ever existed (whether it was from Josephus in the *Antiquities*, or whether it was from a different source mistaken by Origen to be Josephus’), one must allow for the possibility that James’ presence in Jerusalem could have had a material effect on the goings on, as the sectarian conflicts were coming to a boiling point shortly before the outbreak of the war in 66CE. Did James represent one of the leading anti-establishment forces, and perhaps his death triggered a escallation of violence between Rome and the various Jewish freedom-fighter factions? Or perhaps James was the pacifist, advocating righteousness and prayer to the soon-to-be Jewish revolutionaries, and his death removed the last mitigating influence on them?

Let us return to a final Eusebius reference in this chapter, for completeness: History of the Church 2.23.21-24, where Eusebius is quoting directly from the already known Josephus account of James’ death in *Antiquities* Book 20, Chapter 9.1.]
21. And the same writer records his death also in the twentieth book of his Antiquities in the following words: “But the emperor, when he learned of the death of Festus, sent Albinus to be procurator of Judea. But the younger Ananus, who, as we have already said, had obtained the high priesthood, was of an exceedingly bold and reckless disposition. He belonged, moreover, to the sect of the Sadducees, who are the most cruel of all the Jews in the execution of judgment, as we have already shown. 22. Ananus, therefore, being of this character, and supposing that he had a favorable opportunity on account of the fact that Festus was dead, and Albinus was still on the way, called together the Sanhedrim, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, James by name, together with some others, and accused them of violating the law, and condemned them to be stoned. 23. But those in the city who seemed most moderate and skilled in the law were very angry at this, and sent secretly to the king requesting him to order Ananus to cease such proceedings. For he had not done right even this first time. And certain of them also went to meet Albinus, who was journeying from Alexandria, and reminded him that it was not lawful for Ananus to summon the Sanhedrim without his knowledge. 24. And Albinus, being persuaded by their representations, wrote in anger to Ananus, threatening him with punishment. And the king, Agrippa, in consequence, deprived him of the high priesthood, which he had held three months, and appointed Jesus, the son of Damnæus.”

Jerome, in De Viris Illustribus (On Illustrious Men) written approx. 380CE, writes the following in Chapter 2, On James the brother of Jesus:

Josephus also in the 20th book of his Antiquities, and Clement in the 7th of his Outlines mention that on the death of Festus who reigned over Judea, Albinus was sent by Nero as his successor. Before he had reached his province, Ananias the high priest, the youthful son of Ananus of the priestly class, taking advantage of the state of anarchy, assembled a council and publicly tried to force James to deny that Christ is the son of God. When he refused Ananias ordered him to be stoned. Cast down from a pinnacle of the temple, his legs broken, but still half alive, raising his hands to heaven he said, Lord forgive them for they know not what they do. Then struck on the head by the club of a fuller such a club as fullers are accustomed to wring out garments with— he died.

This same Josephus records the tradition that this James was of so great sanctity and reputation among the people that the downfall of Jerusalem was believed to be on account of his death.

He it is of whom the apostle Paul writes to the Galatians that No one else of the apostles did I see except James the brother of the Lord, and shortly after the event the Acts of the apostles bear witness to the matter.

The Gospel also which is called the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin and which also Origen often makes use of, after the account of the resurrection of the Saviour says, but the Lord, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from among those that sleep) and again, a little later, it says 'Bring a table and
bread,' said the Lord. And immediately it is added, He brought bread and blessed and broke and gave to James the Just and said to him, 'my brother eat your bread, for the son of man is risen from among those that sleep.'

And so he ruled the church of Jerusalem thirty years, that is until the seventh year of Nero, [editorial: Nero reigned from 54 to 68CE, so the seventh year of Nero is 61-62CE. The thirty years of James’ leadership then would go from ca 33 to 62CE.] and was buried near the temple from which he had been cast down. His tombstone with its inscription was well known until the siege of Titus and the end of Hadrian's reign. Some of our writers think he was buried in Mount Olivet, but they are mistaken.
Having completed our chapters on the lives of Jesus and his close circle, let us ask this question: Is there archaeological evidence that Jesus or his family or the characters in the gospels existed? As we shall see, there are a number of intriguing finds from burial tomb ossuaries (bone boxes) which contain names and symbols that, when found together, could constitute a high probability of belonging to Jesus followers. Furthermore, since ossuaries were only in use in Eretz Israel until the end of the first Jewish War (70CE), these findings, if related to Jesus followers, would constitute very early and tangible evidence of early Jesus followers in Eretz Israel. Even more tantalizing is the question whether said ossuary symbols can tell us anything about the beliefs of those resting in them.
Dominus Flevit

As discussed earlier, in 1953, workers building a church sanctuary at the Franciscan Dominus Flavit property on the Mount of Olives discovered a Jewish burial ground, replete with ossuaries (burial bone boxes) from the first century. Excavations began promptly at the site, led by Friar Bellarmino Bagatti, whose report was published under the title *Gli Scavi Del Dominus Flevit* (The excavations at Dominus Flevit) - Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem - 1958.

A description by father Emmanuel Testa, who collaborated with father Bagatti for decades:

The cemetery discovered was an area with fully 152 tombs [a “tomb” being an area containing many graves] dating from the first to fourth century.

The zone had two clearly distinct periods:

- 18 interments in ovens, called *Kokhim* in Hebrew, which go from the beginning of the the Roman Occupation [63 BCE] to 135 CE [the year of the Second Jewish War with Rome, on which defeat Rome forbade all Jews to enter Jerusalem], with an unexpected interruption during the War of 70 [it is unclear to your author how Testa is able to ascertain this “interruption”];
- 64 interments in large ditches and arcosolia [chambers for the dead to lie]… which date from the fourth century.
- Then there are 70 graves dug simply in the ground.

Among the *Kokhim* interments were found 7 sarcophagi with grapevines, maniples, laurel crowns, myrtle festoons, geometrical branches, a spinning wheel, round corbels, classical moulding, without human or animal figures. In particular, 350 ossuaries were discovered, with floral motifs and architectural elements, probably to indicate the domus aeterna, the habitation of life. Figures of animals or men do not appear even in the ossuaries.

The evidence shows that the cemetery was not in the hands of orthodox Jews, since no materials with … characteristics such as the menorah, the shofar, the etrog, and the like … were found here.

…Seven epitaphs were written in Mishnaic Hebrew, 11 in Aramaic, and 11 in Greek.

…In strict proximity to the names recorded on the ossuaries, the community placed “Cryptographic signs”, especially the Taw… It showed scrupulous care in varying the languages, the full or defective writing of the words, the whimsical interchange of final and internal letters...

…The vast catalogue of names in the ossuaries of Dominus Flevit is practically identical with with that of the New Testament, not only for biblical names but also rare ones like Saphhira, for Greek names, and finally for Latin ones.

…The cemetery area was, after 135, inherited for the most part by Christians even if the use Kokhim and ossuaries was replaced by room-sized arcosolium, just as the
[church] hierarchy [in the Holy Land] went from Jewish to Gentile, as related by Eusebius [HE Book 3, Ch VI].


Fig. 3. Piano e sezione della tomba del “monogramma” con altre vicine. In alto: sezione da est a ovest e in basso a sinistra: sezione di un vano con fosse (67-69) e “forno” (70).

Lower diagram: plan and cross-section of the tomb of the “monogram” with other neighboring tombs. Upper: cross section from east to west.
History of the Original Jesus Movement
12 – The First Generation Passes Away
One ossuary’s inscription named two women well known together from the gospel stories ("Mary and Martha"), and another has the name “Shapira”, which is not found
in any other first-century writings except for Acts 5:1. One appears to say “Shimon Bar Jonah” (the name of Peter), a uncommon name, not elsewhere found in any other ossuary. We mentioned this inscription already in our chapter on Peter’s final whereabouts.

“Martha and Mary” inscription

“Shapira” inscription
To everyone's surprise, many of the ossuaries contained symbols well recognized in (gentile) Christianity: Several ossuaries contained cross marks, and a stone even contained a “chi-rho” (娉) symbol.

There are two quandries presented by this:

1. The timing seems “wrong”: Ossuaries in Eretz Israel were only in use for about two-hundred years, from 100 BCE to shortly after the destruction of the Temple in 70CE. The traditional view for the last hundred years had been that symbols like the cross and the chi-rho only made their appearance as Christianity took shape in the second century among Graeco-Roman communities. The Christian catacombs of Rome are the best example of this. In fact the use of chi-rho is narrated by Constantine's historians (Lactantius and Eusebius, both writing ca 330CE) as starting only as a result of Constantine's dream before his battle against Roman Emperor Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in Rome (after which Constantine becomes the new Roman Emperor). How is it then that we find that we find crosses and chi-rho’s at a first century burial ground?

2. The setting seems “wrong”: The cross is understood today as the Christian symbol par-excellence, symbolizing Paul’s central idea, that it is Jesus’ death by crucifixion that enables humanity’s Salvation. Likewise today’s use of chi-rho would lead us to understand it as a Roman Christianity symbol par-excellence. If Dominus Flevit is essentially a burial ground of people with Jewish names, how is it that we would find symbols that are best known in (gentile) Christianity, and that we find no commonplace Jewish ossuary symbols like menorahs, shofars, etrogs?

Finds such as those at Dominus Flevit (and other archaeological finds in the last 60 years, which we shall relate next) have led scholars to dig deeper into the origins of the symbols. As it turns out they may well represent things entirely different than what they have come to be seen as, after the Christian Church Fathers’ interpretations (from second century forward) and especially after Constantine (315CE).

The cross marks at Dominus Flevit:
A headstone near the entrance to the cave

Black-and-white and color photos of Dominus Flevit ossuary with cross mark. The name of the deceased is “ShlomZion”, which occurs on the side and on the lid. The inscription on the side is complemented by a cross mark.
Do the cross marks found at Dominus Flevit represent a crucifixion cross (as a Pauline reliance on Jesus’ death would), or is there an other explanation? Let us look at how early writers view the cross mark.

Let us first turn to pre-Jesus times. The use of the “+” and the “X” (both of which were found at Dominus Flevit) has a very Jewish, Torah-based, foundation, one which would have made particular sense in a messianic and eschatological context. The “+” and the “X” are both a rendering of the Paleo Hebrew (and Aramaic) letter Tav (the “+” symbol is a Tav using the Hebrew Ivrit script, and the “X” is the same letter, using the Hebrew Ashuri script), which was used in Jewish messianic writings to refer to “those who belong to God”, after the vision of Ezekiel 9:4:

Ezekiel 9:1-11 1 Then he cried in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Draw near, you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand." 2 And six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand; among them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. 3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. YH-H called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side; 4 and said to him, "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a seal ["תָו"] / “Tav”, literally spelling out the letter TaV, ie., as: a Tav, ת, and a Vav, ו. The shape “ת” of the letter Tav is from post-Second Temple Hebrew Type; In Paleo Hebrew it was written thus: ו on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." 5 To the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. 6 Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, but touch no one who has the mark. And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the house. 7 Then he said to them, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go!" So they went out and killed in the city. 8 While they were killing, and I was left alone, I fell prostrate on my face and cried out, "Ah Lord GOD! will you destroy all who remain of Israel as you pour out your wrath upon Jerusalem?" 9 He said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity; for they say, 'YH-H has forsaken the land, and YH-H does not see.' 10 As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity, but I will bring down their deeds upon their heads." 11 Then the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his side, brought back word, saying, "I have done as you commanded me."

Epiphanius mentions in “On Weights and Measures” that in the Jewish prophetic writings, the Tav is used to mark passages relating to the Messiah:

201
And these signs are employed in the prophetic writings: \( \checkmark \) for the rejection of the ancient people; \( \checkmark \) for the rejection of the law that is in the flesh; \( \times \) for the new covenant; \( \times \) for the calling of the Gentiles; \( \times \) for the Messiah; \( \sum \) for the promises to the ancient people; \( \sum \) for obscure passages in the Scriptures; \( \sum \) for foreknowledge of things going to take place.


The Dead Sea Scrolls also show evidence of the Essene community expecting the advent of Ezekiel's prophecy:

Damascus Document (CDC) VII:9 using Manuscript B XIX:19: And all those who despise the Commandments and the Statutes shall be rewarded with the retribution of the wicked when God shall visit the Land, when the saying shall come to pass which is written by the hand of the prophet Zechariah, “Awake oh sword, against my shepherd, against my companion, says God. Strike the shepherd that the flock may be scattered and I will stretch my hand over the little ones” [Zech xiii.7]. The humble of the flock are those who watch for Him. They shall be saved at the time of the Visitation whereas the others shall be delivered up to the sword when the Anointed of Aaron and Israel shall come, as it came to pass at the time of the former Visitation concerning which God said by the hand of Ezekiel: They shall put a mark on the foreheads of those who sign and groan [Ezek ix.4]. But the others were delivered up to the avenging sword of the Covenant.

Infact, the use of the Tav has been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls precisely for the purpose stated by Epiphanius. The Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls community contains numerous markings where Tav signs are used to mark passages with messianic import. In other words, it is very likely that the Tav was a well known mark used by religious groups to denote that a person was “reserved” for the Deity and “marked” for salvation at the advent of God’s kingdom:
Could the cross marks on Dominus Flevit be in order to mark the deceased as “sealed” in allegiance to God, as in Ezekiel’s messianic eschatological vision?

In the 90’s CE, we indeed see the author of Revelation making the connection of the seal of Ezekiel’s end-times messianic vision, to Jesus’ followers:
Revelation 7:1-13 1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree. 2 I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, 3 saying, "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads."

Would the seal of the Revelation community also look like a Tav? Jack Finnegan, in his “The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church” (1992, Princeton University Press) pg 348, highlights that Origen (died ca. 254 CE) tells us that a Jewish follower of Jesus explained to him that the Tav in old Hebrew script (i.e. “+” or its other form, “X”, [which is written identical to the Greek “chi”]) represented the mark to be placed on Jesus followers’ foreheads:

Origen, Selecta in Ezechiel: 9: Upon inquiring of the Jews whether they can relate any traditional teaching regarding the Taw, I heard the following. One of them said that, in the order of the Hebrew letters, the Taw is the last of the twenty-two consonantal sounds. The last consonant is therefore taken as proof of the perfection of those who, because of their virtue, moan and groan over the sinners among the people and suffer together with the transgressors.

Another said that the Taw symbolizes the observers of the Law. Since the Law, which is called Tora by the Jews, begins [its name] with the consonant Taw, it is a symbol of those who live according to the Law.

Finally, a third [Jew], belonging to the number of those who had become Christians, said that the Old Testament writings show that the Taw is a symbol of the cross and was a prototype of that sign which Christians are accustomed to make on their foreheads before beginning their prayers.

From the above we can surmise that the “seal on the forehead” mentioned in Revelation is probably the Hebrew Tav of Ezekiel: 🅔. But Origen, thru his third source above (the “Jewish Christian”) also tells us that the same Hebrew Tav on the forehead is also viewed (at least at the time of Origen’s writing, i.e., early third century) as a symbol of the cross (that is, the crucifixion cross).

The Tav, then, is a symbol for those who are attached to good works (i.e., they sigh and groan about the abominations committed around them), in other words, the Torah Commandments (and we shall see shortly Origen’s Jewish source calling out the Tav as a sign of “Torah”). In addition, with Ezekiel, it also becomes the vehicle for attaining Life (as in “Resurrection”) in the messianic eschaton. In other words, without
having to represent Paul’s doctrine of “Jesus’ death is what enables salvation”, the Tav ("+") / “X”), from its original Ezekiel Jewish context, signifies “Torah”, AND “Resurrection in the Messianic Age”, two concepts central to the Original Jesus Movement. Unfortunately, as we shall shortly see, it is so similar to the "✝" shape, that we shall find it difficult to tell whether a inscription of the “+” shape is meant in the above, Jewish, context or in the Pauline, Christian, context of “salvation is enabled only via Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross, and not via striving for God’s Torah Commandments”. Let’s visit the earliest existing post-Jesus records, and see whether we have evidence of cross marks becoming symbols, and what those cross mark symbols meant. Is there evidence of Jesus communities (Pauline/Christian or otherwise) using the “+” symbol? When do we see the beginnings of the use of the "✝" shape and by whom exactly?

The Christian author of the Epistle of Barnabas (a very anti-Torah, anti-Israel tract, written ca. 130 CE), associates the form of the Greek letter Tau (“T”) to the crucifixion cross (stauros in Greek): 9:7 And because the cross was to express the grace of our redemption by the letter T, he says also, "Three Hundred." [the author of Barnabas is referencing the number of people circumcised by Abraham, in Genesis, and connecting the number 300 (denoted by “T” in Greek numerology) with the crucifixion cross. Among Greek writers (as with their Jewish counterparts, numerology played a role, not only when looking for “clues” that support a position, as we have seen here in Barnabas, but also for a sect to communicate in a secret code, sometimes even with “magical” formulas.)

In assuming a “T” shape for the crucifixion cross, the author of Barnabas is made credible by the “Alexamenos” graffito, which was discovered in 1857 when a building called the domus Gelotiana was unearthed on the Palatine Hill, Rome. The emperor Caligula had acquired the house for the imperial palace, which, after Caligula died, became used as a Paedagogium (boarding school) for the imperial page boys. Later, the street on which the house sat was walled off to give support to extensions to the buildings above, and it thus remained sealed for centuries. The graffito is actually a image mocking the (probably Christian) religion of presumably someone in the Roman imperial service. Date is unknown but most probably sometime between mid-second century to mid-third century. It shows a individual, Alexamenos, worshipping a crucified man with the head of a donkey. Tertulian (died 220 CE, Carthage, North Africa) also confirms that Christians were mocked at with allegations of donkey-worship (he is baffled at where the allegation comes from, but it certainly coincides with our graffito here). At any rate, the point here is not regarding the topic of “allegations of donkey worship on Christians of the early third century” nor “proofs of early Christianity among those in the service of Rome”, but simply the shape of a crucifixion cross. Who better than people in the imperial service to be acquainted with the shape of the stauros? This should not fully preclude other possible shapes ("✝", “X”, or “+”), however it does confirm that “T” was a perfectly valid shape for how people understood the crucifixion cross.
The First Generation Passes Away

ALEXAMENOS CEBETE THEON / ALEXAMENOS WORSHIPS GOD

Note: in the centuries in question, the letter Tau (in both Greek and Latin) always had the shape “T”; small-types for Latin characters (such as “t” or “✝” for the letter Tau) were only introduced in the Middle Ages.

The Tau shape for the crucifixion cross is further attested by Lucian (125-180AD). This early Greek rhetorician (non-Christian) wrote a number of artistic, satirical and cynical pieces surviving to this day. In one of them, entitled Trial in the Court of Vowels, he wrote the following:

Trial in the Court of Vowels, 12.4-13: “Such are his verbal offences against man; his offences in deed remain. Men weep, and bewail their lot, and curse Cadmus with many curses for introducing Tau into the family of letters; they say it was his body that tyrants took for a model, his shape that they imitated, when they set up the erections on which men are crucified”

But the author of Barnabas, looking at Exodus 17:11-12, also associates the shape of Moses with his outstretched arms (i.e., “✝”) with the crucifixion cross:

Barnabas 12:2: And He saith again in Moses, when war was waged against Israel by men of another nation, and that He might remind them when the war was waged against them that for their sins they were delivered unto death; the Spirit saith to the heart of Moses, that he should make a type of the cross and of Him that was to suffer, that unless, saith He, they shall set their hope on Him, war shall be waged against them for ever. Moses therefore pileth arms one upon another in the midst of the encounter, and standing on higher ground than any he stretched out his hands, and so Israel was again victorious. Then, whenever he lowered them, they were slain with the sword.
Justin Martyr (born in Nablus ca 100 CE, died in Rome ca 165CE) associates the crucifixion cross with the "✝" shape:


But in no instance, not even in any of those called sons of Jupiter, did they imitate the being crucified; for it was not understood by them, all the things said of it having been put symbolically. And this, as the prophet foretold, is the greatest symbol of His power and role; as is also proved by the things which fall under our observation. For consider all the things in the world, whether without this form they could be administered or have any community. For the sea is not traversed except that trophy which is called a sail abide safe in the ship; and the earth is not ploughed without it: diggers and mechanics do not their work, except with tools which have this shape. And the human form differs from that of the irrational animals in nothing else than in its being erect and having the hands extended, and having on the face extending from the forehead what is called the nose, through which there is respiration for the living creature; and this shows no other form than that of the cross. And so it was said by the prophet, "The breath before our face is the Lord Christ." And the power of this form is shown by your own symbols on what are called "vexilla" [banners] and trophies, with which all your state possessions are made, using these as the insignia of your power and government, even though you do so unwittingly. And with this form you consecrate the images of your emperors when they die, and you name them gods by inscriptions. Since, therefore, we have urged you both by reason and by an evident form, and to the utmost of our ability, we know that now we are blameless even though you disbelieve; for our part is done and finished.

Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter XL: That lamb which was commanded to be wholly roasted was a symbol of the suffering of the cross which Christ would undergo. For the lamb, which is roasted, is roasted and dressed up in the form of the cross. For one spit is transfixed right through from the lower parts up to the head, and one across the back, to which are attached the legs of the lamb.

Justin Martyr, in Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter XC associates the shape with Moses with outstretched arms: When the people waged war with Amalek, and the son of Nave [Nun] by name Jesus [Joshua], led the fight, Moses himself prayed to God, stretching out both hands, and Hur with Aaron supported them during the whole day, so that they might not hang down when he got wearied. For if he gave up any part of this sign, which was an imitation of the cross, the people were beaten, as is recorded in the writings of Moses; but if he remained in this form, Amalek was proportionally defeated, and he who prevailed prevailed by the cross. For it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were stronger, but because, while one who bore the name of Jesus [Joshua] was in the forefront of the battle, he himself made the sign of the cross. For who of you knows not that the prayer of one who accompanies it with lamentation and tears, with the body prostrate, or with bended knees, propitiates God most of all?

Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter XCI: And God by Moses shows in another way the force of the mystery of the cross, when He said in the blessing
The very form of the cross, too, has five extremities, two in length, two in breadth, and one in the middle, on which [last] the person rests who is fixed by the nails.

Clement of Alexandria (born 150 CE, died 215 CE) makes mention of the “T” as the shape of “The Lord’s Sign”:

Stromata Book 6, Chapter 11: They say, then, that the character representing 300 is, as to shape, the type of the Lord’s sign. [In Greek numerology, the letter Tau, ie. “T”, represents 300]. Presumably, “The Lord’s Sign” could refer to the seal of Ezekiel 9:1-11, or it could mean the crucifixion cross. It is not clear from Clement’s text alone; however since Clement does make references to the Epistle of Barnabas, we will assume that he coincides with Barnabas 9:7 and means “the crucifixion cross”.

Tertullian (born ca. 155 – died ca. 240 CE), in Adversus Marcion / Contra Marcion (Against Marcion), Book III, Ch 22., discusses readings from the Prophets which foretell the suffering of the Messiah and his followers. There, he calls out Ezequiel’s seal, and reading it as a Greek Tau (probably reading Ezeqiel from the Greek Septuagint), associates it (just as Origen’s Jewish Christian source did with the Hebrew Taw) with the seal on Jesus’ followers AND with the crucifixion cross:

He [God] foretold that His just ones should suffer equally with Him—both the apostles and all the faithful in succession; and He signed them with that very seal of which Ezekiel spoke: “The Lord said unto me, Go through the gate, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set the Tau mark upon the foreheads of the men.” Now the Greek letter Tau and our own [Latin] letter
T is the very form of the cross, which He predicted would be the seal on our foreheads in the true Catholic Jerusalem …

In *De Corona* (Of the Crown), Chapter 3, Tertullian also tells us that Christians (including himself) are in the habit of making “the sign” (presumably a “T” if one follows his previous text from *Adversus Marcion*) upon their own foreheads:

At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign.

However, Tertullian also shows that by the late second century, Christians are already widely known for their central reverence for the crucifixion cross. In *Ad Nationes* (To the Nations) Book I, Chapter 12, and in *Apology*, Chapter 16, he defends Christianity against the accusation by Graeco-Roman pagans, that Christians worship the crucifixion cross. Strangely, rather than deny it, he almost takes for granted the grounds for the accusation as valid, and proceeds to also inculpate his pagan accusers of also worshipping crosses. In doing so, he calls out the specific shapes that said pagans revere: the shapes of Roman standards and human-shaped gods, essentially acknowledging the “✝” shape as a possible form for the crucifixion cross.

Tertullian again, in *Contra Marcion*, Book III, Chapter 18, compares the crucifixion cross to the “✝” shape (as a figure of Moses with outstretched arms, and as a figure of the bronze serpent):
In the case of Moses, wherefore did he at that moment particularly, when Joshua was fighting Amalek, pray in a sitting posture with outstretched hands, when in such a conflict it would surely have been more seemly to have bent the knee, and smitten the breast, and to have fallen on the face to the ground, and in such prostration to have offered prayer? Wherefore, but because in a battle fought in the name of that Lord who was one day to fight against the devil, the shape was necessary of that very cross through which Jesus was to win the victory? Why, once more, did the same Moses, after prohibiting the likeness of everything, set up the golden serpent on the pole; and as it hung there, propose it as an object to be looked at for a cure? Did he not here also intend to show the power of our Lord's cross…?

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (born ca 200 CE, died 258 CE), writing ca 250 CE, in his Testimonies against the Jews, Book 3, equates the crucifixion cross and Ezekiel's seal, not to a Tau, but to the shape of Moses’ outstretched arms (presumably “✝”):

21. Testimony that in the passion and the sign of the cross is all virtue and power.

...By this sign of the cross also Amalek was conquered by Jesus [Joshua] through Moses. In Exodus Moses said to Jesus: "Choose thee out men, and go forth, and order yourselves with Amalek until the morrow. Behold, I will stand on the top of the hill, and the rod of God in mine hand. And it came to pass, when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel prevailed; but when Moses had let down his hands, Amalek waxed strong. But the hands of Moses were heavy; and they took a stone, and placed it under him, and he sat upon it and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, on the one side and on the other side; and the hands of Moses were made steady even to the setting of the sun. And Jesus routed Amalek and all his people. ...

22. Testimony that in this sign of the cross is salvation for all people who are marked on their foreheads.

In Ezekiel the Lord says: "Pass through the midst of Jerusalem, and thou shalt mark the sign I upon the men's foreheads, who groan and grieve for the iniquities which are done in the midst of them." Also in the same place: "Go and smite, and do not spare your eyes. Have no pity on the old man, and the youth, and the virgin, and slay little children and women, that they may be utterly destroyed. But ye shall not touch any one upon whom the sign is written, and begin with my holy places themselves."...

Minucius Felix (Christian apologist, died ca. 250CE in Rome), in his Octavian, Chapter 29, equates the crucifixion cross with the “✝” shape:

Crosses, moreover, we neither worship nor wish for. You, indeed, who consecrate gods of wood, adore wooden crosses perhaps as parts of your gods. For your very standards, as well as your banners; and flags of your camp, what else are they but crosses glided and adorned? Your victorious trophies not only imitate the appearance of a simple cross, but also that of a man affixed to it. We assuredly see the sign of a cross, naturally, in the ship when it is carried along with swelling sails, when it glides forward with
expanded oars; and when the military yoke is lifted up, it is the sign of a cross; and when a man adores God with a pure mind, with hands outstretched. Thus the sign of the cross either is sustained by a natural reason, or your own religion is formed with respect to it.

Regarding what it symbolized, there are other old references to crosses. These include Clement of Alexandria (Paidagogos), Tertullian (On Baptism, Ad Uxori, On Modesty), Origen (Commentary on Matthew). I also considered the famous inscription of Abercius that makes reference to several of these images.

The table below shows the various interpretations of the cross symbols:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Various Authors and their interpretation of “+” and/or “T”</th>
<th>Significance of Hebrew Tav (“+” or “X”)</th>
<th>Significance of Greek Tau “T”</th>
<th>Significance of “✝”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dead Sea Scrolls (not a Jesus community)</td>
<td>Ezekiel’s seal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Ezekiel’s seal on forehead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistle of Barnabas (written ca 100 CE)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crucifixion cross</td>
<td>Crucifixion cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin Martyr (Rome) (wrote ca 130-165 CE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crucifixion cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irenaeus (Gaul) (wrote ca 180-200 CE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crucifixion cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertullian (Rome) (wrote ca 200 CE)</td>
<td>Ezekiel’s seal on forehead, and</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crucifixion cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crucifixion cross</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clement of Alexandria (wrote ca 210 CE)</td>
<td>“The Lord’s Sign” (probably Crucifixion cross?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen (Alexandria Egypt, and Caesarea Palestina) (wrote ca 220-250 CE)</td>
<td>Ezekiel’s seal, and Crucifixion cross on forehead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprian of Carthage (wrote ca 250 CE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ezekiel’s seal on forehead, and Crucifixion cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minucius Felix (wrote ca 250 CE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crucifixion cross</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary:

- There is strong evidence (Ezekiel, Dead Sea Scrolls, Revelation, Origen, Epiphanius) pointing to the use among Jesus followers (of any persuasion), of a eschatological messianic seal in the manner of that of Ezequiel’s vision, marked on the forehead, and conceivably on ossuaries of the deceased who await the salvation at the resurrection of the end-times. For Aramaic and Hebrew speakers, Origen and Epiphanius tell us this would have been expressed as a Hebrew Tav, i.e. “+” or “✝”. For Greek and Latin speakers, Tertulian tells us this could have been the Greek Tau, i.e. “Τ”. It is certainly possible that marking with Ezekiel’s seal (on the forehead and on graves) could have come into use quite early (40’s) by Jesus followers (from all walks: original Torah-observant, Pauline, or even further distanced sects like Gnostics, etc.). Its use reflects a key common belief shared by all of them: that they are the elect of whom Ezequiel’s vision speaks of.
- Given Origen’s source, we can not rule out that the find of a “+” at Dominus Flevit could be a Tav intended to represent a crucifixion cross.

Less likely, but still possible, is the “+” intended not as a Tav but as the “✝” reference to the crucifixion cross as seen in the Church Father examples above.

The “✝” marks (as in the ossuary of a Shлом Zion) are most certainly Ezekiel seals.

How about the “chi-rho”? It was also found at Dominus Flevit:
Intriguingly, Father Bellarmino Bagatti read the “chi-rho” as a fully spelled-out letter Tav, ie, a Tav plus a Vav, that is, a \( \text{\(\chi\)} \) (Tav in the, older, from 900 BCE, Paleo or Ivrit Hebrew script) superimposed with a \( \text{\(\upsilon\)} \) (Vav in the, older, Paleo or Ivrit Hebrew script) or \( \text{\(\upsilon\)} \) (Vav in the newer, from 600 BCE, Aramaic or Ashuri Hebrew script):

The [inscription], from an ossuary of Dominus Flevit, shows … a Vav with apex, like to a P with an incomplete eye. (Bagatti - The Church from the Circumcision – History and Archaeology from the Judaeo-Christians - Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem – 1984, pg. 170)

Other symbols: Greek was the empire’s lingua franca of the first centuries of the Common Era and it is quite conceivable that even to our (mainly Jewish, minority
Gentile) Original Jesus Movement adherents, the symbols that originated as Hebrew letters with messianic significance came also to have meaning in Greek. One could even imagine that some symbols may have been born in the Greek. Of course we already know that at Christian burial grounds from the late first century thru early fourth century, Greek-letter symbology is commonplace in the vast number of tombs and catacombs all throughout the empire.

Conclusion:

At Dominus Flevit we have evidence of a burial ground whose interred reflect a Jewish community (they have Jewish names, are buried inside ossuaries, they observe the prohibition against graven images) with messianic beliefs (they use Ezequiel’s Tav mark and other inscriptions meant to usher them into, or prepare them for the advent of, the eschatological Kingdom). By the lack of traditional Jewish burial symbols like the menorah, shofar, etrog, we also observe that this community has departed from the expectations of the general Jewish population. They consider themselves a “remnant” of sorts (not unlike the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls did). In Dominus Flevit we do see the cradle of the Original, Jewish Jesus Movement.
### History of the Original Jesus Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אבּ</td>
<td>Alef</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Αα</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ב</td>
<td>Bet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ββ</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ג</td>
<td>Gimel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Γγ</td>
<td>Gamma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ד</td>
<td>Dalet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Δδ</td>
<td>Delta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ה</td>
<td>Hei</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Εε</td>
<td>Epsilon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ו</td>
<td>Vav</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ז</td>
<td>Zayin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ζζ</td>
<td>Zeta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ח</td>
<td>Chet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ηη</td>
<td>Eta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ג</td>
<td>Tet</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Θθ</td>
<td>Theta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Yud</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ιι</td>
<td>Iota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ק</td>
<td>Kaf</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Κκ</td>
<td>Kappa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ל</td>
<td>Lamed</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Λλ</td>
<td>Lambda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מ</td>
<td>Mem</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Μμ</td>
<td>Mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נ</td>
<td>Nun</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Νν</td>
<td>Nu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ס</td>
<td>Samech</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ξξ</td>
<td>Xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ע</td>
<td>Ayin</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Οο</td>
<td>Omicron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>פ</td>
<td>Pei</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Ππ</td>
<td>Pi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>צ</td>
<td>Tzadik</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ק</td>
<td>Kuf</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>ΡΡ</td>
<td>Rho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ר</td>
<td>Reish</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>ΣΣςς</td>
<td>Sigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ש</td>
<td>Shin</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Ττ</td>
<td>Tau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ט</td>
<td>Tav</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>ΥΥ</td>
<td>Upsilon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Final kaf</td>
<td>500 or 20</td>
<td>ΦΦ</td>
<td>Phi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Final mem</td>
<td>600 or 40</td>
<td>ΧΧ</td>
<td>Chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Final nun</td>
<td>700 or 50</td>
<td>ΨΨ</td>
<td>Psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Final pei</td>
<td>800 or 80</td>
<td>ΩΩ</td>
<td>Omega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Final tzadik</td>
<td>900 or 90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What to do with the below jpg?

Commemorative inscription (not the name of the person buried) reading: “Yeshua”
Mount of Offense

In 1873 archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau arrived in Jerusalem on a one-year commission from the Palestine Exploration Fund. Clermont-Ganneau’s work and subsequent publication, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine During the Years 1873-1874, (Volumes I, and II)* would become a classic of Archaeological research in the Holy Land. His work covered the Jerusalem area (published in Volume I) and the rest of the land (published in Volume II). The publications are now public domain and can be found and downloaded via Google Book search (https://books.google.com/books).

At the onset of his arrival, Clermont-Ganneau came to the attention of a very recent find, which he recounts thus:

In the course of the year 1873, some months before my arrival at Jerusalem, an Effendi of that city, Abu ’s So^ud by name, as far as I remember, while building himself a country house on the shoulder of the Mount of Olives, which is called Bat’n el-Hawa, the traditional Mount of Offense, not far from the road to Bethany, had broken into a sepulchral cave, full of most interesting little ossuaries. One of my first proceedings was to go and examine this important discovery. I even began to bargain with the landlord for the antiquities which he had found, but had to give it up owing to his exorbitant demands. I was obliged to content myself with getting as accurate reproductions as I could, in the form of squeezes, both of the inscriptions and the ornamentation carved upon the ossuaries. Afterwards the relics were dispersed and passed into various hands. I congratulate myself upon having taken the precaution to make a detailed description of the entire group, which is exceptionally important on account of its forming a connected whole.

The cave consisted of a simple rock-hewn chamber without loculi; it looked as though strictly speaking it had not been made for a sepulcher, but for a storehouse for the ossuaries brought from other unknown sepulchral chambers, which must exist not far from that spot. The ossuaries, thirty at least in number, were literally piled one above another in this narrow space. Unfortunately the cave was ransacked by rough workmen without the least care; they carried off the ossuaries and mixed them together, changed their lids, and broke many of the boxes, which were of very brittle soft calcareous stone. The also broke or threw away the bones which they contained, and various terra-cotta vases which lay among them. It is peculiarly vexing that they did not take any note of the order in which the ossuaries were arranged and piled up, because one might then perhaps have obtained some clue to their relative dates, since these ossuaries seem, as we shall see, to have belonged to several succeeding generations.

Clermont-Ganneau documented the reproductions in his aforementioned publication. There are 34 ossuary inscriptions in total, belonging to approximately thirty ossuaries (in some cases several inscriptions are of the same name although Clermont-Ganneau did not preserve the correlation of each inscription to each ossuary, however presumably belonging to the same ossuary). Twenty one inscriptions were in Hebrew
and thirteen in Greek. We shall provide a number of them here, those that are of note and/or form the overall picture of the conclusions that Clermont-Ganneau has drawn from this tomb. Then we shall cover the possible implications.

No. 1.*

Shalam-Zion, daughter of Shimeon the Priest.

No. 5.

“Shimeon, the son of Jesus.”

No. 3.

Judah, the Scribe.”
History of the Original Jesus Movement

No. 4.

“Judah, son of Eleazar, the Scribe.”

No. 6.

“Eleazar, the son of Natai.”

No. 7.

“Martha, daughter of Pascal.”
12 – The First Generation Passes Away

No. 8.

<drawing>

דוד, דוד, "Judah."

No. 9.

םלמה אשר ידודה

Salome, wife of Judah.”

(10)

<drawing>

“Salome.”
No. 11.

On the front side of an ossuary—

H<sub>2</sub>YUDH (Yehudah)

No. 19.

“To Judah, the son of Hananiah;”
but I do not give this reading as certain,
especially as regards the patronymic.

No. 22.

'IESOYC — 'IESOYC

'IESOYC — 'IESOYC
Nos. 25 and 26.

Mariados, “of Marias” or “Mariados.”

No. 28.

On the long front side of a perfectly plain ossuary.

Letters very deeply cut, quite in lapidary fashion, ἘΔΑ. I do not know whether we have here a woman’s proper name, ἘΔΑ, or ἘΔΑ, irregularly spelled; what complicates the question is that in the following number we seem to have the same name, or a doubtful word which looks like an abridged form of it.
Clermont-Ganneau theorized that the ossuaries in this tomb are part of a single family and span several generations, and that furthermore the cross marks reflect members of the family becoming Jesus followers.

Most baffling is the inscription of #29. If the other cross marks are consistent with a Jewish Jesus messianism (that is, that the cross marks denote Tavs, as suggested by Baggatti for the Dominus Flevit cases), there is no clear explanation for the Latin Cross and ED (clearly Christian symbols): either this final ossuary is from later time (eg. Post-70CE, but prior to the Second Jewish War of 135CE, when Jews were no longer permitted in Jerusalem), or it is pre-70CE and we must open the possibility of Pauline elements / Graeco-Roman elements starting to manifest themselves before 70CE in Eretz Israel.
If one accepts the presence of Jesus followers in this tomb, then the “umbrella” like symbols of inscriptions 8 and 10 become even more intriguing. Clermont-Ganneau did not offer a recommended interpretation, although he did rule out that these could be menorahs (found commonly in Jewish iconography, and sometimes on ossuaries) or anchors (found commonly in Graeco-Roman Christian catacombs). They must remain a enigma for the time being.

Inscription #22 is also of special interest. The name Iesous appears twice side-by-side. Is it the name of the occupant? Or is it a invocation?
Talpiot tomb discovered in 1945.

*The Official Guide to Israel* in 1950, said the following about a recent find in Talpiot, a suburb of Jerusalem, on the way to Bethlehem: “About seven hundred metres behind Talpiot a tomb was excavated in 1945 and several ossuaries containing human bodies were found. Inscriptions and coins proved that the burial in the tomb took place [around] the years 41-42. Two ossuaries were found marked with the word ‘Jesus’ and some others have so far been undeciphered. It has therefore been assumed that followers of Jesus had been buried in this tomb. If this assumption proves correct, this tomb would show the earliest historical evidence known about the followers of Jesus” [Official Guide to Israel, Tel Aviv: 1950, 247].

The tomb discovered in 1945 had 14 ossuaries. Three were taken out by the workmen who found the tomb. The other eleven were recovered by archaeologists E.L. Sukenik and N. Avigad in an excavation conducted very soon after the discovery. The places where the remaining 11 ossuaries were found were marked by Sukenik in his sketch of the tomb layout (see below). Also in the tomb was a coin of Herod Agrippa I, dating from 42/43 CE. Pottery of Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods was found, indicating that the tomb could have been in use between sometime in the first century BCE and the mid or late first century CE.

The find caused quite some sensation at the time of its find (Sukenik published the findings in *The Earliest Records of Christianity*. Philadelphia : American Journal of Archaeology, October-December 1947, Vol LI, issue number 4), and a story even appeared on Life Magazine on Dec 22, 1947. The reason for the sensation was the discovery of two ossuaries in place, next to each other, each with a inscription bearing the characters “IHCOUC” (“Jesus” in Greek) in each case followed by a possible expression of woe. In other words, were these Jesus followers’ ossuaries, in which a expression of allegiance to Jesus had been inscribed? In addition, a number of cross marks were found on the ossuaries (much more on this later), and finally two names reminiscent of the gospels: one ossuary with a inscription with the sur-name “Barsaba” in Hebrew, which is a family name only known from the NT (“Barsabba” in Acts 1:23 and Acts 15:22), and one with a Matya (short for “Matthew”, a common name of the time, nevertheless adding intriguing possibilities).
Plan of the Talpiot tomb discovered in 1945 including location of the ossuaries.
Drawing by E.L. Sukenik.

Below are the images of ossuaries and inscriptions referring to “Jesus” and “Barsaba”, excavated by Sukenik and Avigad:
Sukenik noted, “In classical Greek the interjection IOU, [“IOU” in English] usually twice repeated, was used to express grief or annoyance.”; “…there is a slight possibility that the diagonal stroke to the right may have been intended to indicate the repetition of the word”. Hence a possible English translation could be “Jesus, woe!” or “Jesus, woe!, woe!”
Ossuary No 8:

Of the two crosses and on the use of word Αλονθι Sukenik said:

There can be no doubt that the presence and the size of the crosses on ossuary no. 8 suggest that they were placed there with some definite purpose. They were apparently drawn by the same person who wrote the words IOY on the other ossuary.

We are faced with greater difficulties when attempting an interpretation of the second Greek inscription, no. 4, incised on the lid of ossuary no. 8. …In the Septuagint translation of the Song of Songs the word ἡράδοις (iv, 14) meaning the fragrant aloe plant, is rendered αλονθι. The same word ἡράδοις in Psalms (xl, 8) is, however, translated στάκτη [stakte]. In the New Testament we find the word Α λ ᾦ [aloe] (John, xix, 39).

…As stated above, the word is found once in the Septuagint as a translation of the Hebrew הָרָדָה, meaning aloe. This might conceivably be a nickname, since such nicknames taken from the names of plants do occasionally occur. In this case, however, we would expect to find the Greek word Α λ ᾦ used, since this is the usual Greek name for the aloe plant. The form of the word הָרָדָה seems to suggest a Semitic root but I could not make out the form. It was suggested to me that αλονθι might be a place-name, but in this case we would expect an adjective
formed from the place-name rather than the place-name itself. With great reserve I venture to suggest that ἀλωθ may have its origin in the Hebrew and Aramaic זָלַל, which means among other things "to wail," "to lament." But as I have already said, this interpretation is only tentative.

Ossuary No. 1:

Finally, the two other inscriptions that were found:
Ossuary No. 10:

Sukenik’s description: “One of the short sides of ossuary no. 10 bears three Hebrew letters, roughly incised. They seem to read "GetY", that is “Matya”, which is a abbreviation of Matyahu or Matityahu, i.e., "Matthew", a common name in first century Eretz Israel (yet, at the same time a important Jesus Movement one, as the name of one of the twelve apostles.

These were Sukenik’s overall conclusions on the tomb:

With regard to the crosses of our tomb, it would be unwise to insist that the cross had already become a venerated symbol of Christianity; these may be a pictorial expression of the event, tantamount to exclaiming, "He was crucified." My suggestion, therefore, is that the crosses and the graffiti on ossuaries nos. 7 and 8 represent a lamentation for the crucifixion of Jesus by some of His disciples. This suggestion was strengthened by the decipherment of the [Barsaba] graffito on ossuary no. 1, several months after the excavation of the tomb.

...[Our ossuary no. 1] graffito thus bears the name of a Jewish family of Jerusalem, some members of which are known to have been among the first disciples of Jesus, on the evidence of the New Testament...
A few words remain to be said with regard to the date of the tomb. Although it is theoretically possible that some of the Jewish tombs around Jerusalem may be dated as late as the foundation of Aelia Capitolina, the bulk of the tombs found at Jerusalem belong to the period before its destruction by the Romans in A.D. 70.

The pottery found in this tomb is typical of the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods. Similar types occur in practically all the tombs containing ossuaries discovered at Jerusalem. With the exception of the lamp decorated with the line pattern, which is still earlier, all the others are of a type with spatulated nozzles called "Herodian." No later types were found in the tomb.

The character of the Greek letters (especially the shape of the H) points to a date not later than the first century A.D. To this should be added the evidence of the coin of Agrippa I, which dates from A.D. 42/3.

My general impression is that the tomb contains nothing later than the first half of the first century A.D. The tomb was apparently in use from the first century B.C. until the middle of the first century A.D.

All our evidence indicates that we have in this tomb the earliest records of Christianity in existence. It may also have a bearing on the historicity of Jesus and the crucifixion.

Regarding the use of cross marks, let us bear in mind Sukenik’s admonition, made in the above 1947 report, to not interpret them as a implication of a veneration of a crucifixion symbol by the people related to this tomb. We have already discussed the use of the cross mark in Jewish writings as a “seal” which marks allegiance to God, critical during times of the Messiah and the End Days; and we have speculated that its use in the Dominus Flevit ossuaries may reflect this same usage possibly by Jesus followers (presumably applied to a putative Messiahship of Jesus in the eyes of followers of him). We have however also discussed the possible use of cross marks for the more mundane purpose of aligning the two parts of a ossuary (the cover and the repository). All of these possibilities are equally applicable here.

If the tomb contains the remains of Jesus followers, it does not tell us much regarding the beliefs of the people buried here, other than possibly the basic Messianic end-times expectation.
Talpiot tomb complex discovered in 1980

If the 1945 Talpiot tomb finding introduced the possibility of a tomb of Jesus followers, a subsequent Talpiot finding several decades later, would cause ripples an order of magnitude greater.

In 1980, a construction crew working on building a modern apartment complex in Talpiot encountered during the necessary digging, two tombs, each containing a number of ossuaries.

Location of Talpiot (currently tomb part of a apartment complex)

The first of these tombs, when excavated in 1980 during salvage archaeology, contained ten ossuaries. Excavations of the tomb were performed under the supervision of archaeologist, Joseph Gath, and a plan diagram of the tomb with elevations was made by an assistant archaeologist and surveyor, Shimon Gibson. Of the ten ossuaries, one was presumably stolen or lost. Of the other nine, six were inscribed with names, all of them closely connected with the names associated in the Gospels with Jesus and his family. The first of the two tombs also has a peculiar sign at the entrance:
Articles on the find soon appeared in various publications:

The find was also published in 1994 in LY Rahmani’s "Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel" numbers 701-709, and was first discussed in the media in Britain during March/April 1996 (a BBC documentary as part of its “Heart of the Matter” news magazine). At that time, Amos Kloner, the first archaeologist to examine the site in 1980, said [A. Kloner, “A Tomb with Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot” ‘Atiqot 29 (1996): pgs. 15-22.] that the claims of a connection to Jesus did not hold up archaeologically. Others were similarly skeptical, although another of the archaeologists who discovered the tomb admitted "I'm willing to accept the possibility." According to Kloner’s own notes, “The discovery, made prior to construction activity, was reported by K. Mandil and A. Shohat of the Solel Boneh Construction Company. The site was initially examined by E. Braun. Salvage excavations were conducted from March 28-April 14, 1980 (Permit 938)” [Kloner, “A Tomb with Inscribed Ossuaries,” Note 1, p. 22]. According to Kloner, the tomb was vandalized in antiquity and the blocking stone, known as a golal, was never found for this tomb. It was supposed to have been removed in antiquity. Or was it removed in more modern times? Though the original map of the Talpiyot tomb shows that the soil level was almost a foot above the buried ossuaries, the inscription on the “Yeshua bar Yosef” ossuary was scratched in a messy fashion near the lid. Only one or two of the first four letters are fairly legible.

A controversial 2007 documentary film produced by Canadian film director James Cameron and investigative journalist Simcha Jacobovici titled ‘The Lost Tomb of Jesus’ and a book written by Jacobovici, together with Charles Pellegrino, The Jesus Family Tomb presents findings that the authors believe prove that the Talpiot Tomb is the burial place of Jesus the Nazarene, and other figures from the New Testament. This claim is controversial and disputed by many archaeologists and theologians, as well as language and biblical scholars. The main argument from the authors of “The Jesus Family Tomb” rests on probabilities that these names would be found together (each on their own are all common names to be sure).

The tombs are located today within a apartment complex. The first one, in a courtyard in front of the entrance to 273 Dov Gruner Street (a walk down the flight of stairs adjacent to 278 Dov Gruner Street; the entrance to 278 Dov Gruner faces Olei HaGardom Street, opposite the junction with Avshalom Haviv Street.). The second one is just a few feet away, although it is completely underground and access was only possible via narrow air duct.

Below are the names and images of the inscriptions found in the first tomb (Talpyot Tomb A):
### TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF INSCRIPTION DATA FROM TEN OSSUARIES FOUND IN TALPIOT TOMB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IAA Catalogue No.</th>
<th>Rahmani/CJO Catalogue No.</th>
<th>Language of Inscription</th>
<th>Transliterated Inscription</th>
<th>Other Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/500</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Mariamene e Mara (Crossan 19); or Mariame kai Mara (Pfann)</td>
<td>Decorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/501</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>Yehudah bar Yeshua</td>
<td>Decorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/502</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>Matiyah (for Matitiyah)</td>
<td>Found broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repaired at museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/503</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>Aramaic</td>
<td>Yeshua (? ) bar Yehosef</td>
<td>Older scratches/strokes under Yeshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/504</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>Hebrew (View 2) Aramaic (Crossan 19)</td>
<td>Yosa or Yose or Yoseh</td>
<td>Found broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repaired at museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/505</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>Latin version of the name inscribed using Hebrew letters</td>
<td>Mariá (for Marian)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/506</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Illegible (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/507</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/508</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No name. Decorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAA 80/509</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Missing from IAA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. collated using information from Crossan and Reed; View from Jerusalem; Jacobovici and Pellegrino; and Pfann.

2. several authors refer to ossuaries according to the catalogue number shown in L.Y. Rahmani, Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel, (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994).
Plan of the 1980 Talpiot Tomb, sketched by Shimon Gibson showing the location of ten ossuaries:
Yeshua bar Yosef - inscription in Aramaic, meaning "Jesus son of Joseph." Ossuary 80.503 (#704 in Y.L. Rahmani’s Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries):

Yeshua (?) bar Yosef. Frank Moore Cross reads Yeshua bar Yosef. Amos Kloner and Stephen Pfann question this, suggesting “Hanun bar Yosef”. T. Ilan’s lexicon has the name “Jesus” occurring 104 times during this period. Given a Jerusalem area population of 100,000, there were probably 5,000 or more men with this name. Twenty-two ossuaries have been found bearing the inscription “Jesus” in some form—and four of them with the inscription Jesus son of Joseph.

Note also the cross mark (circled here in red) on the beginning of the name.
Additionally, as remarked by Scott Wolter, the lid of ossuary 80.503 is also of interest:

The mark on the lid is located next to the name on the side (sketch by S.Wolter).
http://scottwolteranswers.blogspot.com/2015/08/hooked-xtau-cross-monogram-on-jesus.html
The “star like” mark is absolutely deliberately carved, and not natural. Also of note is that it appears to be carved more deeply than the name “Yeshua” and cross mark located on the side of the ossuary. If the mark has any deliberate meaning, it is conceivable that it could have been made by another hand and many years after the first inscription on the side.

The mark is not a “lid alignment mark” (as discussed previously, makers of ossuaries regularly placed cross marks on the lid and the side of an ossuary, in order to assist the family in correctly placing the lid, after the deceased’s bones were placed inside). Rather, our mark here has no counterpart on the side of the ossuary and is too complex to represent a “lid alignment” mark.

Rather, it resembles a superimposition of a “T” Greek Tau mark and a Old Hebrew/Aramaic Tav “X” mark. Notice also that the “X” mark shows a appendage from one of its branches. A cross mark with appendage has also been recorded by Archaeologist Father Bellarmino Bagatti, representing, in his findings, a superimposition of a Tav and Vav, in other words fully spelling the word “Tav”.

One may read the symbol as a double Tav mark (certainly appropriate for someone judged by his family and followers to be the special figure in the coming messianic times. Alternatively, one can suppose the Greek Tau to symbolize a crucifixion stauros cross. Certainly a intriguing thought.

Lastly the “<” is intriguing given the “Λ” at the tomb entrance.
“Mariamenou Mara” or “Mariamene e Mara”, “Mariamene also known as Mara” or “Mariamne and Mara”, inscription in Greek. “Mariamne” is of course the Hebrew form of “Mary”. “Mara” could be the Aramaic word for “Lord” or “Master” or “Leader”. Alternatively it could be a form of “Martha”. Ossuary 80.500.

“Belonging to Mariamenon who is Mara” [Genitive of Mariamenon with a second name “Mara” (a short form of Martha)]. This has been suggested by R. Bauckham [http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/ (See Wednesday February 28, 2007)]. The Discovery Channel film proposes to read Mara as the Aramaic word ‘the master’ (as in Maranatha). Bauckham later wrote: “But, since we know that Mara was used as an abbreviated form of Martha, in this context of names on an ossuary it is much more plausible to read it as a name. This woman had two names: Mariamenon and Mara. It could be that the latter in this case was used as an abbreviation of Mariamenou, or it could be that the woman was known by Mariamenon, treated as a Greek name, and the Aramaic name Mara, conforming to the common practice of being known by two names, Greek and Semitic” [http://www.christilling.de/blog/2007/03/guest-post-by-richard-bauckham.html].
Maryah - a name apparently in Latin, but written in Hebrew letters. Ossuary 80.505 (#706 in Y.L. Rahmani’s Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries):

Maryah or Maria [form of Miriam, spelled here Mem, Resh, Yod, Heh].
Yosa - believed to be the same as Yoses or Joses, the name of one of the brothers of Jesus listed in the New Testament's book of Mark (6:3). Yosa is the diminutive of Yosef similar to Joey being the diminutive of Joseph in English. Such a name has not been found in any ossuary other than this and it is noteworthy that the ossuary was that of an adult. Hence, the book speculates, this would be a strong indication that Yosa would be the son of Yosef, or Yeshua's brother ("Yeshua bar Yosef") just as in Mark. Rahmani thinks it could be that of Jesus' father Yosef, because of similarities to the Marya ossuary.

Ossuary 80.504 (#705 in L.Y. Rahmani’s Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries):

Ywoseh [A contraction of Yehosef (Joseph), spelled here Yod, Vav, Samech, Heh]
Matiah - a name in Hebrew, the original form of the names of the apostles Matthew and Matthias. His presence in the family tomb implies he was also a relative of Jesus, as were some of the other apostles.

Ossuary 80.502 (#703 in L.Y. Rahmani’s Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries):

Matiah [form of Matthew, spelled here Mem, Tav, Yod, Heh]. About 35% of Jewish males during this period had “Hasmonian” [Maccabean] names. These include: Matthew, John/Jonathan, Simon, Judah/Judas, Eleazar, and Joseph.
**Yehuda bar Yeshua** - "Judah, son of Jesus." (Inscription in Aramaic). Otherwise unknown. According to the authors, same as Jude, known also as Thomas, the “Twin.” Among the several theories presented in the book “The Jesus Family Tomb” is that he was the son of Jesus, but was publicly presented as the brother of Jesus, in order to save him from being executed as a pretender to the throne of Israel. He was known as "Twin" (Thomas, Didymus, etc.) presumed to be Jesus' brother but really his son. Ossuary 80.501 (#702 in Y.L. Rahmani’s Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries).

**Yehuda bar Yeshua** [Judah son of Yeshua/Joshua/Jesus (Gk.)]. The third most common name for a Jewish male during this period was Yehuda (Judah/Judas). Of 1986 names surveyed for this period, Yehuda occurs 128 times [T. Ilan].
Last, yet certainly not least, the controversial James ossuary. The ossuary was purchased by collector Oded Golan in the antiquities market. In April 2015 a study found its patina to be the same as the other ossuaries in the same “Jesus family tomb”. It is claimed that it is the “missing ossuary” from the original set that was found in 1980 in Talpiot.
Talpiot tomb #2 ("The Patio Tomb"). Ossuary containing what appears to be a stick figure at the mouth of a whale (Jonah and the whale), bordered by "little fish", something never previously seen in Jewish ossuaries. A replica was manufactured, shown below.
The Patio tombs ossuary's iconography is disputed. The “whale” could be a vase. The stick figure at the “mouth” of the “whale” has been described as spelling out the name “Yonah”, however this is also disputed. If this image were a representation of Jonah and the Whale, it could be a Jesus Movement symbol. It is certainly a well-known resurrection symbol from the Christian catacombs in Rome and in other Graeco-Roman cities where second or third century Christians buried their dead. However the Patio Tomb Ossuary image does not well resemble the “Graeco-Roman” styles found in Christian catacombs throughout the empire.

Lastly, the “little fishes” on the same ossuary have not been confirmed as such (recall that the image above is of a replica only). The actual photos are not focused enough to confirm whether these are fishes, but if they were, we would certainly have a strong connection to the Jesus Movement. Little fishes have never been found on Jewish ossuaries, except possibly here. Here is a photo from the original ossuary (doctored to highlight the fishlike incisions):

Again, as with the 1945 Talpiot tomb, if these are the remains of Jesus and/or Jesus’ followers, the evidence as to the beliefs of the people interred here is tenous.
A tomb was discovered on 10 November 1941, during one of the systematic searches for ancient Jewish tombs in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem undertaken by the Department of Archaeology of the Hebrew University. The excavation was directed by the late Prof. E. L. Sukenik with the assistance of N. Avigad, who published the finding in 1962 (Israel Exploration Society, Vol. 12, No. 1, pgs. 1-12, 1962: A Depository of Inscribed Ossuaries in the Kidron Valley; article can be found at JSTOR.org here: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27924877). A subsequent study by Tom Powers was also published in Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR), called “Treasures in the Storeroom: The Family Tomb of Simon of Cyrene” (July/August 2003) and a revisiting of the topic in 2010, which can be found here: https://israelpalestineguide.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/alexander-simon-ossuary-a-second-look-from-bar.pdf

The rock-cut tomb (Serial No. XXXI) is situated south of Silwan village at a site named Karm esh-Sheikh on the south-western slope of the Kidron Valley. N. Avigad tells us:

In the chamber were found eleven ossuaries (Nos. 1-11 on plan). Ten were grouped close together at the eastern end of the chamber and one stood alone near the corner of the western shelf. Thirteen pottery vessels and a few sherds were found on the shelves and in the debris of the pit. On both the south and the west shelves were scattered badly decayed bones. Apparently the dead when buried were simply put on the shelves; later their bones were collected and deposited in the ossuaries. This kind of single tomb chamber with shelves and no kokhim is rather rare among ossuary-tombs. [Kokhim, or loculi in Latin, are niches carved into the walls within a tomb, that are intended for placement of the ossuaries.]

Based on the pottery found, the tomb is dated to the first century CE. What is particular about this tomb is that many of the names on the ossuaries are in general particular to Cyrenaica (near present-day Shahhat in north-eastern Libya). Cyrenaica, whose chief city was Cyrene, was a Roman province with a thriving Jewish community going back to about 300 B.C.E. Besides the Simon of Cyrene of the Gospel accounts (Mark 15:21 “They compelled a passerby, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.”; also in Matthew 27:32; Luke 23:26), there are other mentions of the presence of Jews of Cyrenian origin in the eastern Levant in first century C.E. They are mentioned in connection with the Pentecost event (Acts 2:5,10), the story of the proto-martyr Stephen (Acts 6:9), and the composition of the early Christian communities of both Jerusalem (Acts 11:19–20) and Antioch (Acts 13:1). In short, the tomb seems to be a burial for a family or community of Cyrenean Jews.

One of the ossuaries contains references to a “Simon” and a “Alexander son of Simon”. Alexander was an unusual name among Jews of Palestine in the first century CE, and the combination Alexander son of Simon even more unusual.
The first inscription, on one side of the ossuary (the side facing the wall) reads:

![Image of inscription]

The text “SIMON” on line 1 appears centered and in deeper carving than the remaining characters (“ALE” on line 1 and “ALEXANDROS SIMONOU” in lines 2 and 3). According to N. Avigad, the three lines were meant for a Alexander son of Simon, but the engraver was very inexperienced and began with “SIMON” and continued with “ALE” until he realized his (three!) mistakes (mistake 1: carving “SIMON” instead of “SIMONOU”, mistake 2: not starting with “ALEXANDROS”, mistake 3: centering “SIMON” and not realizing there would be insufficient space for “ALEXANDROS”). Tom Powers has a simpler explanation: the engraver could not have been so incompetent; rather what we have is two separate inscriptions: the first one (more deeply carved) of a person named “SIMON”, and then a second one (more lightly carved, i.e., by a different engraver) where the engraver’s only mistake was to begin “ALEXANDROS SIMONOU” on the same line where the earlier “SIMON” inscription lay.

A second inscription on the other side of the ossuary (found facing outward) was written in chalk by a single hand, and simply contains “ALEXANDROS” and “SIMON”, without qualifying who Alexander’s father was. It would seem to agree with Powers’ assessment on the inscription on the other side. This, chalk, inscription would have been made at the time of the burial of the second of the two names (that would be, at the time of the burial of the, younger, Alexander son of Simon) and intended to recap whose bones were contained in the box.

![Image of chalk inscription]

Lastly, we have the lid, with only the name “of Alexander”, ALEXANDROU, and and then the Hebrew [Aramaic] letters for ALXSNDROS QRNYT. Presumably, QRNYT (circled in red below) may refer to “of Cyrenaica” (“QRNY” is Hebrew for “Cyreanean”).
In summary, the ossuary in its contextual setting may constitute evidence of actual remains of two individuals (father and son) mentioned in the Gospels. There were no markings found in the tomb that would recall Jesus or the Jesus Movement.
This is a broad and fascinating field with vast archeological findings over the last hundred years, a field that we can not do justice to in this work. For seminal works on the symbology used by communities of Jesus followers see also:

Charles Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine During the Years 1873 - 1874*


After James' death in 62CE, the Movement leadership passes to his cousin Simeon bar Cleopas, who leads the escape to Pella (modern-day Jordan) during the Jewish-Roman war.

62-65 CE

Eusebius, writing in 324CE, relates the succession of the movement after James' death ('History of the Church', 3.11.1): After the martyrdom of James, and the capture of Jerusalem which instantly followed [four years later], there is a firm tradition that those of the apostles and disciples of the Lord who were still alive, assembled from all parts together with those who, humanly speaking, were kinsmen of the Lord - for most of them were still living and they all took counsel together concerning whom they should judge worthy to succeed Iakobos, and to the unanimous tested approval it was decided that Simeon bar Clopas [Συμεὼν ὁ πῶν τοῦ Κλωπᾶ], mentioned in the Gospel Narrative, was worthy to occupy the throne of the Jerusalem see. He was, so it is said, a cousin of the savior, for Hegesippus relates that Clopas was the brother of Joseph [Κλωπᾶν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ].

History of the Church 4.22.4, quoting Hegessipus, Jewish Christian chronicler who lived ca 110 to 180CE:

4. The same author also describes the beginnings of the heresies which arose in his time, in the following words: “And after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as the Lord had also on the same account, Symeon, the son of the Lord's uncle, Clopas, was appointed the next bishop. All proposed him as second bishop because he was a cousin of the Lord. Therefore, they called the Church a virgin, for it was not yet corrupted by vain discourses.”

As we will now see, the period under Simeon Bar Cleopas shall see great turmoil. The War with Rome will begin in 66CE and the community will feel compelled to escape to east of the Jordan; At the same time, we will see some in the community will align with Rome (consistent with Paul’s teachings). Finally we will see other flavors of Jesus sects, all well documented by Church Historians.
Continuing with Eusebius’s previous account (quoted from Hegessipus), we have the beginning of a multitude of Jesus-sects:

History of the Church 4.22.

5. “But Thebuthis, because he was not made bishop, began to corrupt it. He also was sprung from the seven sects among the people, like Simon, from whom came the Simonians, and Cleobius, from whom came the Cleobians, and Dositheus, from whom came the Dositeans, and Gorthæus, from whom came the Goratheni, and Masbotheus, from whom came the Masbothæans. From them sprang the Menandarianists, and Marcionists, and Carpocratians, and Valentinians, and Basilidians, and Saturnilians. Each introduced privately and separately his own peculiar opinion. From them came false Christs, false prophets, false apostles, who divided the unity of the Church by corrupt doctrines uttered against God and against his Christ.”

6. The same writer also records the ancient heresies which arose among the Jews, in the following words: "There were, moreover, various opinions in the circumcision, among the children of Israel. The following were those that were opposed to the tribe of Judah and the Christ: Essenes, Galileans, Hemerobaptists, Masbothæans, Samaritans, Sadducees, Pharisees."

64 CE Nero’s Rome

We have already discussed Tacitus’ (writing ca 114CE) reference to Chrestus as the originator of the Christian sect in Rome (a passing reference to his account of the tortures inflicted on them by Nero). Having now also discussed the community Rome thru the late fifties, let us return to Tacitus’ reference on the Neronian persecution, which happened in 64CE.

Annales XLIV: … The next thing [to find culprits for the fire at Rome] was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Chrestianos by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort
was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

We already discussed the troubled start of the mixed assembly of Jesus followers in Rome: a start (ca. late thirties to mid forties) by Jews eager for the messiah’s arrival; followed by revolts versus other Jews and the consequent expulsion of all Jews from the city by Claudius between 49 and 53CE; then a return to Rome after Claudius’ death in 54CE; and finally we can see from Paul's letter that as of the late fifties the community is now mainly Gentile (ie the Jewish membership probably did not regain its strength after the pain of the Claudian exile). Nevertheless, one has to wonder why, if they were Gentiles (presumably Romans of various, mainly lower, social classes), would they be subjected to tortures like crucifixion (a penalty reserved for non-Roman citizens). Could it be that these “Christians” were still considered a Jewish sect? It is quite likely that thru the mid sixties one could still find “Pauline” and “Jame" Jesus followers, some Gentile, some Jewish, associating and trying to work things out together in Rome (this shall of course wind down to near zero after the First Jewish War (66 to 70CE).

66 CE Jerusalem and flight to east of the Jordan

Eusebius relates the flight of the Jesus followers to Pella (in present-day Jordan), around the start of the Jewish-Roman war (66CE to 70CE):

History of the Church 3:5:3 : But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella.

The situation of escaping and settling in the dessert may also be reflected in a earlier work, The Ascension of Isaiah (a Christian work, redact between early and late second century CE), in which Isaiah “prophecies” that:

Ascension of Isaiah Chapter 4.13 : And many believers and saints having seen Him for whom they were hoping, who was crucified, Jesus the Lord Christ, [after that I, Isaiah, had seen Him who was crucified and ascended] and those also who were believers in Him - of these few in those days will be left as His servants, while they flee from desert to desert, awaiting the coming of the Beloved.

Epiphanius (writing ca 374 CE, and possibly based partially on Eusebius) also relates the flight to Pella.
Epiphanius’ *Panarion* Chapter 29 “On the Nazoreans” (Greek: Ναζωραίων / Nazoraion) section 7.7-7.8:

The Nazoraean sect exists in Beroea near Coele Syria [Βεροιαίων περὶ τὴν ΚοΪλήν Συρίαν / Beroiaion peri ten Koilen Syrian], and in the Decapolis near the region of Pella, and in Bashan in the place called Kocaba, which in Hebrew is called Kochabe [Βασανίτιδι ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ Κωκάβῃ / Basanitidi en te legomene Kokabe, Kokhabe de Ebraisti legomene]. That is where the sect began, when all the disciples were living in Pella after they moved from Jerusalem, since Christ told them to leave Jerusalem and withdraw because it was about to be besieged. For this reason they settled in Peraea and there, as I said, they lived. This is where the Nazoraean sect began. [Note: Regarding “This is where the Nazoraean sect began”, see Chapter Note 1.]

Epiphanius’ *Panarion* Chapter 30 “On the Ebionites” (Greek: Ἐβιωναίων / Ebionaion):

Panarion 30:18:

They [the Ebionites] spring for the most part from Nabatea and Paneas [Ναβαταίων καὶ Πανεάδως / Nabataias kai Paneados], as well as from Moabitis and Kochaba in Basanitis [Μωαβίτιδος καὶ Κοκάβων ἐν τῇ Βασανίτιδι / Moabitidos te kai Kokabon en te Basanitidi] on the other side of Adraa.

Panarion 30:2:7:

Their sect began after the capture of Jerusalem. For, when all who believed in Christ had settled down about that time in Peraea, the majority of the emigrants taking up their abode at Pella, a town belonging to the Decapolis mentioned in the Gospel, near Batanea [Βαταναίας / Batanaias] and the district of Bashan (Basanitis) [Βασανίτιδος / Basanitidos], then Ebion [Chapter Note 2] got his excuse and opportunity. At first their abode was Kochaba [Κοκάβῃ / Kochabe], a village in the district of Carnaim [Καρναίμ / Karnaim], Arnem, and Astaroth [Ἀσταρωθὸς / Astaros], in the region of Basanitis [Βασανίτιδος / Basanitidos], according to the information we have received. But I have spoken, in other connections and with regard to other heresies, of the locality of Kochaba and Arabia. [Chapter Note 3]

Epiphanius, *On Weights and Measures* 15:

For when the city was about to be captured and sacked by the Romans, all the disciples were warned beforehand by an angel to remove from the city, doomed as it was to utter destruction. On migrating from it they settled at Pella, the town already indicated, across the Jordan. It is said to belong to Decapolis.
If the animosity between the (pro-Torah) Jewish Jesus Movement and the (anti-Torah) Pauline Graeco-Roman Jesus followers begins with the confrontations around 49CE (e.g. as in Antioch between Paul and Peter/Barnabas/"the James Faction"), the period under Simeon Bar Cleopas will see the division between the two become deeper and "out in the open" sometime between 62CE and 70CE (probably around 66CE, when the Jewish Jesus Movement moves to Pella at the start of the Jewish-Roman War, and the Roman sympathizers choose (in good Pauline fashion) to cozy up to the imminent Roman conquerors). After 70CE, with the Temple destroyed and Jerusalem in ruins, we start seeing growing Graeco-Roman Christian communities in Eretz Israel and throughout the empire, and along with them, the early versions of Christian gospels, e.g. the anonymous "Epistle to the Hebrews" (written shortly after 70CE), "Luke/Acts" (written in the 90's), and John's Gospel (written ca. 100 CE) that are openly adverse (as was Paul) to those who rely in the Sinai Covenant.

A late reference to these events of the late 60's and 70's comes from Abd al-Jabbar, who as we wrote before, preserved excerpts that historian Shlomo Pines brought to light in 1966, in *The Jewish Christians According to a New Source*, as being authored by a Jewish group of Jesus followers. The author from whom Abd al-Jabbar brought his excerpt is lamenting the creation of a new religion which has abandoned its Hebrew and Jewish roots and accommodated to please the Roman empire (Pines 1966, pg14; also in Reynolds 2010, pg 92) [comments in brackets mine, not Pines']:

(71a) After him [i.e. Jesus], his disciples were with the Jews and the Children of Israel in the latter's synagogues and observed the prayers and the feasts of the Jews in the same place as the latter. (However) there was a disagreement between and the Jews with regard to Christ.

The Romans (al-Rum) reigned over them. The Christians (used to) complain to the Romans about the Jews [editorial, certainly Paul's appeal to Rome after the incident at the Temple, recorded in Acts, would qualify here], showed them their own weakness and appealed to their pity. And the Romans did pity them. This (used) to happen frequently. And the Romans said to the Christians: "Between us and the Jews there is a pact which (obliges us) not to change their religious laws (adyan). But if you would abandon their laws and separate yourselves from them, praying as we do (while facing) the East, eating (the things) we eat, and regarding as permissible that which we consider as such, we should help you and make you powerful, and the Jews would find no way (to harm you). On the contrary, you would be more powerful than they."

The Christians answered: "We will do this." (And the Romans) said: "Go, fetch your companions, and bring your Book (kitab)." (The Christians) went to their companions, informed them of (what had taken place) between them and the Romans and said to them: "Bring the Gospel (al-injil), and stand up so that we should go to them." But these (companions) said to them: "You have done ill. We are not permitted (to let) the Romans pollute the Gospel. (71b) In giving a favorable answer to the Romans, you have accordingly departed from the religion. We are (therefore) no longer permitted to associate with you; on the contrary, we are obliged to declare that there is nothing in common between us and you;" and they prevented their (taking possession of) the Gospel or gaining access to it. In consequence a violent quarrel (broke out) between (the two
groups). Those (mentioned in the first place) went back to the Romans and said to them: "Help us against these companions of ours before (helping us) against the Jews, and take away from them on our behalf our Book (kitab)." Thereupon (the companions of whom they had spoken) fled the country. And the Romans wrote concerning them to their governors in the districts of Mosul and in the Jazirat al-'Arab. Accordingly, a search was made for them; some (qawm) were caught and burned, others (qawm) were killed.

(As for) those who had given a favorable answer to the Romans they came together and took counsel as to how to replace the Gospel, seeing that it was lost to them. (Thus) the opinion that a Gospel should be composed (yunshi‘u) was established among them. They said: "the Torah (consists) exclusively of (narratives concerning) the births of the prophets and of the histories (tawarikh) of their lives. We are going to construct (nabni) a Gospel according to this (pattern). Everyone among us is going to call to mind that which he remembers of the words (ajfar) of the Gospel and of (the things) about which the Christians talked among themselves (when speaking) of Christ." Accordingly, some people (qawm) wrote a Gospel. After (them) came others (qawm) (who) wrote (another) Gospel. (In this manner) a certain number of Gospels were written. (However) a great part of what was (contained) in the original was missing in them. There were among them (men), one after another, who knew many things that were contained in the true Gospel (al-injil al-xahih), but with a view to establishing their dominion (ri‘asa), they refrained from communicating them. In all this there was no mention [in the true Gospel] of the cross or of the crucifix. According to them there were eighty Gospels. However, their (number) constantly diminished and became less, until (only) four Gospels were left which are due to four individuals (nafar). Every one of them composed in his time a Gospel. Then another came after him, saw that (the Gospel composed by his predecessor) was imperfect, and composed another which according to him was more correct (axahh), nearer to correction (al-xihha) than the Gospel of the others.

Then there is not among these a (single) Gospel (written) in the language of Christ, which was spoken by him and his companions (axhab), namely the Hebrew (al-‘ibraniyya) language, which is that of Abraham (Ibrahim), the Friend (khalil) of God and of the other prophets, (the language) which was spoken by them and in which the Books of God were revealed to them and to the other Children of Israel, and in which God addressed them.

(For) they have abandoned (taraka) (this language). Learned men (al-‘ulama’) said to them: "Community of Christians, give up the Hebrew language, which is the language of Christ and the prophets (who were) before him, peace be upon them, (72a) and (adopt) other languages." Thus there is no Christian who (in observing) a religious obligation recites these Gospels in the Hebrew language: he does not do so out of ruse (using) a stratagem, in order to avoid (public) shame.

Therefore people said to them: The giving-up the language (al-‘ud-l ‘anha) occurred because your first masters (axhabukum al-aw-walun) aimed at deception in their writings (maqalat) using such stratagems as quotations from counterfeit authorities in the lies which they composed, and concealing these
stratagems. They did this because they sought to obtain domination (ti'asa). For at that time the Hebrews (al-'ibraniyya) were people of the Book and men of knowledge. Accordingly, these individuals (nafar) altered (ghayyara) the language or rather gave it up altogether, in order that the men of knowledge should not grasp quickly their teaching and their objectives. (For if they had done, so these individuals) would have been disgraced before having been (able) to consolidate their teaching, and their (objectives) would not have been fulfilled. Accordingly, they gave up (Hebrew and took up) numerous other languages which had not been spoken by Christ and his companions. (Those who speak these languages) are not people of the Book and have no knowledge concerning God's books and commandments. Such were the Romans (al-Rum), the Syrians, the Persians, Hindus, Armenians and other foreigners. This was done by means of deception and ruse by this small group of people who (wanted) to hide their infamy and to reach the goal of their wishes in their aspiration for dominion (which was to be won) through (the instrumentality of) religion. If this were not so they would have used the language of Abraham, of his children and of Christ, through whom the edifice had been constructed and to whom the books had been revealed. In establishing a proof (meant) for the Children of Israel and the unbelievers among the Jews (al-yahud) it would have been better that a call be made to them in their own tongue (lisan) and a discussion engaged with them in their language (lugha), which they would not have been able to refuse. Know this; it is a great principle.

Know -may God have mercy upon you- that these three sects [editorial: the author is referring to the three Christian sects: the Graceo-Roman-aligned Melkite Church, the Nestorians (diaphysites), and the Jacobites (monophysites/miaphysites)] do not believe that God revealed to Christ in one way or another a Gospel or a book. Rather, according to them, Christ created the prophets, revealed to them the books and sent to them angels. However, they have with them Gospels composed by four individuals [i.e. “Matthew”, “John”, “Mark”, “John”] each one of whom wrote a Gospel. After (one of them) came (another) who was not satisfied with (his predecessor's) Gospel and held that his own Gospel was better. (These Gospels) agree in certain places and disagree (72b) in others; in some of them (there are passages) which are not (found) in the other. There are tales concerning people-men and women-from among the Jews, the Romans, and other (nations, who) said this and did that. There are many absurdities, (many) false and stupid things and many obvious lies and manifest contradictions. It was this which people have thoroughly studied and set apart. However, a person who reads it becomes aware of this if he examines it carefully. Something -but little- of the sayings, the precepts of Christ and information concerning him is also to be found there.

As for the four Gospels: one of them was composed by John (Yuhanna) and another by Matthew. Then, after these two came Mark (M.r.q.s.) who was not satisfied with their two Gospels. Then, after these came Luke (Luqa), who was not satisfied with these Evangels and composed (still) another one. Each one of them was of the opinion (wa-kana 'inda kull wahid min ha'ula') that the man who had composed a Gospel before him, had given a correct account of (certain) things and had distorted (akhalla) others, and that another (Gospel) would be
more deserving of recognition and more correct. For if his predecessor had succeeded in giving a correct account, there would have been no need for him to compose another, different from that of his predecessor.

None of these four Gospels is a commentary upon another (Gospel); (it is not a case of) someone who coming after (someone else) comments upon his predecessor’s book, giving first an account of what the latter had said, and then (proposing) a commentary. Know this: (he who composed a Gospel) did this, because another man had fallen short of success (qaxxara) (at his task).

These (Christian) sects are of the opinion that these four (Evangelists) were companions and disciples of Christ. But they do not know, having no information (on the subject), who they were. On this (point) they can (merely) make a claim. For Luke mentions in his Gospel that he had never seen Christ. Addressing (the man) for whom he composed his Gospel --- he is the last of the four (Evangelists) --- he says: "I knew your desire of good, of knowledge and of instruction (al-‘adab), and I composed this Gospel because I knew this and because I was close to those who had served and seen the Word (al-kalima)." Thus he says clearly in the first place that he did not see the Word --- they signify by this word Christ ---; Thereupon he claims to have seen people who had seen Christ. But his having seen them is a (mere) assertion (on his part). If he had been someone deserving of trust, he would not have-in view of the (kind of) information (which was at his disposal)---composed anything at all. In spite of this he mentions that his Gospel is preferable to those of the others.

(73a) If the Christians would consider these things, they would know that the Gospels which are with them are of no profit to them, and that the knowledge claimed (on their behalf) by their masters and the authors (of the Gospels) is not (found) in them, and that on this point) things are just as we have said---it is a well-known (fact) which is referred to here (namely the fact that they have abandoned the religion of Christ and turned towards) the religious doctrines of the Romans, prizing and (seeking to obtain) in haste the profits which could be derived from their domination and their riches.


Know... that these Christian sects are the most ignorant people in the world with regard to Christ, his history and that of his mother and that everyone among the authors of these Gospels learnt whatever he has written only a long time after Christ and after the death of his companions from (people) who lacked knowledge and were ill-informed. (Tathbit 95a)

A similar account (although containing anachronisms) comes to us via another muslim apologist, Al-Qurtubi (died 1273). As discovered by Shlomo Pines (Collected Works Volume IV, 1996, pg 459), within Al-Qurtubi’s anti-Christian treatise, a account is given on the origin of the Christian sects that al-Qurtubi is familiar with, and their opposition to the original Jesus followers, resulting in a dispersion east of the Jordan. The three Christian sects that Al-Qurtubi speaks of came into formalized separate existence after the council of Chalcedon (451CE), and they exist even today in the east. These were (and are): Byzantine Orthodox Christians (called Melkites, because of their siding with the Roman/Byzantine emperor’s Chalcedon ruling on the nature of Jesus Christ), Diaphysite (ie. “two natures”) Christians (later also named “Nestorians”, after
Nestorius 386-450CE, Patriarch of Constantinople), and Miaphysite (ie. “single nature”) Christians (later named “Jacobites”, after Jacob Bar-adai/Baradeus of Edessa, ca503 to 578CE).

First, a brief excursus on these three Christian denominations and how these three came to be, especially in the area of Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, and further east (to India and China). In the fourth and early fifth centuries, perhaps the hottest topic ripping Christianity apart was the question of the nature of Jesus Christ. Back in 325CE at the Council of Nicaea, the ruling had been made that Christ is of the same nature as God, i.e. that he is a second person of the Deity. That council essentially relegated as “heretics” the Arian party (which argued, in a way consistent with Daniel’s prophecy and also with Helenistic Judaism) that Christ (the Logos/Word) was God’s “tool” through which God operates in the created world (the Logos having actually created the universe, influenced it at critical times, and eventually will come to fulfill the role of Anointed to usher in God’s Kingdom). In 381CE at the Council of Constantinople, Arianism was re-defeated (as it turns out all of Constantinople and much of Asia minor had remained Arian even after 325 !), and the “Holy Spirit” was also officially named as a third person of the Deity. At any rate, after 381, the Church moved on without the Arians, and that was that. However in the subsequent decades, those who agreed with the Nicaean ruling, began to differ on the next fundamental question: “what is the nature of Jesus Christ”, i.e. do we have “Jesus” and “Christ” separately? Together? The fundamental driver of this question, which was officially discussed and ruled on, at the Council of Chalcedon, 451CE, was: “If the Christ is divine (as was indeed ruled on, at the Council of Nicaea in 325CE), does the sacrifice of Jesus Christ mean that the Deity actually suffered and even experienced death? The response came in three flavors: The diaphysites (eventually called Nestorians) argued that “in Jesus we have two natures: the divine Son/Christ, and the human Jesus” (therefore, the divine Christ did not suffer or die, rather the human aspect, Jesus, did experience the suffering, death, and resurrection), which their opponents abhorred because it makes Jesus’ death like that of any other human hero (ie., is “just” a human’s sacrifice sufficient to save humanity?); The Jacobites on the other hand argued that “in Jesus Christ there is only a single nature, which is fully divine but which can also conduct itself in ways we humans can relate to”, (which means that Jesus Christ’s sacrifice was enormous enough to suffice as THE salvific event in history, but which their opponents abhorred because it was, and is, considered degrading to God for Him to suffer and die); Finally the (now called) Orthodox (which includes what today are known as Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox, since that split had not occurred yet) argued that “in Jesus we have a two natures merged into one, separate yet indivisible” (which their opponents abhorred as neither here nor there). The Council of Chalcedon, 451CE, ruled for the (now known as) Orthodox position. This caused Diaphysites and Miaphysites to be anathemized in the empire. However, by then large parts of Syria, and all of Mesopotamia (and eastward) were outside of the empire. Hence all three positions were able to flourish there (as the Muslims found when they came in the seventh century). Now back to the text transmitted via al-Qurtubi:

They separated into four sects:
Yaqub took over Paul’s doctrine, according to which God IS the Messiah, that he (the Messiah) always “was” and he incarnated; his partisans adopted this doctrine; they are the Jacobites.
Nestor said: The Messiah is God’s son by grace. His partisans adopted this doctrine; they are the Nestorians; However, his partisans did not believe that he was called “son” by grace; they hold rather to the belief that was stated here before.

Malkun said: God is three Pesons.

Here upon the Believer (al-mu'min) stood up and told them: May the curse of God be upon you! God only did this in order to bring about your corruption. We have been the companions of Christ before him. We saw Christ and heard what he said and have transmitted his sayings. God only did this in order to bring about your straying away and corruption. Paul said to his followers: Stand up, let us fight this Believer and kill him and his companions. Or else he will corrupt your religion. The Believer went forth to his people and said: Don’t you know that Christ is a slave and messenger of God and that he said this to you? They said ‘yes’. He said thereupon: ‘This accursed one has led astray these people.’ And they rose in pursuit and fought them. The Believer and his companions were defeated, for he had the smallest following. Thereupon he and his people went to al-Sham [today’s Syria and Iraq]. Thereupon the Jews took them captive. But they informed them of what happened and said: ‘we came to you in order to be safe in your country. We have no need of things belonging to this world. We will stay in caves and cells and be wanderers upon the earth. Thereupon the Jews let them go.

... The flight of those among them who believed (al-mu'minun) took them to Jazirat al-'Arab [literally Peninsula of Arabia; the previous reference, al-Sham can be considered the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula] ... This, God knows best, happened forty years or something like this after Christ. Thereupon the existence of the Believer (al-mu'min) and his followers continued to be hidden, while the other sects disagreed with one another and rioted. They had no solid base until the time of the Caesar Constantine, the king, son of Helena. This was 233 years after Christ was exalted.

The account is anachronistic in that, when applying the charge that the Christians caused the exile of the original Jesus followers from Eretz Israel to al-Sham, it uses a construct for Christianity that only came to exist in Syria and Mesopotamia after 451 CE. Nevertheless, al-Qurtubi’s narrative does give us a tradition which is consistent with the original understanding that somehow the original followers were pressured and took flight eastward.

Excursus on “Al-mu’minun”: if indeed there was a tradition in Syria and Mesopotamia whereby Jesus followers were known as “al-mu’minun”, one is tempted to see the word play with the Hebrew “minim” (heretics), which is well known from the Rabbinical polemics against the “minim and notzrim” (i.e. heretics and Nazarenes).
Chapter Notes

1. Regarding “This is where the sect began”: When introducing this group a few paragraphs earlier in his Panarion (29:1:2-4), Epiphanius has acknowledged that the original Jesus followers self-identified with the name Nazarenes (Nazoraion / Ναζωραῖων) since the time of Jesus, but of course as he is hostile to the beliefs of the group that he describes here, he would like the reader to believe that they are different than the original Jesus followers. Panarion 29:1:2-4 This group did not name themselves Christians or with Jesus' own name, but "Nazoraeans" [Nazoraion / Ναζωραῖων]. However, at that time [of Jesus] all Christians were called Nazoraeans in the same way. They also came to be called "Jessaes" for a short while, before the disciples began to be called "Christians" at Antioch. But they were called Jessaeans because of Jesse, I suppose, since David was descended from Jesse, but Mary from David's line. This was in fulfillment of sacred scripture, for in the Old Testament the Lord tells David, "Of the fruit of thy belly shall I set upon thy throne."

Also in his Anacephalaiosis Ch 29, Epiphanius relates the same (notice his sarcasm as he calls them “so-called followers of the apostles”):

When they were once called Jessaeans during a short period, some again withdrew at that time after the ascension of the Lord when Mark preached in the land of Egypt. They were so-called followers of the apostles, but I supposed that they were Nazoreans who are described by me here. [Epiphanius Anacephalaiosis 29.1.3 and 29.5.4, Klein 1973.]

The term used by Epiphanius (in Greek: Nazoraion / Ναζωραῖων) is the same as that found in the received texts of canonical Matthew and of canonical Acts:

Matthew 2:23: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene (Nazoraios).

Act 24:5: We have, in fact, found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Nazoraion).

Regarding the Greek term “Nazoraios”, several etymologies have been proposed:

- Nazirite, from the Hebrew word רַנְזִירָה ("N Z I R") meaning "consecrated" or "separated" for a special vow especially as in Number 6:1-21, abstaining from grapes and alcohol, from cutting one’s hair, and from ritual impurity (including contact with corpses even of family members).

- Netzarim, from the Hebrew word נֶצָר (netzer), meaning “a branch”, as in “from the branch of Jesse and David”.

- Natzarim, from the Hebrew word נָצָר (natzar), meaning “to watch”, therefore “watchers”.

The oldest extant inscriptions referring to the place Nazareth use the spelling נַעַר ("N Tz R Th"). From this information we can surmise that that “Nazoraios”/”Nazarene” are probably not rooted in the Hebrew word for nazirite (even though Matthew 2:23 thinks so!);
Rather, it is related to Jesus’ place of provenance, which in turn is related to either “Netzer” or “Natzar”. In other words, Jesus’ home town must have been a very small community, named by Davidic families who settled there. Hence a more appropriate Greek spelling would have been Νατζοραίος “Natzoraios” and in Latin, “Natzarene”.

The Talmudic references to Jesus, where he is called “Yeshu Ha Notzri”, can also translate to “Jesus of NaTzReTh” (and would certainly not translate into anything like “Jesus the Nazirite” (as in Nazir / Consecrated to a vow).

Further, Epiphanius’ note about the original Jesus followers being called “Jesseans” is very interesting, as it lends weight to the “Netzarim / Branch” etymology theory, that Jesus and his family were all Davidic descendants and that their Davidic lineage was a key part of their self-identity in leading the Movement. On the other hand, Epiphanius is not sure (“they were called Jesseans because of Jesse, I suppose”). This begs the question: would it not be likely also that they were called “Jeshuans”, from Jesus’ own name (Yeshua) ?

2. Epiphanius assumes (and so do others after him) that doctrines which he finds heretical must originate with a heretic, whom in this case he labels “Ebion”. There is no record of a character named “Ebion”. Epiphanius seems unaware of (or ignores) the root of the term “Ebionim”, which is “Pauper” or “Poor” in Hebrew.

3. Regarding places mentioned in Epiphanius’ Panarion Chapters 29 and 30, see map in Chapter 2, Background. Essentially we are dealing with the entire coastline east of the Jordan, from Damascus to the south. It may well be that east of the Jordan was a home-base for the movement. Recall that:
   - John the Baptist starts at the Jordan,
   - Jesus crosses over to the east coast of the Sea of Galilee (to the land of the Gedarenes, Gerasenes),
   - When Saul of Tarsus is persecuting the Jesus followers, he is directs himself to Damascus.
14
THE RETURN

The community returns to Jerusalem at Mt Zion.

73 CE, Jerusalem

Writing circa 325 CE, Eusebius of Caesarea records:

Demonstratio Evangelica III Chapter 5: And history also assures us that there was a very important Christian Church in Jerusalem, composed of Jews, which existed until the siege of the city under Hadrian. The bishops, too, who stand first in the line of succession there are said to have been Jews, whose names are still remembered by the inhabitants.

[Translation by W.J. Ferrar (1920); transcribed by Roger Pearse, Ipswich, UK, 2003]

Eusebius lived in Caesarea and became one of Constantine’s key bishops during the most important event in Western Christianity: Constantine’s promotion of Christianity into a mainstream religion. Eusebius, living close to Jerusalem, would have had good knowledge of the city and its inhabitants in the early fourth century.

Eusebius is a early reference to the location in Jerusalem where this Jewish “church” was situated, and why that location was chose by Jesus' Jewish followers:

Demonstratio Evangelica I, Ch. 4:

Isaiah... says: “For out of Sion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And all the nations shall go, and all the peoples shall be gathered together, and shall say, Let us go up to the Mount of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob." This law going forth from Sion..., what can it be but the word of the Gospel, "going forth from Sion" through our Saviour Jesus Christ, and going through all the nations? For it is plain that it was in Jerusalem and Mount Sion adjacent thereto, where our Lord and Saviour for the most part lived and taught, that the law of the new covenant began and from thence went forth and shone upon all.

[Translation by W.J. Ferrar (1920); transcribed by Roger Pearse, Ipswich, UK, 2003]

Why Zion? The community is living out the reestablishment of the Messianic House of David, physically on Mount Zion as called for by prophecy. This vision is expressed variously throughout the Prophets; a few examples can suffice:

Micah 4:1-2 : In days to come the mountain of YH-H’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the
hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Amos 9:11-12: On that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name, says YH-H who does this.

Epiphanius writing ca. 375 CE, tells us in On Weights and Measures 14-15 that in the time of Emperor Hadrian’s visit of 130 CE, the assembly was active at Mount Zion:

He [Emperor Hadrian, in his visit of 130CE] found the entire city devastated and the Temple of God trampled down, except for a few houses and the church of God, which was small, where the disciples, after they returned when the savior was taken up from the Mount of Olives, went up to the upper room. For there it had been built, that is, in the part of Zion that was kept from the destruction, and the blocks of houses around Zion itself, and seven synagogues, which stood alone like huts, one of which remained until the time of Maximona the bishop [350 CE] and Constantine the king, "like a booth in a vineyard," as it is written. Therefore Hadrian decided to build the city, but not the temple. And he took Aquila [Aquila of Sinope, was the author of a translation of the Torah into Greek, circa 130 CE]., who was a Greek interpreter, because Hadrian also was a Greek. Now, Aquila was related to the king by marriage and was from Sinope in Pontus - and he [Hadrian] established him there in Jerusalem as overseer of the work of building the city. And he gave to the city that was being built his own name and the appellation of the royal title. For as he was named Aelius Hadrian, so he also named the city Aelia. So Aquila, while he was in Jerusalem, also saw the disciples of the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith and working great signs, healings, and other miracles. For they [the disciples of the disciples of the apostles] were such as had come back from the city of Pella to Jerusalem and were living there and teaching. For when the city was about to be taken [circa 70CE] and destroyed by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should remove from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella, the city above mentioned, in Transjordania. And this city is said to be of the Decapolis. But after the [70CE] destruction of Jerusalem, when they had returned to Jerusalem, as I have said, they wrought great signs.

The layout of Mount Zion with the seven synagogues (only one of which was left standing after 70CE) has a second independent source: the Pilgrim of Bordeaux, who travelled to Jerusalem in 333 CE:

Also as you come out of Jerusalem to go up Mount Sion, on the left hand, below in the valley, beside the wall, is a pool which is called Siloe [see John 9:1-11] and has four porticoes; and there is another large pool outside it. This spring runs for six days and nights, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, it does not run at all, either by day or by night [the source of Gihon, which feeds the Siloe spring, is known for its intermittent, if not weekly resting, flow]. On this side one goes up Sion, and sees where the house of Caiafas the priest was [see Mt 26:57-68], and there still stands a column against which Christ was beaten with rods. Within, however, inside the wall of Sion, is seen the place where was David's palace. Of seven synagogues which once were there, one alone remains; the rest are ploughed over and sown upon, as said Isaiah the prophet [Is 1:2.4-8; Micah 3:9-12].

The reference to the “palace of David” that is “in the area of the seven synagogues (of which only one stands)” must be a reference to that one synagogue that Epiphanius mentions as “remaining until the time of Maximana and Constantine”, that is our Jewish Jesus synagogue.

Perhaps leveraging Epiphanius, the tenth-century Patriarch of Alexandria, Eutychius (896-940 CE) wrote a history of the Church, in which he tells us that the Jesus followers who had fled to Pella "returned to Jerusalem in the fourth year of the emperor Vespasian [73CE] and built there their church".* [Eutychius, Annales; See also Migne, Patrologia Latina III:985). Quoted from : Jeffrey Buetz, The Secret Legacy of Jesus, pg 146].

The Spanish pilgrim Egeria (aka. Etheria, traveled to the Holy Land ca 384 CE), while describing the Pentecost liturgies conducted in Jerusalem at the time of her visit, gives us two important data points:

- She says that it was at the site of Mount Zion that the Pentecost events of Acts took place and were being commemorated there by Christians, and, that at the church at that site, there is “a new construction” (i.e. a new construction built next to or overlapping with the original). The new construction would be Haga Zion, built during Theodosius (Roman Emperor from 379 to 395 CE). In other words, she provides testimony of a older (pre-384CE) structure at Mount Zion:

And when the dismissal has been made at the Martyrium [aka Church of the Holy Sepulchre / Golgotha], all the people, to a man, escort the bishop with hymns to Sion, [so that] they are in Sion when the third hour is fully come. And on their arrival there, the passage from the Acts of the Apostles is read, where the Spirit came down so that all tongues [were heard, and all men] understood the things that were being spoken, and the dismissal takes place afterwards in due course; For the priests read there from the Acts of the Apostles concerning the selfsame thing, because that is the place in Sion -there is another church there now- where once, after the Lord's Passion, the multitude was gathered together with the Apostles, and where this was done, as we have said above.
Afterwards the dismissal takes place in due course, and the oblation is made there. Then, that the people may be dismissed, the archdeacon raises his voice, and says: "Let us all be ready to day in Eleona [the Mount of Olives], in the Imbomon [place of the Ascension], directly after the sixth hour."


That there was a new church built next to the original is confirmed by the Madaba Mosaic, which shows that the smaller, earlier, structure was preserved. Chapter Note 1

Indeed, in 1990 the late benedictine priest and archaeologist, Father Bargil Pixner³, based on Jacob Pinkerfeld's 1951 Mount Zion excavations, and on his own archaeological work, identified the well-known building which houses “David’s Tomb” (a memorial, not actually the location of King David’s remains; today it functions as a Jewish Synagogue) in the first floor, and the "Upper Room" or "Cenacle" on the second floor, as a first century Roman-era synagogue run by Jewish followers of Jesus.

³ Among other books by Bargil Pixner, see: Paths of the Messiah; Jesus and Jewish Christianity in Light of Archaeological Discoveries; Edited by Rainer Riesner, 2010. Ignatius Press, San Francisco. Also: http://www.bibarch.com/ArchaeologicalSites/Cenacle.htm.
That it is first century, we know because the façade of the building, on the eastern side, contains Herodian stones that could have only come from the remains of existing structures around the city (not improbably, from the structures of the destroyed Temple itself).

That it was built as a synagogue and more-over a synagogue run by Jesus followers, we know because in the archaeological studies and excavations, Pinkerfeld found that the niche for the Torah is oriented, not toward the Temple, which was the norm, but towards Golgotha, the site of the Crucifixion and Ressurection. More telling, a Greek inscription was found on the plaster lying on the excavated Roman-era pavement on the first floor, with the words "O Jesus, that I may live, O Lord of the Autocrat" (the “autocrat” being King David). The first floor today is a Orthodox Synagogue, the Tomb of David memorial; it has been so for centuries. There is an irony in that the building itself was built by Jesus people, and that the niche of the synagogue, where David's memorial sarcophagus lies, is pointed, not towards the Temple Mount, but towards Golgotha, the site of Jesus' Death and Resurrection.

(Pixner 2010)
The Floors in the Church of the Apostles

- niche in original Judeo-Christian synagogue
- Crusader cenotaph of King David
- present Arab floor
- Crusader floor
- Byzantine floor
- Roman-period floor
- Judeo-Christian graffiti
- ledge of original first-century floor

(Pixner 2010)
History of the Original Jesus Movement

Above: Emanuelle Testa O.F.M. 1962. Father Testa’s sketch of the inscriptions found on the Roman-era plaster. #3: Live (ZH), Lord (K/E, Kyrie) [of the] King (autokratoros).

Above: View of the western façade. Photo ca 1900.
14 - The Return

Below, same entrance, current day.
History of the Original Jesus Movement

1870 Photo by Felix Bonfils, and close-up (next page)
Above, the Upper Room, on the second floor of the building. The first floor houses “The Tomb of David”, where there is a Orthodox Synagogue currently (see below images). Most of today’s construction dates from the Crusader period (ca 1000 CE).
Chapter Notes

1. Madaba mosaic map dating to the sixth century CE, showing a small structure to the right, as an extension, of the Hagia Sion basilica (CE 415-1009) shown in the foreground.

Once a Moabite border city, cited in the Exodus account at Numbers 21:30 and Joshua 13:9, Madaba dates from the Middle Bronze Age. The present-day city is known for the many mosaics found in the remains of floors of private homes and public buildings. It is the site of the famed Madaba Mosaic Map. The Madaba Mosaic Map is an index map of the region, dating from the sixth century CE, preserved in the floor of the Greek Orthodox Basilica of St. George. The mosaic is the earliest extant representation of Jerusalem. The map provides important details as to its 6th century landmarks. This map is one key in developing scholarly knowledge about the physical layout of Jerusalem after CE 70. Above is an index to some of the landmarks in the Jerusalem map of the Madaba Mosaic Map (photo below).
From http://www.bibarch.com/ArchaeologicalSites/Cenacle.htm:

Just outside the Zion Gate of the old city in Jerusalem, near the crest of Mount Zion, lie the partial remains of an ancient building known as the Cenacle. These consist of a niche, walls, floors, and foundations incorporated into a building now venerated by both Jews and Christians.

For Jews the site is the traditional location of David's Tomb (the pseudo-tomb not the actual tomb) marked by a small synagogue on the first floor. Christians regard this location as that of the ancient venue of the Upper Room or Cenacle. A memorial of this heritage, dating to the 14th century, consists of the reconstructed Room of the Last Supper and the adjoining Chapel of the Holy Spirit on the second floor. While a single building houses the two memorials, each has a separate entrance.

Although there is general agreement that the original building was a first-century CE synagogue, both Jews and Christians claim it as their own relying on a statement by Epiphanius (CE ca. 315-402/3). Writing late in the fourth century, he claimed that when the Roman emperor Hadrian (CE 76-138) visited Jerusalem (ca. 131/132) a small "Church of God" and seven synagogues existed on Mount Zion. Christians argue that the present-day remains are those of the small Judeo-Christian synagogue, which Epiphanius called a Church of God, constructed on the site of the Upper Room by Judeo-Christian refugees returning from Pella about CE 73. Jews claim it as one of the seven synagogues of the Jews observed by Hadrian. Epiphanius stated in chapter 14 of his work De Mensurius et Ponderibus (Treatise on Weights and Measures), a biblical dictionary that discusses, among other things,
The geography of Palestine, that Hadrian found the entire city devastated and the temple of God trampled down, except for a few houses and the church of God, which was small, where the disciples, after they returned when the savior was taken up from the Mount of Olives, went up to the upper room. For there it had been built, that is, in the part of Zion that was kept from the destruction, and the blocks of houses around Zion itself, and seven synagogues, which stood alone like huts, one of which remained until the time of Maximona the bishop and Constantine the king, "like a booth in a vineyard," as it is written. Therefore Hadrian decided to build the city, but not the temple. And he took this Aquila, who was mentioned before, as interpreter.... (Koester 1989:93.)

An earlier account by a pilgrim from Bordeaux, presumably a Judeo-Christian who visited Jerusalem in CE 333, refers to the tradition of seven synagogues on Mount Zion as well. This visitor wrote: Inside Sion, within the wall, you can see where David had his palace. Seven synagogues were there, but only one is left, the rest have been "plowed down and sown," as was said by the Prophet Isaiah. (Wilkinson 1983:157-158.)

Regarding the “new church” building referred to by the pilgrim Egeria ca 384CE (seen next to the Cennacle, in the Madaba Mosaic), it may have been built by Roman-Catholic John II (Jerusalem Bishop 387-417CE). Baggati (The Church from the Circumcision, 1984 edition, pg 12) deduces this from a 7th century liturgical calendar of the Christian Church in Jerusalem, which, on the Friday after the 6th Sunday of Lent has: “The memory of the archbishop John, who first built Sion”.

276
THE COMMUNITY OF CANONICAL MATTHEW

80’s CE, Near (probably east of) the Jordan

The canonical “Gospel of Matthew” is a re-arrangement of “Mark”, “Q”, and a number of unique additions (and in some cases, omissions) with respect to Mark & “Q”.

By examining these additions (and omissions) one can appreciate whether and how this community differed from the communities of “Mark” and of “Q”. Our remit here is to understand the unique characteristics of the community of the author of this gospel, that is, beliefs (are they Pauline?, Jamesian?, other?), general location, ethnic makeup, and any other pertinent demographics.

The most significant addition in canonical Matthew is the beginning, where we have the genealogy of Jesus, and the story of the nativity (which includes the virgin birth story, the story of the magi, Herod’s murder of the infants, and the escape from Judea to Egypt and return to Nazareth in Galilee).

Immediately evident is the author’s choice to provide a genealogy that is patrilineal down to Joseph (as opposed to a matrilineal genealogy down to Mary, as Luke’s author would choose to provide, circa ten years after canonical Matthew). In spite of the author subscribing to the virgin birth, he feels an imperative to establish Jesus’ patrilineal pedigree. Does Matthew’s author (and community) assume that, in “overshadowing Mary”, as he puts it, God has created a baby Jesus that inherits the physical lineage (i.e. the DNA for today’s audience) of Joseph? It would seem so; there is no other way to explain Matthew’s insistence on establishing Jesus’ Davidic paternal lineage via Joseph.

Regarding the virgin birth, we discussed already in the chapter on Jesus, that both Luke and canonical Matthew incorporated their own stories. We can not call these stories as part of “Q” since the stories are completely different (and in some aspects contradictory). However, the fact that both authors have virgin birth nativity stories, implies that the virgin birth was a tradition developed sometime before 80CE (when canonical Matthew was written; Luke being later, that is circa 90CE.) On the other
hand, it likely did not develop before the early sixties (when Paul wrote his last letters), otherwise Paul (who loves the concept of a pre-existent cosmic Christ) would have made wide use of it. Instead, Paul is quite matter-of-fact about Jesus’ provenance: “descended from David, according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3). The tradition probably did not develop before 70CE either, otherwise Mark, who onboards a few Pauline biases given his gentile audience, might have also incorporated something about it.

We have already discussed the polemics and possible social scenarios that might have led to the tradition. Given that, from a Torah messianic prophecy standpoint, there is no need to establish the Messiah as being born virginally, and given the problems that it presents (namely, can one convincingly call Jesus a descendant of David, when he has not been fathered by a human?), the stories about Jesus’ illegitimacy may have been pervasive.

It is hinted at in John’s gospel, in the episode where Jesus confronts his naysayers and calls them “children of the devil”. Their reply? John 8:41: “We are not children of adultery”!! The idea that Jesus could have been a illegitimate child was strong, as evidenced by the fact that both virgin birth narratives (written separately) include the mention about Joseph being ready to cast Mary aside for adultery.

Other polemical sources also raised their voice against Mary’s venerable motherhood. Approximately in 180CE, Greek philosopher (and anti-Christian polemicist) Celsus (Kelsos) wrote the following (which has been preserved in Origen’s “Contra Celsum”, written in 248 CE, Book 1: 32): [Celsus has said]: But let us now return to where the Jew is introduced, speaking of the mother of Jesus, and saying that "when she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera." Likewise (although significantly later in time) we have rabbinical anti-christian polemical sources referring to Mary as having had an unmarried relationship to a ‘Panthera’. Whether these sources used the well-known quote from Celsus, or are a independent tradition, we do not know.

There is no precedent whatsoever in Jewish tradition for a person being born supernaturally (except for the first man and woman, Adam and Eve). It is certainly possible that between the early seventies and early eighties Jesus’ followers invented the story of the virgin birth, to counter what must have been a very strong allegation that Mary had conceived illegitimately. If so, it was a extremely desperate measure, for it presents a (much larger) issue of lineage.

A few additional points of canonical Matthew’s virgin birth story are notable.

As we shall see, canonical Matthew is quite adept to quoting Torah scriptures that have been allegedly fulfilled in Jesus (it is worthy of note that he quotes from the Greek translation, referred to as the Septuagint, and not from the Hebrew.)

In the case of the virgin birth story, canonical Matthew 1:21-23 quotes Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child
and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.” As is well-known, the Septuagint mistranslates the Hebrew “almah” (young woman) into “parthenos” which can signify “virgin” in Greek. Furthermore, the use of Isaiah 7:14 is quite contrived, as the discussion in Isaiah 7 has nothing to do with a prophecy of a future king. Rather, it is about a sign that YH-H reveals to King Ahaz to reassure him that Judah will not be defeated by the Arameans and Ephraimites. The sign is not even about the young woman “giving birth”, but rather that before her child matures (presumably by age 13?) Ahaz shall see Aram and Ephraim desolated. By comparison, Luke does not make use of Isaiah 7:14.

Of interest also is that canonical Matthew quite matter-of-factly assures the reader that, subsequent to Jesus’ birth, Joseph and Mary do have normal marital relations (Matthew 1:25 “but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.”). Obviously he had no idea of the headaches this would cause the future Italian popes, who have been so eager to pretend Mary was a perpetual virgin.

Then we have the uniquely Matthean story of the magi. First, let us clear away the pageantry that tradition would later add: the story is not about three kings. It is not about three and it is not about kings. Mathew simply says “magi from the east”. Here is the full verse: “And Jesus having been born in Beth-Lehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, lo, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who was born king of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and we came to bow to him.’ ”(Matthew 2:1-2 Young’s Literal Translation). What are “magi”? They are Zoroastrian priests. As is well known, Zoroastrianism, the Persian religion, is steeped in astrology. And sure enough, Matthew’s magi come following a star, and it is through the stars that they have foreseen a King being born. Why does Matthew (and no one else) have a story about Zoroastrian priests coming to recognize Jesus as the future King of Israel? There can only be one answer: the community of canonical Matthew is located in a area with (or near) a population of Persian-influenced natives. The buffer area between Rome’s dominion and Parthia/Persia, that is, the land between the Jordan river and the Euphrates, was replete with pagan tribes whose religions were heavily influenced by Zoroastrianism, particularly the belief in the stars as powers and influencers of fate. It is conceivable that the community of Matthew could have been located in a area under the influence of Jewish and Syrian populations. This could have been in Galilee, but also of interest is Epiphanius’ already quoted reference to the cities where the Nazoreans made their home after the escape from Jerusalem. All three areas mentioned by Epiphanius were under Syrian influence: Beroea is the modern city of Aleppo, near Antioch; Bashan was located about 15 miles east of the Sea of Galilee, and Pella is between Galilee and the Dead Sea just east of the Jordan river):

Epiphanius’ Panarion Chapter 29 “On the Nazoreans” (Greek: Ναζωραίον / Nazoraion) section 7.7-7.8 : The Nazorean sect exists in Beroea near Coele Syria [Βεροαίον περὶ τὴν Κοίλην Συρίαν / Beroiaion peri ten Koilen Syrian], and in the Decapolis near the region of Pella, and in Bashan in the place called Kocaba, which in Hebrew is called Kochabe [Βασανιτιδί ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ Κωκαβῇ, Χωχαβῇ δὲ Ἑβραίστη λεγομένῃ] / Basanitidi en te legomene Kokabe, Kokhabe de Ebraisti legomene]. That is where
the sect began, when all the disciples were living in Pella after they moved from Jerusalem, since Christ told them to leave Jerusalem and withdraw because it was about to be besieged. For this reason they settled in Peraea and there, as I said, they lived. This is where the Nazoraean sect began.

Let us now examine the rest of the text of Matthew. As we have stated, it is mainly a combination of “oldest Mark” and “Q”, with some added uniquely Matthean parables (all of which fit nicely within the world-view of “Q”), and lastly (and of most interest to this chapter) canonical Matthew’s own “tweaks” to the text of Mark or his differences versus Luke’s rendering of “Q”. These reveal additional points of emphasis that Matthew wants to make (or avoid, in case of deletions of words or phrases). Let us first look at these “tweaks”, that Matthew shows versus Mark and/or “Q”.

Added reliance on Torah prophecy. Matthew’s author is especially fond of highlighting alleged connections between Jesus’ life and Torah prophecies. We shall call out a few:

To Mark’s narrative of:

(Mark 1:14-15) Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Matthew adds:

(Matt 4:13-16) He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

To Mark’s narrative of:

(Mark 1:32-34) That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Matthew adds:

(Matt 8:17) This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

To Mark’s narrative of:

(Mark 4:10-12) When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.'"

Matthew adds:

Matthew (13:14-17) With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: 'You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn-- and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

Where Mark has:

(Mark 4:33-34) With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Matthew has expanded, referencing Psalm 78:2:

(Matthew 13:34-35) Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world."

As can be seen, Canonical Matthew is generally very fond of Isaiah.

Regarding location of Jesus’ ministry according to Matthew

Where Mark says:

(Mark 1:29-39) And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Matthew has:

(Matthew 4:23-25) Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

This is indeed consistent with our discussion a few lines above on the location of the Matthean community. Matthew emphasizes the same areas outside of Eretz Israel that would later be called out as the home of the Nazoraion (Nazoreans/Nazarenes).

On the character “Matthew”

Where Mark says:

(Mark 2:14) As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

Matthew has:

(Matthew 9:9) As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

Mark and Luke name Levi but he is not one of the twelve apostles. They do not name Matthew at all except once: in the naming of the twelve apostles (Mark 3:13-19 and Luke 6:12-16). Instead, Matthew’s Gospel merges the two characters under a single name “Matthew” and never mentions a “Levi”. In other words, the idea of Matthew as both Tax Collector AND Apostle is purely Matthean and is not reflected in either Mark or Luke.
The Law

In numerous occasions Matthew adds Torah texts to further show that Jesus’ teachings uphold the continued validity of the Sinai Law.

On the Sabbath, to Mark’s narrative:

(Mark 2:23-28) One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the Bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions."

Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; So the Son of Adam is lord even of the Sabbath."

Matthew adds (before “the Son of Adam is lord even of the Sabbath”):

(Matthew 12:5-7) Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

And where Mark has:

(Mark 3:1-6) Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward."

Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Matthew adds a tighter Torah-justification beyond that found in Mark:

(Matthew 12:11-12) He said to them, "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath."

On Doing the Commandments:

In Q, where Luke has:

(Luke 11:46) "Shame on you lawyers! for you load people with burdens heavy to bear, but you yourselves refuse to carry even a light load."

Matthew’s text is expanded:

(Matthew 23:1-5) Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they
themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long.

It is of note that Matthew’s text here could describe a pre-70CE situation (did the scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat after 70CE?). Could it be that it is Luke’s rendering of Q that has removed the text found in Matthew’s version? Or is there a pre-70CE non-Q source being used here (and elsewhere?) by canonical Matthew? In any case, canonical Matthew does show additional sensitivity to the conduct of the Law, compared to Luke.

Also, in Q, where Luke has:

(Luke 6:46-49) "Why do you call me 'Master, master,' and not do what I say? Everyone who hears my words and does them is like a man who built a house on rock. The rain fell, a torrent broke against the house, and it did not fall, for it had a rock foundation. But everyone who hears my words and does not do them is like a man who built a house on sand. The rain came, the torrent broke against it, and it collapsed. The ruin of that house was great."

Matthew emphasizes that what Jesus is saying/teaching is for people to do God’s will (i.e. the Torah Commandments):

(Matthew 7:21-27) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.' "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell--and great was its fall!"

On Divorce:

In “Q”, Matthew’s text differs from Luke’s in one interesting way: Matthew has added “except in the case of adultery” as a exception to Jesus’ injunction against divorce. This of course reflects a legal sensitivity that the original “Q” author had not included (again, one may also argue that “Q” included it, but Luke removed it). As before, Matthew shows a greater sensitivity to Legal matters than Luke.

“You have heard that it was said”:

Matthew contains a unique set of injunctions, prefixed by the “You have heard that it was said”, all of which build a fence to protect one from infringing on the Torah Commandments.

(Matthew 5:21-24) "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire.
So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

(Matthew 5:27-28) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

(Matthew 5:33-37) You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes', your 'No', 'No'. Anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Attitude with respect to Gentiles

Overall, canonical Matthew shows a certain amount of disdain or lack of interest with respect to Gentiles (in fact also to Samaritans).

To Mark’s text on Jesus’ appointment of the Twelve, Matthew adds:

(Matthew 10:5-8) These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.


The heirs to the Kingdom.

In Mark Chapter 11 Jesus is addressing “the high priests, the scribes, and the elders” (a recurring phrase in Mark), as they challenge his teaching and authority. He proceeds (12:1-12) with the parable of the tenants of the vineyard, who kill the servants of the owner, and then the son of the owner. The fate of the tenants is addressed: “9 What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.” Then Mark concludes: “12 When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.” There is no doubt this refers to the Temple and its tenants (“the high priests, the scribes, and the elders”), and Mark, writing probably shortly after 70CE, is well aware that those very tenants were indeed destroyed (along with the vineyard!). The question for Mark’s author could be: “who are those ‘others’ to whom the vineyard will be given?” Canonical Matthew (who, similarly to Mark, addresses “the chief priests and the elders of the people”) adds what he believes is the answer: 21:43 “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the
This presumably could include all righteous people who act according to God’s will, including Jews (excluding ‘the chief priests and elders’, of course) and even righteous Gentiles. It does not mean, as later Christian commentators insinuated, that, for Matthew, the Jewish people as a whole have been excluded from the promise of the Kingdom. Certainly it is true that by canonical Matthew’s time (early 80’s), the Jewish population has had ample time to internalize (and the surviving Pharisaic leadership to proclaim) that Jesus’ movement failed to usher in God’s Kingdom and, in fact, with the Temple in ruins, things are even worse now. That is not lost on canonical Matthew, whose community of mainly Jewish Jesus followers finds itself already ostracized from the synagogues. Furthermore, he is well aware that Gentile Jesus followers (not necessarily of the Pauline type, but even those who would live by the works of the Noahide Laws) are able to stand on their own (ie. they are not bound by the Sinai Laws, hence are much less dependent on the synagogue). In short, the Jewish people are siding with the Pharisees, and it is Gentiles (whether of the Pauline ‘salvation by faith in Jesus’ school or of the James/Peter/Matthew ‘salvation by striving for Works of the Commandments’ school) who are taking over the vineyard of God. In the decades (and centuries) to come, Christianity’s (Gentile) Church Fathers will rationalize this as a condemnation against the Jewish people in general, however that is not canonical Matthew’s point. In the parable he still (as did Mark) lays the blame at the feet of the “high priests and elders of the people”. Nothing takes away that canonical Matthew’s desire is that the vineyard (ie. the Kingdom) should still be partaken of by the Jewish people (Sinai Law included). Of course, he sees that dream slipping away…

We see the same again here: In Q, where Luke tells the story of the Centurion:

(Luke 7:1-10) After Jesus said these things, he went up into Capernaum. And a centurion, when he heard about Jesus, came to him begging him, "My servant / my son is lying paralyzed at home about to die." Jesus said to him, "I will come to heal him." The centurion answered him, "Sir, I am not worthy to have you enter my home. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this he was amazed and said to those who were following him, "I tell you, I have not found such confidence in Israel." And he said to the centurion, "Go." And when the centurion returned home, he found the servant / the boy well.

Matthew has added (or retained?) an injunction against his fellow Jews (who, to Matthew’s frustration, are not partaking of his community’s allegiance to his Messiah, Jesus):

(Matthew 8:5-13) When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will
be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.

Jewish or not?

Another angle by which to look at canonical Matthew is on his frame of reference vis a vis the Jewish people. Does he consider the Jewish people as “other” or does he consider his community as within the Jewish people?

Against the reputation of canonical Matthew as “contrary to the Jewish people”, we will see the opposite when looking carefully at the text: the Jewish people are not referred to, as “the Jews” (unlike Acts and John’s Gospel which are extreme in this sense):

In Matthew, the use of the term “Jews” or “the Jews” only occurs five times:

- Four times in the expression “King of the Jews”. There is nothing anti-Jewish about this. These four times, the use of the expression always as something from the mouth of a foreigner (first use from the Magi, the last three triggered by Pilate). Furthermore, the last three of these instances are not Matthean since they are simply taken verbatim from Mark (Mark uses “King of the Jews” two additional times, for a total of five times; the two additions are also a follow-up to the Pilate dialogue).

- The fifth occurrence is at the end of canonical Matthew and only appears in this gospel. The verse refers to the guards to took money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

Also of import here: Besides the five uses of “King of the Jews”, Mark has one additional use of the term “Jews”: in Mark 7:3 when explaining that the Jews wash their hands before eating “For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders.” Now, Matthew has included the overall passage on the debate about the washing of hands before eating, however he has removed the Markan reference explaining that the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands. Again, this shows that Matthew’s community did not need the clarification that Mark provided.

In short, canonical Matthew preserves Mark’s and “Q”’s frame of reference, that is, of telling the story from within a Jewish movement. (Even though Mark was addressing gentiles, Mark himself wrote as speaking from within the Movement and he does not consider the Jewish people as “evil/other” in any way. Matthew preserves that, and even reinforces it by removing Mark’s reference to the Jewish tradition of the washing of hands. Similarly, Q never uses the term “Jews” either, and Matthew preserves that). The single isolated use of “Jews” as “other” (in the passage on the
soldiers’ rumor on the stealing of the body close to the end of Matthew) would indicate a probable later (Gentile) extrapolation. In any case, even that instance contains no allusion to the Jews as “other” nor does it carry any negative innuendo.

Pauline?

As we have seen, the community preserves the Markan and “Q” frame of reference, that Jesus’ Messiahship is about bringing people to uphold God’s Commandments. Although Matthew preserves the Markan allusion to the Messiah as the suffering servant, who “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mt20:28), Matthew does not take the ransom to the bank like Paul does. Like Mark, it insists on the very Jewish notion that striving for the Commandments is necessary for Salvation, and it in fact re-inforces this concept with its own textual emendations. In other words, like the original yearly atonement of Yom Kippur, the sacrifice brings you to God’s doorstep, so to speak; however you must still bring the salvation to fruition by a Repentant Return to the Commandments, since the Torah calls them “eternal” (for Torah references to the Commandments being eternal see: Gen 9:8-16, Gen 17:7-9, Num 15:15, Deut 4:35-40, Deut 29:29, 1Chr 16:13-18, Isaiah 55:3, Isaiah 24:5, Psalm 103:17-18, Psalm 105:6-11, Exodus 31:16-17). To Matthew, as with Mark’s testimony, there is no salvation without Repentance evidenced by Deeds of Doing God’s Commandments. In short, when it comes to salvation, the canonical Gospel of Matthew is not Pauline. It is Jamesian.

Where is the Kingdom?

Mark and Luke only use the term “Kingdom of God”. Matthew on the other hand sometimes replaces Mark’s and “Q”’s phrase, with “Kingdom of Heaven”. Of 32 times, Matthew prefers “Kingdom of Heaven” 26 times over “Kingdom of God”. Why? By the 80’s CE, it is quite apparent that a earthly solution is further beyond reach than ever before. This is Matthew’s way of telling the followers: do not exert yourselves in changing the political order; things will be fixed for us “in another place”.

Pauline communities through out the Roman empire will eventually catch on to this idea (under persecution by the Roman emperors). Martyrdom and a eagerness for death will become virtues. In both cases (ie for Nazoreans under pressure from fellow Jews, and Christians under pressure from Roman persecution) we will see a shift of the “Kingdom” to a other-worldly realm. Ironically, after Rome’s adoption of Paul’s religion (Christianity) in the late fourth century, it will be the Christian empires (i.e., Rome and its successor empires, especially Spain) who will conquer natives of all lands, teaching the newly persecuted natives the same thing: “bear the yolk of oppression, for it is God who has put the King/Caesar/Czar in place. Go into the forced labor of the mines and the fields, for your reward will be in Heaven.” This is burned deep into the fabric of the history of Latin America, Africa, Philippines, and even dark-ages feudal Europe. Why, even Judaism (in its Rabbinical form, at least) shifted likewise: The Olam Haba (World-to-Come) has acquired a connotation as much relating to the afterlife (i.e., a place in Heaven where God’s people go immediately after they die) as it is relating to a earthly Kingdom that will need to wait for Messiah’ arrival. But let us return to Matthew’s community.
The title of Messiah

The text of “Q” never actually titles Jesus as “Messiah”. In fact, even the text of Mark alludes only tangentially to Jesus as “Messiah”: Once Mark has Peter refer to him so, with Jesus tacitly nodding (Mark 8:27-33). The only other time is upon Jesus answering Caiaphas’ question:

(Mark 14:60-64) “The High Priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus said, "I am; and you will see the Son of Adam seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'”

However this could be a later addition. Both Matthew and Luke copy this text, however interestingly neither has Jesus answer directly in the affirmative, as Mark does. Rather, in both Jesus replies tangentially, as always: “It is you who says so”. It could well be that Luke and Matthew used a different (earlier) version of Mark than our received text.

However, going beyond “Mark” and “Q”, we do see canonical Matthew actually going further in regards to affirming Jesus’ title of Messiah more explicitly:

Once, he presents Jesus as teaching his disciples in a way as if it was already acknowledged that he self-ascribes that title:

(Matthew 23:8-10) …you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah.

In a further instance, Matthew puts in the mouth of Pilate the reference to Jesus as if it was already acknowledged (among his followers) that he is the Messiah:

(Matthew 27:22) "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

(Whereas Mark has Pilate say “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” instead; Granted that perhaps we are splitting hairs here, as, after all, using “King of the Jews” is well on its way to saying “Messiah”).

Also, where Mark has:

(Mark 10:28-30) Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age--houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions--and in the age to come eternal life."

Matthew has added:

(Matthew 19:28) "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

In summary, whenever Matthew adds to a text from Mark or “Q”, he tends to further reinforce Jesus having been acknowledged explicitly by the title “Messiah” by
his followers during his ministry. This is of course not surprising. By the 80’s the the retroactive agrandizement of Jesus has progressed beyond that of the previous decades.

**Petrine Leadership:**

Canonical Matthew does display an additional sense of loyalty to Peter, when compared to Mark or Q.

To Mark’s

(Mark 8:27-29) Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."

Matthew adds:

(Matthew 16:13-19) And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

**Christology:**

Where as in Mark one could conclude that the Chosen-ness of Jesus takes place during Baptism (that is in fact what later church fathers will “accuse” the ebionites of believing, as we shall see), the reader of canonical Matthew can rightfully wonder: “this Jesus who is born from the Holy Spirit, and announced as the one ‘who will save people from their sins’ (Matt 1:21), is needing to again receive the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove ?”; i.e., we have here another problem caused by the introduction of the virgin birth. In fact the reader could go as far as wondering “Why should Jesus even be Baptized? Isn’t a miracle-born Messiah perfect enough already such that he should not need a Baptism of Repentance?” The Matthean author knows these questions, and feels the need to persevere: he is the only one to add the following to the Markan narrative (before the Baptism scene):

(Mat 3:13-14) John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

Then Matthew 15-17 continues (effectively same as Mark 1:10-11): And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Not exactly convincing.

Centuries later, Christian writer Jerome, writing in the early 400’s, would report about a certain Nazorean community using a different version of “Matthew” and
likewise questioning the need for Jesus to be Baptized (except here it is Jesus himself who questions it):

( Jerome, Dialogue against Pelagius 3.2.)

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews which is indeed in the Chaldaean and Syrian speech but is written in Hebrew letters, which the Nazarenes use to this day, called 'according to the apostles', or, as most term it, 'according to Matthew', which also is to be seen in the library of Caesarea, the story tells:

"Behold, the mother of the Lord and his brethren said unto him: John Baptist baptizes unto the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized of him. But he said unto them: Wherein (what) have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized of him?, unless perhaps this very thing that I have said is a sin of ignorance."

As with canonical Matthew, the text referenced by Jerome continues with the baptism, and produces the proclamation by God:

( Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah 4 [on Isaiah 11:2])

According to the Gospel written in the Hebrew speech, which the Nazaraeans read, "The whole fount of the Holy Spirit shall descend upon him. ..."). Further in the Gospel which we have just mentioned we find the following written: "And it came to pass when the Lord was come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended upon him and rested on him and said to him: My son, in all the prophets was I waiting for thee that thou shouldest come and I might rest in thee. For thou art my rest; thou art my first-begotten Son that reignest for ever."

In other words, in both canonical Matthew and Jerome’s “Nazorean Hebrew Matthew”, the text implies that Jesus has already been chosen prior to Baptism, in spite of both admitting that it is only at Baptism that the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus (presumably initiating his chosen-ness). These are contradictions stemming from having the virgin birth story.

Epiphanius (writing in the late 300’s) would also comment on a community (this time the ebionites) that use a different version of Matthew. In it, he tells us, they insist on Jesus’ Messiahship to have started only at Baptism (just as one would think from Mark alone).

( Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion 30.13.7-8, on the ebionites):

30.13.2 Now in what they call a Gospel according to Matthew, though it is not the entire Gospel but is corrupt and mutilated - and they call this thing "Hebrew"! - the following passage is found: ....

30.13.7-8 “When the people were baptized, Jesus also came and was baptized by John. And as he came up from the water, the heavens was opened and he saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove that descended and entered into him. And a voice sounded from Heaven that said: ‘You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased. I have this day begotten you.’ And immediately a great light shone round about the place. When John saw this, it is said, he said unto him: ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And again a voice from Heaven rang out to him: ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.’ And then, it is said, John fell down
before him and said: ‘I beseech you, Lord, baptize me.’ But he prevented him and said: ‘Suffer it; for thus it is fitting that everything should be fulfilled.’ ”

It would be very interesting to know whether the “Hebrew Matthew” known to Epiphanius also contained the virgin nativity story. What is clear however is that, unlike in canonical Matthew, in the above ebionite text referenced by Epiphanius, John Baptist only realizes Jesus’ important status after immersion (ie when God imparts the Holy Spirit into him). Furthermore, God’s proclamation (“you are my beloved son, in you I am well pleased. I have this day begotten you”) is more faithful to the original Davidic Torah text that is at the root of the proclamation at Jesus’ Baptism: God’s proclamation in Psalm 2:7 to David, telling of the Davidic Messiah’s chosenness: I will tell of the decree of YH-H: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you.”

Strangely, Mark (and both canonical Matthew as well Luke followed him so) does not contain “I have this day begotten you”. All three synoptics contain the formula "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.". Certainly for Mark, who calls out Jesus’ chosenness at Baptism, missing “Today I have begotten you” was a missed opportunity. Canonical Matthew and Luke (both of whom have virgin birth stories) were probably quite happy to follow Mark here.

Whether the “Matthew” versions used by the fourth century nazoreans and ebionites are earlier or later than canonical Matthew will not occupy us in this chapter. Suffice it to say that various Matthean communities had to deal (sometimes sloppily) with Jesus’ Baptism and the timing of his Messiahship, in light of Jesus’ high status from birth (arising from the decision to declare him virginally conceived).

In summary, canonical Matthew’s Christology is neither low (e.g., Markan, “Q”, or ebionite, that is, Jesus a human being being receiving the never-stated-as-equal-to-God Christ/Spirit/Logos during immersion by John) nor high (Johannine or Nicean, ie. the eternal Christ/Logos being equated to God the Father, and incarnating as Jesus via immaculate conception). Rather, it is “in between”: For canonical Matthew, Jesus is from his very conception and birth already a supernatural human: a flesh created by the Holy Spirit in Mary, a soul already possessing the attribute of “Christ/Messiah”. Nevertheless, Matthew does not take the step (which John’s Gospel author would later take) of equating “the Christ” with God Himself. In the fourth century, hostile Church fathers will write about a “heretical sect”, the Nazoreans, precisely accusing them of not recognizing the deity of Christ (and holding on to Jewish Law) even though adhering to a belief in the virgin birth.

The theology of canonical Matthew matches in every aspect that of the later-vilified Nazarene (Nazoraioi) and here one can truly begin to say that this is a Nazarene community matching later Church Fathers’ use of the term “Nazarene” (Nazoraioi).

One can also see how it is that this community in particular would have been anathemized by the broader Jewish community. It’s one thing to talk about the Messiah’s soul being the supernatural “One Like a Son of Adam” (of Daniel’s
prophecy). Or one can also accept the concept of “One Like a Son of Adam” of Daniel’s prophecy descending at Baptism into the human (Jesus in this case) who will vie to fulfill the role of Messiah; Rationally, this is not altogether inconsistent with the precedent of God imparting his “spirit” (or “Spirit”? to humans in various Torah passages, as in Exodus 31 for example:
1 And Jehovah speaketh unto Moses, saying,
2 `See, I have called by name Bezaleel, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah,
3 and I fill him [with] a spirit of God [RUACH ELOHIM], in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all work,
4 to devise devices to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,
5 and in graving of stone for settings, and in graving of wood to work in all work.

But to talk about God getting into the business of “overshadowing” a woman, just crosses the line. That, combined with the fact that Jesus did not succeed in removing the oppressors of Israel, set the stage for the eventual Birkhat ha Minim (“Benedictions” against the Heretics) by the post-70CE Pharisees:

And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be quickly uprooted, in our days. And may the natsrim and the minim perish quickly; and may they be erased from the Book of Life and may they not be inscribed with the righteous. Blessed art thou, Lord, who humblest the insolent. (Palestinian recension)¹


As we have discussed earlier, the belief in the virgin birth is shared between the communities addressed by “Matthew” and “Luke”, both of which show significant differences in their respective nativity narratives; Hence, “Matthew” did not get the idea from “Luke” nor viceversa. The idea is neither a invention of “Matthew” or the Matthean community, nor is it a invention of “Luke” or the Lukan community. It is earlier. Since not found in Paul, it is very probably post-62CE (Paul’s last letters). Since it is not found in Mark, it is also probably post-70CE. We have already mentioned that the second and third century Church Fathers will rail against another group of Torah-observant Jesus followers (the ebionim) who did not subscribe to the virgin birth idea (e.g., Irenaeus, in Against the Heresies, Book III, Ch 21.1, written ca 175CE, which we will quote later).

¹ The Babylonian Talmud (b. Ber. 28b–29a; cf. y. Ber. 4.3) attributes the origin of this “benediction” on heretics to Samuel the Small who constructed it at Yavneh upon the request of Gamaliel II, who was head of the Academy in Yavneh from 80 to 110 c.e. The Birkhat HaMinim, therefore, would have been composed sometime during this time period. Most scholars date its composition more narrowly to between 85 and 95 c.e., although there is little firm evidence for this date. Both Epiphanius (born in Judea, died in Cyprus, 403 CE) and Jerome (died in Bethlehem, 420 CE) write that the Nazoreans were cursed regularly by the Jews in their synagogues. Both record that the Jews cursed the Nazoreans thrice daily in their synagogues (Comm. Am. 1.11–12; Comm. Isa. 5.18–19; 49.7; 52.4–6; Panarion. 29.9.2). Earlier references are not as clear: Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho, which dates to the middle of the second century, states in several instances that the Jews curse Christians (16.4; 47.4; 93.4; 95.4; 96.2; 108.3; 123.6; 133.6; 137.2; cf. 17.1; 35.8; 117.3) and in three instances specifically states that this is done in the synagogues (16.4; 47.4; 96.2; possibly 137.2). However, there is considerable debate over whether these references demonstrate that Justin was aware of the regular use of the BHM.
**Conclusion:**

Ultimately, canonical Matthew’s is a Torah-centered mainly-Jewish community, who continues to seek the instantiation of God’s Kingdom by bringing the Israelites (and those Gentiles who would listen) to God’s Commandments and who continues to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus. However he shows his frustration at slowly loosing the battle for the hearts and minds of his fellow Jews.

---

**On Oaths 5.33-37**

On Almsgiving 6.1-4 NRSV 1 "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

**On Prayer 6.5-6** NRSV 5 "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

**On Fasting 6.16-18** NRSV 16 "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

**On Profaning the Holy 7.6** NRSV 6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

**Continuation of Journey 11.1** NRSV 1 Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.

"Come unto Me" 11.28-30 NRSV 28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**Interpretation of the Parable of the Tares 13.36-43** NRSV 36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." 37 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 38 the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin
and all evildoers, 42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and of the Pearl 13.44-46  NRSV 44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; 46 on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net 13.47-50  NRSV 47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; 48 when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Treasures New and Old 13.51-52  NRSV 51 "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." 52 And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Payment of the Temple Tax 17.24-27  NRSV 24 When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?" 25 He said, "Yes, he does." And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" 26 When Peter said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the children are free. 27 However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me."

"Where Two or Three are Gathered Together" 18.19-20  NRSV 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant 18.23-35  NRSV 23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; 25 and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins 25.1-13  NRSV 1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.
The Last Judgment

25.31-46 NRSV

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The Death of Judas

27.3-10 NRSV

3 When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. 4 He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." 5 Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." 7 After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. 8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

The Guard at the Tomb

27.62-66 NRSV

62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." 66 So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

The Report of the Guard

28.11-15 NRSV

11 While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy
him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples (Thomas being Present)  LK20.24-29
Jesus Appears to the Eleven While They Sit at Table  MK16.14-18
Jesus Appears to the Eleven on a Mountain in Galilee  MT 28.16-20  NRSV 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
THE COMMUNITY OF CANONICAL LUKE / ACTS

90’s CE – Location uncertain

As with our previous chapter, our remit here is to understand the unique characteristics of the community of the author of these two documents (“Luke” and “Acts”, which are commonly accepted as redacted and/or authored by the same person), that is, their beliefs (are they Pauline?, Jamesian?, Do they see themselves as part of the Jewish people or as part of the Graeco-Roman world? What is their Christology?), their general location, ethnic makeup, and any other pertinent demographics.

Let us begin with the gospel work and then proceed with Acts.

As with “Matthew”, in “Luke” we also have a gospel which is by-and-large a combination of “oldest Mark” and “Q”, plus a number of additions and modifications that are unique to this gospel.

Also as with “Matthew”, the gospel according to “Luke” contains:
- its own (unique) nativity story,
- a narrative of the ministries of John the Baptist and of Jesus
- a narrative on the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus

Luke’s nativity story is very different than Matthew’s. He actually has given us two nativity stories, that of John Baptist and that of Jesus. The story of Jesus’ virgin birth shares with Matthew the main themes in common: the name of Jesus’ mother, the name of his (“adoptive”) father, a angelic annunciation, Bethlehem as Jesus’ birthplace (in fulfillment of Micah 5:2), and the family’s eventual settlement in Nazareth after the birth. Beyond that, the circumstances and logistic details are very different than Matthew’s. Here is a side-by-side synopsis:
Luke’s:
- John Baptist’s conception story.
- Mary and Joseph live in Nazareth and are engaged.
- Gabriel announces Jesus’ immaculate conception to Mary in Nazareth
- Pregnant Mary visits pregnant Elizabeth.
- John Baptist is born, circumcised, and Zechariah utters the blessing and a prophecy on John.
- Due to census, Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem.
- Mary gives birth in Bethlehem.
- With great shining light, an angel announces Jesus’ birth to shepherds, who then travel to Bethlehem to see the newborn king, Jesus.
- Jesus is circumcised and presented at the Temple, with lawful sacrifices.
- A righteous elder, Simon, prophecies at the Temple concerning Jesus.
- Anna the prophetess also prophecies concerning Jesus.
- Family returns home to Nazareth.
- Jesus’ at age twelve in Jerusalem with his parents, for Passover; The story of his teaching at the Temple.
- Genealogy of Jesus’ father Joseph.

Matthew’s:
- Genealogy of Jesus’s father Joseph.
- Mary and Joseph live in Bethlehem and are engaged.
- Mary is found pregnant by the Holy Spirit.
- Angel announces Jesus’ immaculate conception to Joseph.
- Mary gives birth in Bethlehem.
- Following a start as a sign, Magi from the East travel to Bethlehem to see the newborn king, Jesus.
- Herod’s murder of the innocents; the family escapes to Egypt.
- Upon Herod’s death, they return to Israel, but avoiding Herod’s successor, Archelaus, they settle in Nazareth.
We will not dwell on how it came to be that the stories are different, nor will we harp on the point that both stories can not easily be reconciled (for example, in Luke, Mary is found pregnant while in Nazareth, while in Matthew the couple does not live in Nazareth until a few years after Jesus’ birth). What will occupy us here is the text of Luke’s nativity story and whether its worldview is consistent with that of the communities of the earlier gospel witnesses (namely, “oldest Mark”, “Q”, “Matthew”) or whether it is a “Graeco-Roman” / Pauline worldview.

A reading of Luke’s nativity stories shows readily that these are Jewish prophetic stories at heart, and hold the Sinai Covenant in utmost regard and give all praise and thanks ultimately to God. They are stories of immense beauty, hymns in fact:

Mary’s Hymn (aka ‘The Magnificat’): Luke 1: 46-55:

46 And Mary said:
   My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God (θεος/Theo) my Savior.
48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
   For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
   And holy is His name.
50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him
   From generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with His arm;
   He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
   And exalted the lowly.
53 He has filled the hungry with good things,
   And the rich He has sent away empty.

54 He has helped His servant Israel,
   In remembrance of His mercy,
55 As He spoke to our fathers,
   To Abraham and to his seed forever.

The Magnificat reflects the desire to see a physical, here on earth, instantiation of God’s rule, including the military aspect of defeat of Israel’s enemies, and the fulfillment of God’s promise that Israel should live in Eretz Israel without fear of the nations. It would be a strange hymn to have been authored either by (Graeco-Roman) Christians, i.e. Jesus followers of the school of Paul (Roman apologist that he is), or even by Jewish followers of the original Jesus movement (after all, didn’t they acknowledge that none of the redemption promises had come to pass?). Nevertheless, here we have a Jewish messianic yearning which is completely opposite to Paul’s notion of respecting the (Roman) authorities. There is also not a hint of the Pauline notions
of “the Jews refusing to confess Jesus as Messiah” and “God deciding to favor the gentiles while the Jews wallow in unsalvation and rejection of Messiah”.

Rather, the hymn is prophetic, describing an imminent realization of the Messianic Age and Israel’s redemption as a fait accompli.

It is interesting to compare Mary’s Hymn with the Song of Hannah (we have highlighted verses that reflect a direct parallel theme to a verse in the Magnificat):

1 Samuel 2:1-10 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

1 And Hannah prayed and said,
   “My heart exults in YH-H;
   my horn is exalted in YH-H.
   My mouth derides my enemies,
   because I rejoice in your salvation.

2 “There is none holy like YH-H:
   for there is none besides you;
   there is no rock like our God.

3 Talk no more so very proudly,
   let not arrogance come from your mouth;
   for YH-H is a God of knowledge,
   and by him actions are weighed.

4 The bows of the mighty are broken,
   but the feeble bind on strength.

5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
   but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.
   The barren has borne seven,
   but she who has many children is forlorn.

6 YH-H kills and brings to life;
   he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

7 YH-H makes poor and makes rich;
   he brings low and he exalts.

8 He raises up the poor from the dust;
   he lifts the needy from the ash heap
   to make them sit with princes
   and inherit a seat of honor.
   For the pillars of the earth are YH-H’s,
   and on them he has set the world.

9 “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
   but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.

10 The adversaries of YH-H shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. YH-H will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

Shortly after the Magnificat, we have the “Benedictus”, the blessing and prophecy uttered by John the Baptist’s father, Zechariah [Luke 1:67-79]:

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:
68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David,
70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,
73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us
74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear,
75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.
78 By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

As with the Magnificat, this poem or hymn reflects Israel's salvation in a manner consistent with the Torah: God’s rule defeats Israel's enemies and Israel is able to serve God without fear, its sins forgiven. Who is Israel's enemy? In the time of Luke’s writing (90’s CE), Rome had just recently defeated Israel and destroyed the Temple (70CE). There was no doubt in Luke’s time on who Israel’s oppressor. Yet, Luke included it. It must have been a widely circulating hymn among some of Jesus’ Jewish followers. Whether the hymn’s origin is pre- or post-70CE is impossible to tell.

Also of interest here is that, as Zechariah speaks, Jesus has not been born yet. Zechariah is talking about his new born son, John. He speaks about John as if John himself were the messiah (“he has raised up a mighty savior for us”). Could it be that this is poem from a Johanine community? We have seen already that John the Baptist’s followers also had messianic hopes for their teacher.
After Jesus’ birth, the story has Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to the Jerusalem Temple, for the mandatory Circumcision, followed by another poetic / prophetic piece, “Nunc Dimittis” / “Now Dismiss” (your servant), Luke 2:25-39:

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the Law,

28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,
29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary,

"This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. 39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

In summary, with the exception of the idea of a virginal birth (which we have discussed in prior chapters already), the stories and hymns in Luke’s nativity narratives reflect a completely classical Torah world view that the Sinai Covenant is in full force: Israel shall uphold God’s Commandments and be redeemed from its sins and its oppressors. There is not one iota about a change in the Covenant (e.g. away from “Adherence to the Law” and towards “Faith in Jesus”), nor is there one iota about Israel being dispossessed of the promises and benefits of the Sinai Covenant.

We now proceed to the main body of the Lukan gospel.
Although the author of Luke/Acts is traditionally known as a \textit{par excellance} apologist for (Gentile) Christianity (and we shall see shortly how this reputation is earned, mostly thru Acts), what we see in the main body of Luke’s gospel (a side by side comparison of Luke, Matthew, and Mark is available at 
\url{www.ebionim.org/Sayings_and_deeds_of_Yeshua.shtml}) is that Luke has preserved the verses in “oldest Mark” and “Q” faithfully and without any emmendations into a pro-gentile or anti-Jewish/anti-Torah direction.

The main liberties that Luke has taken are in the sequencing of events from “Mark”. Interestingly “Matthew” also took liberties with the sequencing of events. Add a side by side comparison.

In the main body, Luke has also preserved a number of passages that appear only in Luke, and even those reflect no contradiction whatsoever to the main themes and world-view that comes from “oldest Mark” and “Q”. In fact these are so consistent with the rest of the material taken from “oldest Mark” and “Q” that one could even surmise that they may have come to Luke from the same source used by him and “Matthew” (in other words, the original “Q” could have contained more material than what is in common between “Luke” and “Matthew”, and it just happens that Luke chose to preserve a few sayings that Matthew ignored, and viceversa). Here is the roster of “Luke only” passages in the main body of Luke’s gospel:

- John Replies to Questioners \(3.10-14\)
- The Miraculous Draught of Fish \(5.1-11\)
- The Woes \(6.24-26\)
- The Widow's Son at Nain \(7.11-17\)
- The Ministering Women \(8.1-3\)
- Jesus is Rejected by Samaritans \(9.52-56\)
- The Return of the Seventy \(10.17-20\)
- The Parable of the Good Samaritan \(10.29-37\)
- Mary and Martha \(10.38-42\)
- The Importunate Friend at Midnight \(11.5-8\)
- True Blessedness \(11.27-28\)
- Warning against Avarice \(12.13-15\)
- The Parable of the Rich Fool \(12.16-21\)
- The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree \(13.1-9\)
- The Healing of Crippled Woman on the Sabbath \(13.10-17\)
- A Warning against Herod \(13.31-33\)
- The Healing of the Man with Dropsy \(14.1-6\)
- Teaching on Humility \(14.7-14\)
- The Parable of the Lost Coin \(15.8-10\)
- The Parable of the Prodigal Son \(15.11-32\)
- The Parable of the Unjust Steward \(16.1-9\)
- On Faithfulness in What is Least \(16.10-12\)
- The Pharisees Reproved \(16.14-15\)
- The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus \(16.19-31\)
- We are Unprofitable Servants \(17.7-10\)
- The Cleansing of the Ten Lepers \(17.11-19\)
- On the Coming of the Kingdom of God \(17.20-21\)
We turn now to the text at the end of Luke’s Gospel (Luke chapters 23 thru 24, narrating the trial before Pilate, thru Crucifixion, and Resurrection). Here will see a few differences vis-à-vis “oldest Mark”’s ending (15:1 thru 16:8) and Matthew’s (chs. 27 thru 28).

Let’s start with the Trial before Pilate. Where as Mark simply says that the “chief priests accused him of many things” (15:1-3), and Matthew says the same (27:12), Luke is more specific on the charges:

Luke 23:1-2  Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. 2 They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king."

Although Luke’s text here is different than Mark’s and Matthew’s, seeing Jesus as forbidding Roman tax payments and claiming David’s throne is entirely consistent with the Jewish messianic, prophetic, and nationalistic theme (ushering in the Promise of Israel’s Redemption and installment of God’s rule and freedom from the oppressor nations) that we have seen in “oldest Mark” and “Q”.

But from here on Luke’s Trial narrative shows an alteration that betrays that author’s Roman sympathies at the expense of Israel. Mark and Matthew are very clear that it is “the chief priests, elders, and scribes” who are behind Jesus’ persecution and who assemble a large crowd hostile to Jesus (Mk 15:11 “But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Bar-Abbas for them instead.”, also in Mt 27:20). As if to stress the guilt of “the chief priests and elders”, both Mark and Matthew (especially Matthew, with the “washing of the hands” scene) show Pilate as a reluctant punisher (whether this is credible or not is debatable, given Pilate’s brutal track record, known from Josephus; but it does show the authors of Mark and Matthew as eager to show the evil of the high priest establishment). What does Luke say? Luke also exculpates Pilate, however, where in Mark and Matthew the crowd that persuades Pilate to send Jesus to his death is a mob instigated so by “the chief priests, elders, and scribes”, in Luke we have the crowd acting of its own volition:

Luke 23:13 : “Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people” and then (Luke 23:18) “they all shouted out together, ‘Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!’ ”.

In short, now the “the people”, rather than being instigated by the high priests and elders, are part of the group that is culpable of pushing Pilate to condemn Jesus. Not so different from Paul in 1 Thesalonians Chapter 2 (“14 For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for
you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.

Where as Matthew has copied Mark virtually exactly (Mark 15:32-37 and Matthew 27:44-50), Luke differs. A side by side comparison renders thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32 Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.</td>
<td>39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, &quot;Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-34: When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, &quot;Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?&quot; which means, &quot;My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?&quot;</td>
<td>40 But the other rebuked him, saying, &quot;Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.&quot; 42 Then he said, &quot;Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.&quot; 43 He replied, &quot;Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, &quot;Listen, he is calling for Elijah.&quot; 36 And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, &quot;Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.&quot;</td>
<td>44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.46 Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, &quot;Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.&quot; Having said this, he breathed his last.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dying Jesus of Mark and Matthew is quite human. He dies in abandonment by the people (those watching him, and even those crucified with him, taunt him) and his final cry is one of desperation and failure. Luke’s dying Jesus seems above it all. He forgives the two insurrectionists crucified next to him, and instead of asking God why he has been forsaken, he simply commends his spirit to God. Luke’s Jesus is in control and sure of himself, as if he knows that it is precisely his death that is the high point of the story. It is a vintage Pauline Jesus, decidedly fulfilling his purpose (i.e., to die) and providing salvation in the process.
The burial with assistance from Joseph of Arimathea is preserved with virtually identical language between Mark, Luke, and Matthew. The discovery of the missing body is also virtually identical between Luke and Mark (Matthew has a added story on Pilate’s soldiers guarding the stone and concocting a story that Jesus’ disciples had moved the body). One exception is that, where in Mark and Matthew the women encounter one angel, in Luke it is two. Also of interest: in “oldest Mark” the women do not tell anyone that Jesus is no longer at his tomb (and that is where “oldest Mark” ends), whereas in Matthew and Luke they do run and tell the apostles.

Luke has preserved a story on Jesus’ resurrection appearance, which is completely unique to Luke. Where as “oldest Mark” lacks a resurrection appearance story, and Matthew’s is extremely brief (Mt. 28:9-10 where Jesus appears to Mary and Mary at the tomb, and 16-20 where he appears to the eleven in Galilee), Luke’s resurrection appearances take place, first, to two followers on the road to Emmaus, and then to the eleven but in Jerusalem instead of Galilee. Again focusing on the worldview of the text, let’s take a look:

13 And, lo, two of them were going on during that day to a village, distant sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, the name of which is Emmaus, 14 and they were conversing with one another about all these things that have happened. 15 And it came to pass in their conversing and reasoning together, that Jesus himself, having come nigh, was going on with them, 16 and their eyes were holden so as not to know him, 17 and he said unto them, ‘What are these words that you exchange with one another, walking, and you are sad?’ 18 And the one, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, ‘Art you alone such a stranger in Jerusalem, that you have not known the things that came to pass in it in these days?’ 19 And he said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to him, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who became a man --a prophet-- powerful in deed and word, before God and all the people, 20 how also the high priests and our rulers did deliver him up to a judgment of death, and crucified him; 21 and we were hoping that he it is who is about to redeem Israel, and also with all these things, this third day is passing to-day, since these things happened. 22 ‘And certain women of ours also astonished us, coming early to the tomb, 23 and not having found his body, they came, saying also to have seen an apparition of messengers, who say he is alive, 24 and certain of those with us went away unto the tomb, and found as even the women said, and him they saw not.’ 25 And he said unto them, ‘O inconsiderate and slow in heart, to be believe on all that the prophets spake! 26 Was it not behoving the Christ these things to suffer, and to enter into his glory?’ 27 and having begun from Moses, and from all the prophets, he was expounding to them in all the Writings the things about himself. 28 And they came nigh to the village whither they were going, and he made an appearance of going on further, 29 and they constrained him, saying, ’Remain with us, for it is toward evening,’ and the day did decline, and he went in to remain with them. 30 And it came to pass, in his reclining (at meat) with them, having taken the bread, he blessed, and having broken, he
was giving to them, 31 and their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he became unseen by them. 32 And they said one to another, `Was not our heart burning within us, as he was speaking to us in the way, and as he was opening up to us the Writings?' 33 And they, having risen up the same hour, turned back to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven, and those with them, 34 saying-- The Lord was raised indeed, and was seen by Simon.'

Luke’s unique account calls out Simeon (bar) Cleopas. As we shall see, Simeon bar Cleopas will become the third leader to take the helm of the Movement, after Jesus and Jesus’ brother James (as we have seen, James led the Movement from ca 33CE until his death in 62CE). Simon bar Cleopas is likely Jesus’ cousin (Cleopas being brother of Jesus’ father, Joseph) or even half-brother (if this Simon is the same as Jesus’ brother Simon referenced in Mark 6:3, which is possible if Jesus’ mother Mary undertook a Levirate marriage to Cleopas upon the death of Jesus’ father, Joseph). What is noteworthy here is the choice of words once again: Jesus is “a man, a prophet”, i.e., no hint of a supernatural being (as one born of a virgin would be). And he is one “who was about to redeem Israel”. That doesn’t sound like the Jesus of Paul, ready to redeem people who “confess him as savior” from their sins. This tradition preserved by “Luke” is that of a human Jesus who died in the process of trying to save the political nation from its oppressors and restore it to upholding God’s will. As we shall see, the immediacy of Jesus’ mission was not lost to the Simeon bar Cleopas of history: he himself took the helm of the Movement from 62CE until ca 100CE (when as a old man he too is crucified). But more on Simon bar Cleopas later.

What else do we learn from this account preserved by Luke? The ending (Luke 24:53) says it all: After the resurrection experience, the followers STILL consider the Temple as valid. No such thing here as Paul’s “Jesus’ sacrificial death has replaced the need for the Law, including Temple rituals and worship”. In fact, in 24:47 the disciples are told: Jesus’ message is first about reformation (i.e. reformation of how we behave in our DEEDS; that is, reformation as in a Repentant Return to the DEEDS of God’s Torah Commandments) and THEN about remission/forgiveness of sins. This is vintage, straightforward, Judaism. No such thing as “Tell the world to ‘Confess me as Savior, or else’”. Here’s the remaining text of Luke’s conclusion:

35 and they were telling the things in the way, and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread, 36 and as they are speaking these things, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith to them, `Peace-to you;' 37 and being amazed, and becoming affrighted, they were thinking themselves to see a spirit. 38 And he said to them, `Why are you troubled? and wherefore do reasonings come up in your hearts? 39 see my hands and my feet, that I am he; handle me and see, because a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me having.' 40 And having said this, he showed to them the hands and the feet, 41 and while they are not believing from the joy, and wondering, he said to them, `Have you anything here to eat?' 42 and they gave to him part of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb, 43 and having taken, he did eat before them, 44 and he said to them, `These are the words that I
spoke unto you, being yet with you, that it behoveth to be fulfilled all the things that are written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, about me.' 45 Then opened he up their understanding to understand the Writings, 46 and he said to them--'Thus it has been written, and thus it was behoving the Christ to suffer, and to rise out of the dead the third day, 47 and reformation and remission of sins to be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem: 48 and you--you are witnesses of these things. 49 'And, lo, I do send the promise of my Father upon you, but you--abide you in the city of Jerusalem till you be clothed with power from on high.' 50 And he led them forth without--unto Bethany, and having lifted up his hands he did bless them, 51 and it came to pass, in his blessing them, he was parted from them, and was borne up to the heaven; 52 and they, having bowed before him, did turn back to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Conclusions thus far: The author of Luke’s gospel has remained extremely faithful to the tradition received. It is difficult to say how much of Luke’s nativity narrative is a preserved tradition versus a Lukan creation, but even that portion of “Luke” carries strong elements that make it consistent with the original theme gathered from “oldest Mark” and “Q”, namely, the classic Torah theme of Messiah as one to usher God’s Kingdom here on earth (as opposed to the Pauline messiah, one who doesn’t care to expel Rome but is instead preoccupied with selecting those who confess him as savior and bringing them to a other-worldly place where they will be “caught up in the clouds with him”, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:17). Having said that, in Luke’s Trial and Crucifixion wording we do find him inculpating “the people” (i.e. the Jews), where as in Mark and Matthew the hostile “crowd” was explicitly instigated by the high priest. Still, overall, “Luke” is not as much a “author” of his gospel, or even a “editor”, as much as a redactor, and as far as that goes, he seems to have aimed at faithfully preserving the Jesus traditions that he has received from his four sources: “Mark”, “Q”, the Q-like sayings unique to Luke, and what little on Jesus was said by Paul (including Paul’s blaming “the Jews” for Jesus’ death, as in, e.g., 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

Let us move on to Acts. In that document we will see a very different worldview. Here the author is not just preserving accounts that he has received, but is also conveying (creating?) his own interpretation of the history of the events from Jesus’ death thru Paul’s imprisonment. As we shall see, he does his best to harmonize the antagonism between the Paul and the Jamesian/Apostolic leadership, and the Pauline view is the clear winner here.

Already early on in Acts’ narrative we have the author famously reiterating (in the mouth of Peter, no less!) the Pauline accusation of 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 and establishing allegiance to Jesus as the exclusive method for human salvation:

Peter speaking at Pentecost:
Acts 2:22-23: "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know-- this
man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.”

Acts 2:36 “Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified”.

Peter after performing his first miracle after Pentecost:
Acts 3:13-14 : “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”

Peter during a questioning by the high priests, setting forth Luke’s position that no salvation is possible without allegiance to Jesus :
Acts 4:12 : “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

While Paul taught that “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9), and strongly admonished any who would prefer to rely on the Commandments (since they are a “curse”, a hilltop virtually impossible to climb), he nevertheless left a sliver of an opening when he said (Galatians 5:3-4) “I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire Law. You who want to be justified by the Law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace”, in that he still allows the Sinai Commandments as a (virtually, though not completely impossible) mechanism for Salvation for Israel. In Luke, we have closed that gap completely now: that is, now with Acts 4:12 even for Israel is it mandatory to ONLY rely on allegiance to Jesus, to attain Salvation.

Peter again: Acts 4:27 : For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed...

In Acts, Luke reinforces the Pauline correlation of Jesus as Sacrificial Lamb (from 1 Cor 5:7):
Acts 8:32-35 : Now the passage of the scripture that he [the eunuch of the Ethiopian queen] was reading was this: [Isaiah 53:7-8] "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

Unlike the synoptic gospels, Acts broadly refers to the Jews as “other”. Acts uses the term “the Jews” 45 times, 31 of which are negative, referring to “the Jews” as persecuting Paul and at times the Movement in general. Acts uses the term “Jews”
Peter’s strange vision of the heavenly sheet. Acts has a peculiar way of conveying to the reader that Gentiles are welcome to join the Movement:

Acts 10:11-28: **11 He** [Peter] **saw** the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." 15 The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."

Then upon being requested by the centurion Cornelius, Peter says: … 28 "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean."

Already in the synoptics we have seen Jesus’ acceptance of Gentiles who are wishing to follow the Movement, e.g. the episode of another centurion, in Luke 7:1-10 / Matt 8:5-13 (and perhaps we can disregard “Go nowhere among the Gentiles”, Matt 10:5, since it is an addition unique to the Hebrew-centric community of Matthew). Yet here Acts’ author uses a strange way to make the point that gentiles are “ok” to join the Movement, creating a analogy between “associating with Gentiles” and “foregoing the Jewish dietary Laws”. Is this a subtle way of ratifying Paul’s statements that keeping the Laws (dietary or in general) is no longer necessary?

In Acts, the Pauline confession (salvation by faith in Jesus, as opposed to by the Law’s mechanism of Repentance, Repair, and Return to the Commandments) is clearly stated repeatedly, and the author “harmonizes” Peter and Paul into a single (Pauline) message:

Acts 10:43, in the mouth of Peter: “All the prophets testify about him that **everyone who believes in him** receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Acts 13:38-39, in the mouth of Paul: **Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.**

Acts 16:31 They [Paul and Silas, in Philippi] answered, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.**"

For Acts’ author, in good Pauline fashion, it is upon Resurrection (not on birth or baptism) that Jesus receives the anointing as Davidic Messiah:

Acts 13:32-33: **And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.'**

But “the Jews” continue to reject the message, and again in good Pauline fashion Acts’ author announces (in the mouth of Paul) that God’s grace is turned away from the Jews, and towards the Gentiles. If Paul talked about God making the Jews jealous by the Gentiles’ being “saved by faith in Jesus” (namely, Romans 11:11: …But
through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous), the author of Acts takes it one step further: God has abandoned the Jews. At least Paul thought the Jews eventually would be “won over” to his religion (Romans 11:12: *Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!*). Not so the author of Acts:

Acts 13:45-46, in Antioch of Pisidia: **But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy; and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul. Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles.**

We have already extensively discussed the Jerusalem Council and James’ ruling. All that is left to do here is to stress the irony (and in contradiction to Paul’s own account in Galatians) that here in Acts’ rendering of the disagreement, Peter actually defends and espouses the Pauline view:

Acts 15:6-11: **The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. [this contradicts Paul’s own account in Galatians 2:7-8, where he states that it is Paul who was entrusted with the message to the gentiles, and Peter to the Jews]. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will [recall that in Galatians Paul calls Peter a hypocrite for sticking to the Sinai Laws (dietary Laws in that case)]."**

Other:

When Acts quotes from the synoptics, the wording is that of Mark or Luke (not Matthew’s): Acts 13:25 **And as John was finishing his work, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.'**

Conclusion:

Firstly, one must credit “Luke” with faithfully preserving in his gospel rendition the tradition he has received from “Mark”, “Q”, Luke’s Q-like unique source, and what little Paul has to say on the historical Jesus. Having said that, the subtle departures from “Mark” and “Matthew” in Luke’s gospel’s Trial and Crucifixion, as well as his overwhelming traits in Acts, show us that the community of this redactor/author is faithfully Pauline and Graeco-Roman, which views Israel as “other”, “rejectful of the Messiah”, and “displaced by the gentiles, when it comes to the Promise of Salvation”.

311
Net net, it is not a Commandments-centric community, and not part of the Original Jesus Movement that we have gleaned from “oldest Mark”, “Q”, and Matthew.
PERSECUTIONS, 
END OF THE JERUSALEM LEADERSHIP

Persecutions of Davidic descendants under Domitian (ruled 81-96CE);
Crucifixion of Simeon bar Cleopas under Trajan (ruled 98-117CE);
Succession of Jerusalem leadership until the time of Hadrian (ruled 117-138CE);
The Second Jewish War (132-135CE).

81-96 CE, Eretz Israel

Eusebius relates persecution of Jesus' relatives as part of a general persecution by emperor Domitian (younger brother of Titus, ruled 81-96CE) on all descendants of David (HE 3.19.1 - 3.20.7): Domitian ordered the execution of all who were of the family of David, and there is an old and firm tradition that a group of heretics accused the descendants of Jude, the brother, according to the flesh, of the savior, alleging that they were of the family of David and related to Christ himself. Hegesippus relates this as follows: "Now there still survived of the family of the Lord the grandsons of Jude, who was said to be his brother according to the flesh, and they were informed against as being of the family of David. These, the prosecutor brought before Domitian Caesar. For he was afraid of the coming of Christ as Herod also. He asked them if they were descended from David and they admitted it. Then he asked them how much property they owned or how much money they controlled. They replied that they possessed only nine thousand denarii between them, half belonging to each, and this they said, was not available in cash but was the estimated value of the thirty nine plethora [roughly half an acre] of land on which they paid their taxes and lived by their work." They showed him their hands, putting forward as proof of their toil the hardness of their bodies. ... On hearing this, Domitian did not condemn them, but despised them as simple folk, released them, and decreed an end to the persecution against the church. When they were released they were the leaders of the churches, both because of their testimony and because they were of the family of the Lord and remained alive in peace, which lasted until Trajan [ruled 98-117CE]. This we learn from Hegesippus.

98-117 CE, Jerusalem
Eusebius, in *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.32.1-3.32.6, quotes from Hegesippus regarding the death of the second leader of the Jerusalem Church, Jesus' cousin Simon bar Cleopas during Trajan's reign (98 - 117 CE): After Nero and Domitian, we have also been informed, that in the reign of the emperor [Trajan] , whose times we are now recording, there was a partial persecution excited throughout the cities in consequence of a popular insurrection. In this we have understood also that Simeon died as a martyr, who, we have shown, was appointed the second bishop of the Church at Jerusalem. To this the same Hegesippus bears testimony, whose words we have so often quoted. This author, speaking of certain heretics, superadds that Simeon indeed about this time having borne the accusation of Christian, although the was tortured for several days, and astonished both the judge and and his attendants in the highest degree, terminated his life with sufferings like those of our Lord. But it is best to best the writer himself, who gives the account as follows: "Of these heretics," says he, "some reported Simeon son of Cleophas as a descendant of David and a Christian; and thus he suffered as a martyr, when he was one hundred twenty years old, in the reign of the emperor Trajan, and the presidency of the consul Atticus [Tiberius Claudius Atticus, served as a legatus of the Iudaea Province from 99/100 to 102/103]."

The same author says that as search was made for the Jews that were of the tribe of David his accusers as if they descended from this family were taken in custody. One might reasonably assert that this Simeon was among the witnesses that bore testimony to what they had both heard and seen of our Lord, if we are to judge by the length of his life, and the fact that the gospels make mention of Mary the daughter of Cleophas, whose son Simeon was as we have already shown. But the same historian says that there were others, the offspring of one of those considered brothers of the Lord, whose name was Judas, and that these lived until the same reign after their profession of Christ, and the testimony under Domitian before mentioned. He writes thus: "There are also those that take the lead of the whole church as martyrs, even the kindred of our Lord. And since profound peace came to every church they survived until the time of Trajan Caesar, until the time of the son of the Lord's uncle, the before mentioned Simeon bar Clopas, was similarly accused by the sects on the same charge before Atticus the consul. He was tortured for many days and gave witness so that all, even the consul, were astounded that at the age of one hundred and twenty he could endure it, and he was ordered to be crucified.

99-107 CE, Rome

That a ethnic Jewish influence was alive and well in Rome’s Jesus community at this time is also suggested by the fact that the Bishop of Rome at the time of Trajan (Evaristus, bishop from 99 to 107CE) was born in Bethlehem, a child of Hellenic Jewish parents.
117-135 CE, Jerusalem; the Movement from Bar-Cleopas’ death thru the end of the Second Jewish War

Eusebius relates the succession of the Jerusalem leadership after Simon bar Cleopas' crucifixion (HE 3.35): Simeon also having died in the manner shown above, a certain Jew named Justus [Tzaddik, in Hebrew] succeeded him in the episcopate of Jerusalem. As there were great numbers from the circumcision, that came over to the Christian faith at that time, of whom Justus was one.

Eusebius also documents the succession of the Jesus Movement leadership in Jerusalem thru the Second Jewish War:

_Historia Ecclesiastica_ 4.5.1-4.5.4: We have not ascertained in any way, that the times of the bishops in Jerusalem have been regularly preserved on record, for tradition says that they all lived but a very short time. So much however, I have learned from writers, that, down to the invasion of the Judeans under Adrian, there were fifteen successions of bishops [episkopos, which means 'overseers'] in that church, all which it is said were Hebrews from the first, and received the knowledge of Christ pure and unadulterated; so that in the estimation of those who were able to judge they were well approved, and worthy of the episcopal office. For at that time the whole church under them, consisted of faithful Hebrews who continued from the time of the apostles [apostolos, which means 'emmisaries'] until the siege that then took place [under emperor Hadrian in 135 CE]. The Judeans then again revolted from the Romans, were subdued and captured, after very severe conflicts. In the meantime, as the bishops from the circumcision faded, it may be necessary now to recount them in order, from the first. The first, then, was James called the brother of our Lord; after whom, the second was Simeon [bar Cleopas], the third Justus, the fourth Zaccheus, the fifth Tobias, the sixth Benjamin, the seventh John, the eighth Matthew, the ninth Philip, the tenth Seneca, the eleventh Justus, the twelth Levi, the thirteenth Ephres, the fourteenth Joseph, and finally the fifteenth Judas. These are all the bishops of Jerusalem that filled up the time from the apostles until the abovementioned time, all of the circumcision.

Already in the early second century we start hearing of gospels in use by these Original Jesus Movement followers. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (wrote ca 130CE), quoted by Eusebius in his History of the Church (written 324CE), gives us our oldest mention of a “Gospel of the Hebrews” ; HE 3.39.16:

…he [Papias] relates another story of a woman, who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

The Second Jewish War with Rome (132-135 CE), led by Bar Kochba, was brought about greatly by Hadrian’s attempts to Romanize Eretz Israel. In his visit of 130 CE, seeing Jerusalem in ruins (since 70CE), he decided to build a temple to Jupiter on the ruins of the old Temple and in fact to build his new city in honor of Jupiter, to be
named Aelia Capitolina. He also made the same move that Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Greek Syrian ruler ca. 170 BCE) had previously attempted (giving rise to the Maccabean revolution): he forbade circumcision. Dio Cassius reports on the temple to Jupiter:

Dio Cassius, Roman History, 229 CE, Book 69:1-23:

At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there.

[Translation by Earnest Cary, Dio Cassius: Roman History, (Loeb Classical Library) pgs. 425-467]

Justin Martyr documents the harassment of Jesus’ followers at the hands of Jewish revolutionary Bar Kochba, who waged the Second Jewish War against Rome between 132 and 135CE. Although Justin uses the term “Christians”, he is referring to Jews who follow Jesus (Bar Kochba’s issue with them was that they would not recognize Bar Kochba as Messiah, but continued to see Jesus as their defunct leader). Justin Martyr, First Apology 31.5-6:

For in the present war it is only the Christians whom Bar-chochebas, the leader of the rebellion of the Jews, commanded to be punished severely, if they did not deny Jesus as the Messiah and blaspheme him.

Eusebius, quoting Justin Martyr, states the same:

Eusebius HE 4.8.4:

The same writer [Justin Martyr], speaking of the Jewish war which took place at that time, adds the following: For in the late Jewish war BarCocheba, the leader of the Jewish rebellion, commanded that Christians alone should be visited with terrible punishments unless they would deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ.

Eusebius, Chronicles, Hadrian, year 17:

Cochebas, the duke of the Jewish sect, killed the Christians with all kinds of persecutions, when they refused to help him against the Roman troops.

Eusebius, in Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 4, Ch. 6.1-4 summarizes the Second War and its effect on Jerusalem’s Jewish population (including the leadership of the Jewish Jesus Movement):

1. As the rebellion of the Jews at this time grew much more serious, Rufus, governor of Judea, after an auxiliary force had been sent him by the emperor, using their madness as a pretext, proceeded against them without mercy, and destroyed indiscriminately thousands of men and women and children, and in accordance with the laws of war reduced their country to a state of complete subjection.

2. The leader of the Jews at this time was a man by the name of Barcocheba (which signifies a star), who possessed the character of a robber and a murderer, but nevertheless, relying upon his name, boasted to them, as if they were slaves, that he possessed wonderful powers; and he pretended that he was a star that
had come down to them out of heaven to bring them light in the midst of their misfortunes.

3. The war raged most fiercely in the eighteenth year of Adrian \([135 \text{ CE}]\), at the city of Bithara, which was a very secure fortress, situated not far from Jerusalem. When the siege had lasted a long time, and the rebels had been driven to the last extremity by hunger and thirst, and the instigator of the rebellion had suffered his just punishment, the whole nation was prohibited from this time on by a decree, and by the commands of Adrian, from ever going up to the country about Jerusalem. For the emperor gave orders that they should not even see from a distance the land of their fathers. Such is the account of Aristo of Pella.

4. And thus, when the city had been emptied of the Jewish nation and had suffered the total destruction of its ancient inhabitants, it was colonized by a different race, and the Roman city which subsequently arose changed its name and was called Ælia, in honor of the emperor Ælius Adrian. And as the church there was now composed of Gentiles, the first one to assume the government of it after the bishops of the circumcision was Marcus.

Epiphanius of Salamis, in his Panarion (written ca. 375 CE), mentions a Judah Kyriakos, great grandson of Jude as last Jewish Bishop of Jerusalem, that lived beyond Bar Kokhba's revolt. This would match the “Judas” mentioned by Eusebius as the fifteenth and last leader of the Movement before Jews were banished from Jerusalem during Hadrian’s reign. The term “Kyriakos” (meaning “of the lord”) may have been a proper name, or a appellative to indicate his kin relationship to Jesus.

In *Panarion, Against the Manicheans*, Epiphanius also lists the Jerusalem bishops, apparently leveraging Eusebius, although it is intriguing that he provides more information (relating to dates):

And all the saints who shared James’ throne are gone, and Symeon, the son of James’ uncle, with them—Symeon, the son of Cleopas the brother of Joseph. I subjoin their successive episcopates one by one, beginning with the episcopate of James. <I mean the successive > bishops who were appointed in Jerusalem during each emperor’s reign until the time of Aurelian and Probus ….

The list follows:

James, who was martyred in Jerusalem by beating with a cudgel. [He lived] until the time of Nero.

Symeon, was crucified under Trajan.

Judah. Zachariah. Tobiah. Benjamin. John, bringing us to the ninth or tenth year of Trajan \([ruled January 28, 98 \text{ CE} - \ August 7, 117 \text{ CE} ]; Hence John would have led the Movement through 107/8 \text{ CE}].

Matthias. Philip. Seneca. Justus, bringing us to Hadrian \([ruled August 11, 117 \text{ CE} - \ July 10, 138 \text{ CE} ]; hence presumably the leadership of Matthias would have begun 109 \text{ CE} and that of Seneca concluded sometime between 117 \text{ CE} and 138 \text{ CE}].
Levi. Vaphres [Eusebius called him “Ephres”]. Jose. Judah, bringing us to the eleventh year of Antonius. [There is no record of a Antonius, per se, after Hadrian. If this this would be Antoninus Pius (ruled July 10, 138 CE through March 7, 161 CE), then Judah would have led the Movement until 149 CE (in the face of Hadrian’s 135 CE prohibition to Jews from living in Jerusalem?). However, immediately after, Epiphanius then refers to Antoninus Pius by that name (see below).]

The above were the circumcised bishops of Jerusalem. The following were gentiles:

Mark. Cassian. Puplius. Maximus. Julian. These all exercised their office up until the tenth year of Antoninus Pius [ruled July 10, 138 CE through March 7, 161 CE ; Hence, Julian led through 148 CE. Presumably, Mark, Cassian, Puplius, Maximus, and Julian would have been Gentile (Pauline?) bishops, their combined leadership span (Mark starting in 135 CE?, Julian concluding in 148 CE) overlapping, and perhaps competing, with the span of Levi (started sometime after 117 CE), Vaphres, Jose, and Judah (concluded no later than 149 CE)].

Gaian. Symmachus. Gaius, bringing us to the time of Verus, in the eighth year of his reign [He refers to Marcus Aurelius (referred elsewhere by Epiphanius as “Antoninus Verus”), ruled March 7, 161 CE – March 17, 180 CE. Lucius Verus co-ruled with Marcus Aurelius from March 7, 161 CE thru March 169 CE, (eight years). Since below Epiphanius speaks of a “sixteenth year of Verus”, he can not mean Lucius Verus, but Marcus Aurelius (for whom elsewhere he also used the term “Verus?”)].

Julian. Capito. Maximus, bringing us to the sixteenth year of Verus [the sixteenth year of Marcus Aurelius would be 177 CE].

Antoninus. Valens. Dolichian, bringing us to Commodus. [Ruled 177 CE – 180 CE jointly with Marcus Aurelius, then 180 CE – December 31st 192 CE as sole emperor].

Narcissus. Dius, bringing us to Severus [ruled April 9, 193 CE – February 4, 211 CE].

Germanio. Gordius, bringing us to Antoninus.

Narcissus, the same person, bringing us to Alexander the son of Mamaea.

Alexander, bringing us to the same Alexander.

Mazabanus, bringing us to Gallus and Volusian.

Hymenaeus, bringing us to Aurelian [ruled September(? 270 CE – September 275 CE].
Mainly through the hostile writings of Christianity’s Church Fathers (and to some extent the writings of hostile Talmudic sources as well), we can witness the continued existence of the original Jewish Jesus followers, appropriately referred to by these sources as ‘Ebionites’, ‘Nazoreans/Nazarenes’, and/or ‘Hebrews’ (as in: the authors of a “Gospel according to the Hebrews”). The Jewish Jesus followers continue as a (somewhat cohesive) group, at least into 420 CE (when Jerome refers to them in the present tense).

**135-200 CE, Eretz Israel and Syria, east of the Jordan**

After the defeat by Hadrian of the Bar Kochba rebellion of 135 CE Jerusalem is forbidden to Jews and renamed Aelia Capitolina, with a new temple to Jupiter built on the Temple Mount. Judaism is transformed. The Essenes, Sadducees, and Zealots are now completely vanished (a process that started with the First Jewish-Roman War defeat of 70 CE) and only Pharisaic Judaism is able to adapt to the new circumstances. With respect to Jesus, after two defeats it is evident to the Jewish people that Jesus did not in fact return to instate the Kingdom of God in Israel. Quite the opposite, Israel lies in ruins, non existent as a political or religious institution. The Jewish people would, now more than before, see Jesus’ followers as deluded.

The aftermath of the Second War would bring a phase of increased hostility to all things Jewish throughout the Empire. In Eretz Israel, Graeco-Roman cities and populations would only grow, with encouragement from Roman rule. At the same time, Hadrian’s measured attitude towards “Christians” (that is, Pauline, “obey the Roman authorities”\(^1\) Jesus-follower types; not those Torah-based, “Davidic Kingship” types like the Nazarenes and Ebionites) would have provided further incentives for the Pauline (mainly gentile) adherents to increasingly assert themselves in Eretz Israel (and elsewhere) at the expense of the Torah-abiding (mainly Jewish), variety. Let us take a look at our sources.

---

1 Romans 13:1 : “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which is from God. The authorities that exist have been appointed by God.”
While Hadrian turned his ire against the Jews, he also relaxed conditions for the sect of the Christians, a group already well known to Roman emperors since the time of Claudius (ruled 41 to 54 CE) and Nero (ruled 54 to 68 CE). The reader will recall Pliny’s Younger’s correspondence with Trajan, circa 112 CE, in which Trajan responds cautioning against baseless persecution of Christians. Likewise, circa 138 CE, Hadrian responds in a similar correspondence (as recorded by Justin Martyr):

Justin Martyr, *First Apology*:

Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus. I have received the letter addressed to me by your predecessor the Honorable Serenius Granianus, and it does not seem right to me to pass over this report in silence, lest innocent people should be molested and false accusers given the opportunity of doing harm. So if the people of your province can formally support their petition against the Christians by accusing them of something before [your] tribunal, I do not forbid their following this course; but I do not permit them to make use of mere requests and clamorous demands in this matter. It is much more proper, if anyone wishes to bring an accusation, for you to take cognizance of the matters brought forward. Therefore if anyone brings an accusation and proves that the men referred to have done anything contrary to the laws, you will assign penalties in accordance with the character of the offenses. But you must certainly take the greatest care, that if anyone accuses any of these people merely for the sake of calumny, you will punish him with severe penalties for his offense.

Having said the above, Hadrian would not be a friend of Jewish Jesus people. His hostility to all things Jewish, especially any “Davidic Kingship” pretenders, would also have been aimed at Jesus followers in Eretz Israel (that is, presumably, Ebionites and Nazarene Jews). Seeking to squelch any messianic groups fomenting Davidic sovereignty, he commands the building of monuments to Venus at both, Bethlehem (birthplace of David, and allegedly Jesus), and Golgotha. This tells us that, probably for decades before Hadrian, Bethlehem and Golgotha were already places frequented by Jesus followers. Jerome writing in 400 CE tells us of Hadrian’s pagan-building spree on Jesus-related sites:

Jerome, Letter 58, *To Paulinus*, 3:

From the time of Hadrian to the reign of Constantine - a period of about one hundred and eighty years [Hadrian died in 138.; Constantine became Emperor in 306] - the spot which had witnessed the resurrection was occupied by a figure of Jupiter; while on the rock where the cross had stood, a marble statue of Venus was set up by the heathen and became an object of worship. The original persecutors, indeed, supposed that by polluting our holy places they would deprive us of our faith in the passion and in the resurrection. Even my own Bethlehem, as it now is, that most venerable spot in the whole world of which the psalmist sings: "the truth hath sprung out of the earth," was overshadowed by a grove of Tammuz, that is of Adonis; and in the very cave where the infant Christ had uttered His earliest cry, lamentation was made for the paramour of Venus.

Presumably, given the early time horizon, these could well have been Nazarenes and/or Ebionites. Perhaps at Bethlehem it is more likely that these were Nazarenes, as Ebionites did not accept the idea of virginal birth and hence would have placed less
emphasis on Jesus’ nativity. The presence at Golgotha of pre-135CE Jesus followers does beg the question: were they commemorating the miracle only? Or where there any “Pauline-style” leanings such as seeing Jesus’ death and resurrection as salvific?

Sulpicius Severus (Christian writer from Acquitaine Gaul, lived 363-410), first citing Hadrian’s 135 CE prohibition of Jews from entering Jerusalem, then gloats:  

_Sacred History_, Book II, Ch 31:  
"Then under Adrian the Jews attempted to rebel, and endeavored to plunder both Syria and Palestine; but on an army being sent against them, they were subdued. At this time Adrian, thinking that he would destroy the Christian faith by inflicting an injury upon the place, set up the images of demons both in the temple and in the place where the Lord suffered. Because at that time, the Christians from the Jews were very influential, the church at Jerusalem did not then have a priest, except of the circumcision. Hadrian ordered a military cohort to watch the entrance to Jerusalem to keep the Jews from entering. This surely profited the Christian faith, because, until then, nearly all believed in Christ as God while observing the Law. Without doubt this took place, God ordaining it so, in order that the servitude of the Law might be removed by the liberty of Faith and of the Church. So for the first time Marcus, who came from Gentiles, became bishop of Jerusalem. A fourth persecution is reckoned as having taken place under Adrian, which, however, he afterwards forbade to be carried on, declaring it to be unjust that any one should be put on his trial without a charge being specified against him. Under Antoninus Pius [ruled 138-161 CE], his successor, the church did enjoy peace."


Severus, a man of wealth and resources, would have had access to many or most of our earlier quoted sources, hence he probably is not providing original information here (other than exhibiting the continuing solidification during his own time, late fourth and early fifth century, of the Church’s antinomian attitude). Note also Severus ascribing the highest Christology to the beliefs of the Torah-observant Jesus followers of Hadrian’s time in Jerusalem (namely “believed in Christ as God”). Arguably, this is probably Severus’ own self-serving Christian extrapolation; i.e., anti-Arian that he was, he only wants to admit a single “hereticism” on the part of the original Jesus followers: that of adhering to salvation via the Sinai Law). Yet let the reader decide. Note also that Severus calls out ambivalent attitudes from Hadrian with respect to the Jesus followers. This is consistent with our earlier references: while hostile to Jewish Jesus people, he was more moderate vis a vis Graeco-Roman Jesus people.

In summary, after 135CE we have the following:  
- To the Jews that remain in Israel, Gentiles (especially Christians) are those who denigrate the Sinai Law and are the destroyers of the Temple.  
- To the growing Graeco-Roman population in Israel, Jews are haters of the human race, who refused to integrate into the Roman peace.  
- And to the Christians in Israel (and through out the empire), Jews are the “Christ killers”.

321
The original Jewish Jesus movement becomes a shrinking and isolated group, seen as a heretical cult by all others. They call themselves Ebionim (the Poor) and Nazoraioi. They are rejected by mainstream Jews, due to holding on to a dead Messiah, and for being suspected of a Pauline-style “deification” Jesus by empowering him to Save (the Torah is clear that “only God saves”); And they are rejected by the pagan Graeco-Roman establishment, for being faithful to the Jewish Law and for keeping alive the idea of a Davidic King. Yet, we will see how resilient our band of Torah-zealots were.

Our first post-135CE reference, to Jews following Jesus and maintaining the Mosaic Law, is from Christian Church Father Justin Martyr (born in Nablus, Eretz Israel, 100 CE – died in Rome, 165CE). Of particular interest here is the clear evidence of two differing opinions within early Gentile Christianity: some, like Justin, see no issue with Jewish followers of Jesus maintaining their adherence to the Sinai Law, while others, as Justin mentions, consider it a grave offense for Jews to remain faithful to it. Not only that, but it is also proof that certainly in 160CE there were those, even in Rome, where Justin writes from, who considered striving for the Commandments to be a requirement for salvation:

Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Ch 47:

Trypho: But if some one, ...after he recognises that this man [Jesus] is Christ, and has believed in and obeys him, wishes, however, to observe these [Laws given thru Moses], will he be saved?

Justin: In my opinion, Trypho, such an one will be saved, if he does not strive in every way to persuade other men (I mean those Gentiles who have been circumcised from error by Christ), to observe the same things as himself, telling them that they will not be saved unless they do so [follow the Mosaic Law]. This you did yourself at the commencement of the discourse, when you declared that I would not be saved unless I observe these institutions.

Trypho: Why then have you said, 'In my opinion, such an one will be saved,' unless there are some who affirm that such will not be saved?

Justin: There are such people, Trypho, and these do not venture to have any intercourse with or to extend hospitality to such persons; but I do not agree with them. But if some, through weak-mindedness, wish to observe such institutions as were given by Moses, from which they expect some virtue, but which we believe were appointed by reason of the hardness of the people's hearts, along with their hope in this Christ, and [wish to perform] the eternal and natural acts of righteousness and piety, yet choose to live with the Christians and the faithful, as I said before, not inducing them either to be circumcised like themselves, or to keep the Sabbath, or to observe any other such ceremonies, then I hold that we ought to join ourselves to such, and associate with them in all things as kinsmen and brethren. But if, Trypho, some of your race, who say they believe in this Christ, compel those Gentiles who believe in this Christ to live in all
respects according to the law given by Moses, or choose not to associate so intimately with them, I in like manner do not approve of them. But I believe that even those, who have been persuaded by them to observe the legal dispensation along with their confession of God in Christ, shall probably be saved. And I hold, further, that such as have confessed and known this man to be Christ, yet who have gone back from some cause to the legal dispensation, and have denied that this man is Christ, and have repented not before death, shall by no means be saved. Further, I hold that those of the seed of Abraham who live according to the law, and do not believe in this Christ before death, shall likewise not be saved, and especially those who have anathematized and do anathematize this very Christ in the synagogues, and everything by which they might obtain salvation and escape the vengeance of fire. For the goodness and the loving-kindness of God, and His boundless riches, hold righteous and sinless the man who, as Ezekiel tells, repents of sins; and reckons sinful, unrighteous, and impious the man who fails away from piety and righteousness to unrighteousness and ungodliness. Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'In whatsoever things I shall take you, in these I shall judge you.'

Mid second century, Galilee

Indeed, from Talmudic sources, we may have evidence of First Century activities of the Jesus Movement, among the Jewish population in Galilee, where we meet a Jacob of K’far Sekanya who is active in Sepphoris, teaching from the Torah, and healing in the name of Jesus. The Jewish Encyclopedia has the following:

Jacob of Kefar Sekanya (aka Jacob of K’far Simai/K’far Soma):

Judaeo-Christian of the first century; mentioned on two occasions, in both Talmuds and in the Midrash. Meeting Rabbi Eliezer in the upper market-place of Sepphoris, he asked him for an opinion on a curious ritualistic question bearing upon Deuteronomy xxiii.18. As Rabbi Eliezer declined to give an opinion, Jacob acquainted him with the interpretation of Jesus derived from Micah i. 7. Rabbi Eliezer was pleased with the interpretation and was consequently suspected of Christian leanings by the governor (‘Ab. Zarah 17a; Eccl. R. i. 24; Tosef., Hul. ii. 24).

On another occasion Rabbi Eleazar ben Dama, nephew of Rabbi Ishmael, having been bitten by a serpent, Jacob went to heal him in the name of Jesus. Rabbi Ishmael objecting, Jacob demonstrated from the Torah that one may seek healing from any source whatever. But in the meantime Rabbi Eleazar died, and Rabbi Ishmael rejoiced that his nephew had not been defiled by the treatment of a Christian (Yer. Shab. iv., end, where “Kefar Simai” is given; ‘Ab. Zarah 23b; Eccl. R. l.c.).


In all likelihood, Jacob was born at K'far Semai, and lived at K'far Sekanya. Today we can find K'far Sekanya as Sakhnin, and K'far Simai/Soma as K'far Semai, both Galilean villages north of Nazareth, less than 10 km from Kokhabe, which we have already come across as a center of activity of the Movement. In Sakhnin we have a tomb called that of “Just Jacob” (although it is also dedicated to a more recent, fourth century, rabbi, Yehoshua of Sachnin).

Entrance to the tomb. The tomb is said to contain the remains of the more recent (4th century) rabbi Yehoshua of Sachnin (גואשיה ד'סקנין, YHUSHua D’ SKNYN) as well as Rabbi Shimaya Chasida and Rabbi Shimon of Sachnin, while it is also venerated by Christians (and apparently Muslims) as the tomb of Jacob of Sachnin. The tomb has been renovated in the 20th century. Local arabs call the tomb 'Nabi A Sadik'.
Recent and older (B. Bagatti, *Antichi Vilalagi Christiani di Galilea*, Jerusalem 1971, fig. 109) photos of the sarcophagus. A inscription (not visible here) dedicates it to the “righteous Yakov the Min”. Of interest also is the crown-shaped shield, known as a Pelta, apparently used by Samaritans (see E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, III, 226).

Hegesippus (writing ca 175-180CE).
In HE 4:22, Eusebius presents a summary on Hegesippus. Two relevant excerpts here: First, that Hegesippus comments, following his recounting of his visit to Rome, that all is held in accordance with the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord. It would seem that, at least in Rome, one could still find a sensitivity to not trampling over the Jewish Commandments. Secondly, Eusebius’ affirmation that Hegesippus himself was a Jew:

**Hegesippus and the Events which he mentions.**

1. Hegesippus in the five books of Memoirs which have come down to us has left a most complete record of his own views. In them he states that on a journey to Rome he met a great many bishops, and that he received the same doctrine from all. It is fitting to hear what he says after making some remarks about the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians.

2. His words are as follows: And the church of Corinth continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop in Corinth. I conversed with them on my way to Rome, and abode with the Corinthians many days, during which we were mutually refreshed in the true doctrine.

3. And when I had come to Rome I remained there until Anicetus [Bishop, 155-166CE], whose deacon was Eleutherus. And Anicetus was succeeded by Soter, and he by Eleutherus. In every succession, and in every city, that is held which is declared by the law and the prophets and the Lord.

...  

7. And he [Hegesippus] wrote of many other matters, which we have in part already mentioned, introducing the accounts in their appropriate places. And from the Syriac Gospel according to the Hebrews he quotes some passages in the Hebrew tongue, showing that he was a convert from the Hebrews, and he mentions other matters as taken from the unwritten tradition of the Jews.

8. And not only he, but also Irenæus and the whole company of the ancients, called the Proverbs of Solomon All-virtuous Wisdom. And when speaking of the books called Apocrypha, he records that some of them were composed in his day by certain heretics. But let us now pass on to another.

**Irenæus (Died 202CE).**

**Irenæus, Against the Heresies (written ca 170-180CE):**

Book I, Ch26.2 :

Those who are called Ebionites agree that the world was made by God; but their opinions with respect to the Lord are similar to those of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law. As to the prophetical writings, they endeavor to expound them in a somewhat singular manner: they practice circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are enjoined by the law, and are so Judaic in their style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.

Book III Ch.11.7 :

For the Ebionites, who use only that Gospel which is according to Matthew, are convicted out of that very book as not holding right views about the Lord.
Book III, Ch 15: Refutation of the Ebionites, who disparaged the authority of St. Paul, from the writings of St. Luke, which must be received as a whole. … The apostles and their disciples knew and preached one God, the Creator of the world.

...We allege … against those who do not recognise Paul as an apostle; … Those … who do not accept him [as a teacher], who was chosen by God for this purpose, that he might boldly bear His name, as being sent to the aforementioned nations, do despise the election of God, and separate themselves from the company of the apostles. For neither can they contend that Paul was no apostle, when he was chosen for this purpose; nor can they prove Luke guilty of falsehood, when he proclaims the truth to us with all diligence.

Book III, Ch 21.1:

God, then, was made man, and the Lord did Himself save us, giving us the token of the Virgin. But not as some allege, among those now presuming to expound the Scripture, [thus:] "Behold, a young woman shall conceive, and bring forth a son," Isaiah 7:14 as Theodotion the Ephesian has interpreted, and Aquila of Pontus, both Jewish proselytes. The Ebionites, following these, assert that He was begotten by Joseph; thus destroying, as far as in them lies, such a marvelous dispensation of God, and setting aside the testimony of the prophets which proceeded from God. For truly this prediction was uttered before the removal of the people to Babylon; that is, anterior to the supremacy acquired by the Medes and Persians. But it was interpreted into Greek by the Jews themselves, much before the period of our Lord's advent, that there might remain no suspicion that perchance the Jews, complying with our humor, did put this interpretation upon these words. They indeed, had they been cognizant of our future existence, and that we should use these proofs from the Scriptures, would themselves never have hesitated to burn their own Scriptures, which do declare that all other nations partake of [eternal] life, and show that they who boast themselves as being the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, are disinherited from the grace of God.

Book IV Ch 33.4:

He will judge also the Ebionites; [for] how can they be saved unless it was God who wrought out their salvation upon earth? Or how shall man pass into God, unless God has [first] passed into man? And how shall he (man) escape from the generation subject to death, if not by means of a new generation, given in a wonderful and unexpected manner (but as a sign of salvation) by God—[I mean] that regeneration which flows from the virgin through faith? Or how shall they receive adoption from God if they remain in this [kind of] generation, which is naturally possessed by man in this world? And how could He (Christ) have been greater than Solomon, [see Matthew 12:41-42] or greater than Jonah, or have been the Lord of David, [see Matthew 22:43] who was of the same substance as they were? How, too, could He have subdued [see Matthew 22:29; Luke 11:21-22] him who was stronger than men, who had not only overcome man, but also retained him under his power, and conquered him who had conquered, while he set free mankind who had been conquered, unless He had
been greater than man who had thus been vanquished? But who else is superior to, and more eminent than, that man who was formed after the likeness of God, except the Son of God, after whose image man was created? And for this reason He did in these last days exhibit the similitude; [for] the Son of God was made man, assuming the ancient production [of His hands] into His own nature, as I have shown in the immediately preceding book.

Book V, Ch 1.3:
Vain also are the Ebionites, who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but who remain in the old leaven of [the natural] birth, and who do not choose to understand that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High did overshadow her: wherefore also what was generated is a holy thing, and the Son of the Most High God the Father of all, who effected the incarnation of this being, and showed forth a new [kind of] generation; that as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this new generation we might inherit life. Therefore do these men reject the commixture of the heavenly wine, and wish it to be water of the world only, not receiving God so as to have union with Him, but they remain in that Adam who had been conquered and was expelled from Paradise: not considering that as, at the beginning of our formation in Adam, that breath of life which proceeded from God, having been united to what had been fashioned, animated the man, and manifested him as a being endowed with reason; so also, in [the times of] the end, the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation, rendered man living and perfect, receptive of the perfect Father, in order that as in the natural [Adam] we all were dead, so in the spiritual we may all be made alive. For never at any time did Adam escape the harms of God, to whom the Father speaking, said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." And for this reason in the last times (fine), not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but by the good pleasure of the Father, His hands formed a living man, in order that Adam might be created [again] after the image and likeness of God.

Clement of Alexandria (150-215CE):

Stromateis II.9:
So also in the Gospel to the Hebrews it is written, ‘He that wonders shall reign, and he that has reigned shall rest’.

This also quoted by Clement in Stromateis V 14, but without reference to source: “He who seeks will not cease until he finds and having found he will marvel and having marveled he will become king and having become king he will rest.”

The reader may already recognize that here Clement is actually quoting from what is today called the Gospel of Thomas, which was discovered at Nag Hamadi Egypt in 1945 and (smaller fragments) at Oxyrhynchus Egypt in the late 1800’s. Nevertheless, it is intriguing that Clement calls this a part of “the Gospel to the Hebrews” (perhaps because this gospel gives primacy to James the Brother of Jesus, who led the Jewish community after Jesus died).
Tertullian of Carthage (160-225 CE) or possibly a unknown author sometimes referred to as Pseudo-Tertullian: Against All Heresies Ch.3 "Carpocrates, Cerinthus, Ebion":

After [the heretic Carpocrates] broke out the heretic Cerinthus, teaching similarly. For he, too, says that the world was originated by those angels; and sets forth Christ as born of the seed of Joseph, contending that He was merely human, without divinity; affirming also that the Law was given by angels; representing the God of the Jews as not the Lord, but an angel.

His successor was Ebion, not agreeing with Cerinthus in every point; in that he affirms the world to have been made by God, not by angels; and because it is written, "No disciple above his master, nor servant above his lord," sets forth likewise the law as binding, of course for the purpose of excluding the gospel and vindicating Judaism.

Tertullian of Carthage (160-225 CE):

Tertullian, De Praescriptione Haereticorum (Prescription Against Heretics), Ch. 33:
Writing also to the Galatians, he [Paul in Galatians 5:2] inveighs against such men as observed and defend circumcision and the [Mosaic] Law. Thus runs Hebion's heresy.

But in his epistle he [Paul] especially designates those as "Antichrists" who "denied that Christ had come in the flesh," and who refused to think that Jesus was the Son of God. The first dogma, Marcion maintained; the other, Ebion.

Tertulian, On the Flesh of Christ:

Ch 14: Well, but as bearing human nature, He is so far made inferior to the angels; but as bearing angelic nature, He to the same degree loses that inferiority. This opinion will be very suitable for Ebion, who holds Jesus to be a mere man, and nothing more than a descendant of David, and not also the Son of God; although He is, to be sure, in one respect more glorious than the prophets, inasmuch as he declares that there was an angel in Him, just as there was in Zechariah. Only it was never said by Christ, "And the angel, which spoke within me, said unto me." Zechariah 1:14 Neither, indeed, was ever used by Christ that familiar phrase of all the prophets, "Thus says the Lord." For He was Himself the Lord, who openly spoke by His own authority, prefacing His words with the formula, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." What need is there of further argument? Hear what Isaiah says in emphatic words, "It was no angel, nor deputy, but the Lord Himself who saved them." Isaiah 63:9

Ch 18: Now, that we may give a simpler answer, it was not fit that the Son of God should be born of a human father's seed, lest, if He were wholly the Son of a man, He should fail to be also the Son of God, and have nothing more than "a Solomon" or "a Jonas," [Matthew 12:41-42] — as Ebion thought we ought to believe concerning Him. In order, therefore, that He who was already the Son of God— of God the Father's seed, that is to say, the Spirit— might also be the
Son of man, He only wanted to assume flesh, of the flesh of man without the seed of a man; for the seed of a man was unnecessary for One who had the seed of God.

Ch 24: there is an answer to Ebion in the Scripture: "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Tertullian, in Carminis Adversus Marcionitas (“Against the Marcionites”, not to be confused with “Against Marcion” by the same author), Book 1 states:

Hebioni Christum suavit de semine natum et circumcidi docuit legique vacare, fontibus amissis elementa resumere legis.

Ebionites taught that Christ was born from the seed, and circumcised and taught observance of the Law.

Hippolytus of Rome (170 – 235CE). Hippolytus was the most important 3rd-century theologian in the Christian Church in Rome, where he was probably born.

Hyppolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haereses (Refutation of all Heresies): Book VII, Chapter 22. Doctrine of the Ebionaeans: What are the opinions propounded by the Ebionaeans, and that they in preference adhere to Jewish customs.

The Ebionaeans, however, acknowledge that the world was made by Him Who is in reality God, but they propound legends concerning the Christ similarly with Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They live conformably to the customs of the Jews, alleging that they are justified according to the Law, and saying that Jesus was justified by fulfilling the Law. And therefore it was, (according to the Ebionaeans,) that (the Saviour) was named (the) Christ of God and Jesus, since not one of the rest (of mankind) had observed completely the Law. For if even any other had fulfilled the commandments (contained) in the Law, he would have been that Christ. And the (Ebionaeans allege) that they themselves also, when in like manner they fulfil (the law), are able to become Christs; for they assert that our Lord Himself was a man in a like sense with all (the rest of the human family).

Hyppolytus, Refutatio Omnium Haereses (Refutation of all Heresies): Book X, Chapter 18. The Ebionaeans:

But the Ebionaeans assert that the world is made by the true God, and they speak of Christ in a similar manner with Cerinthus. They live, however, in all respects according to the Law of Moses, alleging that they are thus justified.

Julius Africanus (Christian traveler and historian; born in Jerusalem ca 160 – died ca 240)

Africanus lived in Emmaus, and was acquainted with Imperial circles: he may have served under emperor Septimius Severus during his successful campaign to take over the buffer kingdom of Osrhoene, capital Edessa; he travelled to Christian centers in
Greece, Rome, Alexandria; he maintained correspondence with Origen; he is known to have led an embassy to emperor Severus Alexander successfully advocating for the restoration of Emmaus (strangely, his Christian status doesn’t seem to have gotten in the way.)

Of utmost importance is Africanus’ reference, quoted by Eusebius, on the descendants of the family of Jesus carrying on as a dynastic unit, during the time of Africanus’ writing (ca 210-240 CE). The reference is part of an account by Africanus on genealogical record maintenance practices prior to, and leading up to, the time of Jesus. Here also we have a reference to Cochaba, the area near the Jordan (recall our previous chapter on the flight to Pella).

Eusebius, History of the Church 1:7:1,11-14:

1. ... Permit us to subjoin the account of the matter [of Jesus’ genealogy] which has come down to us and which is given by Africanus ..., in his epistle to Aristides, where he discusses the harmony of the gospel genealogies. After refuting the opinions of others as forced and deceptive, he gives the account which he had received from tradition in these words:

[Africanus’ testimony follows:]

... 11. For the relatives of our Lord according to the flesh, whether with the desire of boasting or simply wishing to state the fact, in either case truly, have handed down the following account: Some Idumean robbers, having attacked Ascalon, a city of Palestine, carried away from a temple of Apollo which stood near the walls, in addition to other booty, Antipater, son of a certain temple slave named Herod. And since the priest was not able to pay the ransom for his son, Antipater was brought up in the customs of the Idumeans, and afterward was befriended by Hyrcanus, the high priest of the Jews.

12. And having been sent by Hyrcanus on an embassy to Pompey, and having restored to him the kingdom which had been invaded by his brother Aristobulus, he had the good fortune to be named procurator of Palestine. But Antipater having been slain by those who were envious of his great good fortune was succeeded by his son Herod, who was afterward, by a decree of the senate, made King of the Jews under Antony and Augustus. His sons were Herod and the other tetrarchs. These accounts agree also with those of the Greeks.

13. But as there had been kept in the archives up to that time the genealogies of the Hebrews as well as of those who traced their lineage back to proselytes, such as Achiior the Ammonite and Ruth the Moabitess, and to those who were mingled with the Israelites and came out of Egypt with them, Herod, inasmuch as the lineage of the Israelites contributed nothing to his advantage, and since he was goaded with the consciousness of his own ignoble extraction, burned all the genealogical records, thinking that he might appear of noble origin if no one else were able, from the public registers, to trace back his lineage to the patriarchs or proselytes and to those mingled with them, who were called
Georae. [the word Georae here clearly a Greek transliteration of “Gerim”, originating in the Hebrew word for “conversion”, giyur/גיור]

14. A few of the careful, however, having obtained private records of their own, either by remembering the names or by getting them in some other way from the registers, pride themselves on preserving the memory of their noble extraction. Among these are those already mentioned, called Desposyni, on account of their connection with the family of the Saviour. Coming from Nazara and Cochaba, villages of Judea, into other parts of the world, they drew the aforesaid genealogy from memory and from the book of daily records as faithfully as possible.

Mid and late Second Century CE, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Persia (on the Tigris river)

East of the Euphrates is the Tigris, in many ways a natural border between the Syrian/Mesopotamian world and the Persia-proper. A Jesus following begins on the Tigris in all probability in the second century, particularly in the cities of Arbela (kingdom of Adiabene) as well as in Seleucia-Ctesipon (retaken by Persia from the Alexandrian Seleucids circa 250 BCE). Sozomen (Church historian, born circa 400 in Bethelia, Gaza, into a wealthy Christian family of Palestine.) (H.E., ii. 8) puts it cautiously:

I think the introduction of Christianity among the Persians was due to their intercourse with the people of Osrhoene and Armenia, in all probability; associating with these godly men they were incited to imitate their virtues also.

Various twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth century Syriac Christian writers provide brief accounts of the life of the bishops of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Persia. In doing so, they lists three successive bishops from the mid-second century (Abres, Abraham, and Jacob) who were said to be of Jesus’ family.

These accounts are:
- The Ecclesiastical Chronicle of the Jacobite writer Gregorius Bar Hebraeus (flourished 1280)
- The ecclesiastical histories of the following Nestorian writers:
  o Mari (twelfth-century),
  o ‘Amr (fourteenth-century) and
  o Sliba (fourteenth-century).

The accounts differ slightly, and these minor differences are of significance for scholars interested in tracing the various stages in the development of the stories.

It should be noted that the existence of Seleucia bishops Abraham and Ya’qob has been doubted by J. M. Fiey, one of the most eminent twentieth-century scholars of the Church of the East. In Fiey’s view, they are among several fictitious bishops of Seleucia-
Ctesiphon whose lives were concocted in the sixth century by Seleucia patriarch Joseph (551–67) to bridge the gap between the late third century bishop Papa, the first historically attested bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and the apostle Mari, the legendary founder of Christianity in Persia.

However if the accounts are not entirely fictitious, we have an intriguing story here, not only in terms of the Jesus-dynastic lineage of the leadership of the communities east of the Jordan (and we shall shortly examine their beliefs), but also of note that these Jesus-kinsmen begin precisely at the time when the Jerusalem leadership ceases to be Jewish. In other words, is it possible that the entire Jerusalem leadership thru 135 CE was of Jesus’ family members (Judah Kyriakos being the last one), and that after Hadrian’s prohibition this leadership moved to east of the Jordan? As a minimum one must note the tremendous import of the Jacobite and Nestorian communities claiming dynastic lineage (even if it is concocted). Why is this important? Because it reflects a overriding concern with a Davidic Kingdom here on earth (recall “instruction shall come from Zion”), and this is a characteristic of Commandments-based Judaism, not of the, other-worldly, Pauline religion.

Let us hear from the referenced authors now.

Gregorius Bar Hebraeus (Syriac Orthodox Bishop of Persia, born 1226, died 30 July 1286), in his Chronicon Ecclesiasticum II, Primi Apostoli Orientis:²

On bishop Abres/Abrosius/Abrisius (depending on various lists, would have been bishop from 121 to 137 or 148 CE):

After Mari, his disciple Abrosius. His master Mari had sent him to Antioch, to visit the brethren there and to bring him back news of them. After the death of the blessed Mari the faithful of the East sent to Antioch and asked to be given a bishop. And the disciples of that place laid hands upon Abrosius and sent him back to occupy the throne of his master. There he ruled the faithful for seventeen years until his death. Some say that the place of his burial is unknown, but in fact he was buried in the church of Seleucia. This Abrisius is said to have been from the family of Joseph the carpenter, the father of James and Jesus. [Abrisium hunc a Josepho fabro, Jacobi et Jose patre, originem ducere].

On Abres’ successor, Abraham (depending on various lists, would have been bishop from 148 or 159 CE to 171 CE):

After Abrisius, Abraham. He was also of the race of James, the brother of the Lord. He was consecrated at Antioch and sent into the East. [Is quoque fuit ex genere Jacobi, fratris Domini. Hierosolymis electus et consecratus fuit, ac missus in Orientem.] There the Christians were being persecuted at that time by the Persians. The Persian king’s son suffered from epilepsy, and the king was told that Mar Abraham, the head of the Christian religion, was able to cure him. The king summoned Abraham to his presence, noticed that he looked sad and downcast, and asked

---

him why. Then Abraham recounted the evils he and his people were suffering from the Persians. The king promised to end the persecution of the Christians if Abraham healed his son, and that holy man prayed and laid his hands on the king’s son. He was healed, and peace was given to the faithful. After fulfilling his office for twelve years, he died peacefully.

On Abraham’s successor Jacob/James (bishop from 172 to 190 CE):

After Abraham, Yaʿqob. He too was of the family of Joseph the carpenter. He was elected and consecrated at Jerusalem, and sent into the East. [Hic etiam erat e genere Josephi fabri. Hierosolymis electus et consecratus fuit, ac missus in Orientem.] There he deliberately chose to lead a life of poverty and asceticism. He died after fulfilling his office for eighteen years, and was buried at Seleucia. In his time lived Porphyry the Sicilian, who attacked the truth of the Gospel.

The following accounts are given by twelfth century Nestorian writer Mari, in On the Nestorian Patriarchs ³:

On Abres:

Abris, a Hebrew, from the family of Joseph the carpenter, the husband of our Virgin Lady, was chosen by Simon, son of Cleophas, bishop of Jerusalem. He was renowned for his continence and probity. It is said that after the death of the apostle Mar Mari the people disagreed over who should occupy his throne; and after they asked God in prayer to choose the worthiest man among them, several holy men saw in a dream a man urging them to choose Abris, but they did not know who he was. Then the vision was repeated, and they learned that he was about to enter the church to seek a blessing. When they saw him, they understood. They admitted him to all the orders of the priesthood at once, and sent him into the East. He was a man of exemplary virtue, charitable towards the needy and the poor, prone to good deeds and repelled by the way of the world. He only ordained those who were as chaste as he himself. He passed over to the kingdom of peace after leading the church for sixteen years.

On Yaʿqob:

Yaʿqob, a Hebrew, from the family of Joseph, the husband of Mary, was sent from Jerusalem after he had modestly attempted to refuse such a dignity, pleading that he was too humble to accept an office which he later fulfilled splendidly. He was invested with all the grades of the priesthood at the same time, and governed the church exceptionally well. He was a prudent man of high morals, who devoted himself to prayer and fasting. He selected bishops who were as upright as he himself was, and the results matched his hopes. Churches were built and the faithful were governed wisely. In his time there flourished the second empire of Persia, and the city of Ardashir was built and named after its king. Then too the philosopher Porphyry flourished in Egypt, who published a refutation of the Gospel. Yaʿqob died after ruling the church for eighteen years and six months, and was buried in al-Madaʿin.

Evidently there are inconsistencies between Bar Hebraeus’ and Mari’s accounts. Unlikely (anachronistic) of course is the consecration of Abres by Simon bar Jonah (Peter). Nevertheless the accounts are of import, if they accurately reflect a tradition of dynastic lineage at Seleucia Ctesiphon, Persia.¹

190-196 CE,
The Quartodeciman controversy

There is strong evidence that, as of the end of the second century, many Torah-based traditions had not been rejected in a large number of the, by now generally Pauline, assemblies throughout the empire. In 196 CE this came to a head, in the debate whether the Death and Resurrection should be observed according the original Apostolic tradition (i.e. the Passion on the Jewish date for Passover, the 14th of Nissan, regardless whether that fell on a Thursday or not, and the Resurrection three days after, regardless whether that fell on a Sunday or not). In principle, the debate was about tradition, in other words, not about whether these assemblies considered the Sinai Commandments mandatory. However one can not fail to observe that most of the assemblies with apostolic roots (those of Asia, Alexandria, and Eretz Israel itself) strongly opposed abandoning the observances at Passover. It is certainly plausible that a majority of the followers in these communities were still the ideological descendants of the Original (Apostolic, Torah-observant) Movement. In other words, for the end of the second century, one must not yet think of Original Jesus Movement followers as isolated communities of Ebionites and/or Nazarenes. Particularly of Rome, Asia, Egypt, and Eretz Israel, we can say that those communities were founded Apostolically (i.e. starting with the local Jewish population), and the “infiltration” of gentile anti-Torah worldviews would have been a long process (which as we can see with this particular controversy, was a process that was starting to come to a critical juncture by the end of the second century). Having said this, we also have examples of the opposite: Antioch was a staunch quartodeciman community, yet their most famous bishop, Ignatius (bishop from 68CE to 108CE), is on record as one of the most virulent anti-Torah and anti-Jewish Christians of history. For some originally-Apostolic communities and their leaders of the second century, it was about tradition (“pedigree”?) and not one iota any longer about honoring God’s Torah.

¹ Additional bibliography:
Abbeloos, J. B., and Lamy, T. J., Bar Hebraeus, Chronicon Ecclesiasticum (3 vols, Paris, 1877)
Assemani, J. A., De Catholicis seu Patriarchis Chaldaeorum et Nestorianorum (Rome, 1775)
Brooks, E. W., Eliae Metropolitae Nisibeni Opus Chronologicum (Rome, 1910)
Fiey, J. M., Jalons pour un histoire de l’Eglise en Iraq (Louvain, 1970)
Gismondi, H., Maris, Amri, et Salibae: De Patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria I: Amri et Salibae Tectus (Rome, 1896);
Gismondi, H., Maris, Amri, et Salibae: De Patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria II: Maris tectus arabicus et versio Latina (Rome, 1899)

Ch. 23:

A question of no small importance arose at that time [the time of Pope Victor, about CE 190]. The dioceses of all Asia [modern day Turkey] , as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should always be observed as the feast of the life-giving pasch [epi tes tou soteriou Pascha heortes], contending that the fast ought to end on that day, whatever day of the week it might happen to be. However it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world to end it at this point, as they observed the practice, which from Apostolic tradition has prevailed to the present time, of terminating the fast on no other day than on that of the Resurrection of our Saviour. Synods and assemblies of bishops were held on this account, and all with one consent through mutual correspondence drew up an ecclesiastical decree that the mystery of the Resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other day but the Sunday and that we should observe the close of the paschal fast on that day only. … There is still extant a writing of those who were then assembled in Palestine, over whom Theophilus, bishop of Cesarea, and Narcissus, bishop of Jerusalem, presided. And there is also another writing extant of those who were assembled at Rome to consider the same question, which bears the name of Bishop Victor; also of the bishops in Pontus over whom Palmas, as the oldest, presided; and of the parishes in Gaul of which Irenæus was bishop, and of those in Osroëne and the cities there; and a personal letter of Bacchylus, bishop of the church at Corinth, and of a great many others, who uttered the same opinion and judgment, and cast the same vote.

Ch. 24:

1. But the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates, decided to hold to the old custom handed down to them. He himself, in a letter which he addressed to Victor and the church of Rome, set forth in the following words the tradition which had come down to him:

2. We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. 3. He fell asleep at Ephesus. 4. And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. 5. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papirius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead?

6. All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also,
Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven.

7. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said 'We ought to obey God rather than man.'

8. He then writes of all the bishops who were present with him and thought as he did. His words are as follows:

I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your desire; whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus.

9. Thereupon Victor, who presided over the church at Rome, immediately attempted to cut off from the common unity the parishes of all Asia, with the churches that agreed with them, as heterodox; and he wrote letters and declared all the brethren there wholly excommunicate. 10. But this did not please all the bishops. And they besought him to consider the things of peace, and of neighborly unity and love. Words of theirs are extant, sharply rebuking Victor.

11. Among them was Irenæus, who, sending letters in the name of the brethren in Gaul over whom he presided, maintained that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be observed only on the Lord's day. He fittingly admonishes Victor that he should not cut off whole churches of God which observed the tradition of an ancient custom and after many other words he proceeds as follows:

12. For the controversy is not only concerning the day, but also concerning the very manner of the fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more; some, moreover, count their day as consisting of forty hours day and night.

13. And this variety in its observance has not originated in our time; but long before in that of our ancestors. It is likely that they did not hold to strict accuracy, and thus formed a custom for their posterity according to their own simplicity and peculiar mode. Yet all of these lived none the less in peace, and we also live in peace with one another; and the disagreement in regard to the fast confirms the agreement in the faith.

14. He adds to this the following account, which I may properly insert:

Among these were the presbyters before Soter, who presided over the church which you now rule. We mean Anicetus, and Pius, and Hyginus, and Telesphorus, and Xystus. They neither observed it themselves, nor did they
permit those after them to do so. And yet though not observing it, they were none the less at peace with those who came to them from the parishes in which it was observed; although this observance was more opposed to those who did not observe it.

15. But none were ever cast out on account of this form; but the presbyters before you who did not observe it, sent the eucharist to those of other parishes who observed it.

16. And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, and they disagreed a little about certain other things, they immediately made peace with one another, not caring to quarrel over this matter. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated; neither could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it as he said that he ought to follow the customs of the presbyters that had preceded him.

17. But though matters were in this shape, they communed together, and Anicetus conceded the administration of the eucharist in the church to Polycarp, manifestly as a mark of respect. And they parted from each other in peace, both those who observed, and those who did not, maintaining the peace of the whole church.

18. Thus Irenæus, who truly was well named, became a peacemaker in this matter, exhorting and negotiating in this way in behalf of the peace of the churches. And he conferred by letter about this mooted question, not only with Victor, but also with most of the other rulers of the churches.

Ch 25:
1. Those in Palestine whom we have recently mentioned, Narcissus and Theophilus, and with them Cassius, bishop of the church of Tyre, and Clarus of the church of Ptolemais, and those who met with them, having stated many things respecting the tradition concerning the passover which had come to them in succession from the apostles, at the close of their writing add these words:

2. Endeavor to send copies of our letter to every church, that we may not furnish occasion to those who easily deceive their souls. We show you indeed that also in Alexandria they keep it on the same day that we do. For letters are carried from us to them and from them to us, so that in the same manner and at the same time we keep the sacred day.

150-210 CE, Edessa, Osrhoene (east of the Euphrates)

Osrhoene: a Syriac (i.e. Aramaean) nation, vassal of the Parthian Persian dynasty from 63BCE to 114CE; Subsequently, a reluctant Roman-client kingdom from 114 CE to 244 CE, and absorbed as Roman province from 244 to 260; then, in 260 CE, conquered by the Persians (under Sassanid dynasty now) under Shapur I.
Earlier we encountered the accounts (legends?) of Judas Thomas sending Theudas or Addai to Edessa in the Kingdom of Osrhoene in the mid thirties. Little evidence exists of the spread of any type of Jesus following in Osrhoene between then and the next hundred years (ie. thru 150CE). The received accounts only give us evidence of a Jesus following from circa 150 CE, forwards. Let’s take a look at what type of Jesus followings these were. How about the accounts (Doctrine of Addai, written ca 400ce) that talk about Palut?

Various sources: Christian historian Julius Africanus (travelled with Roman Emperor Septimus Severus), Eusebius of Caesarea, Ephrem the Syrian, The Chronicle of Edessa, Michael the Syrian (died 1199), Gregorius Bar-Hebraeus (1225-1286), others:

From these sources we have accounts of Jesus communities existing in Edessa in a somewhat organized fashion in the second half of the second century, and on the life of salient names in Edessa at the time, such as Tatian (died in Edessa circa 180 CE), and Bardesan of Edessa (lived 154-222 CE).

We have just seen from Eusebius (HE, Book 5, Chapters 23-24) that in 190 CE a number of assemblies, including one in Osroehne, pronounced themselves with respect to the Quartodeciman controversy. Hence we have evidence of a assembly in Osroehne at the end of the second century connected with Christian assemblies around the Roman empire.

We learn also that Bardesan was raised in the court of King Abgar of Osrhoene (ruled 177 – 212 CE) and that in his youth (ca. 180 CE?) Bardesan came under the influence of Bishop Hystaspes of Edessa, whom he once happened to hear preach.5 Through the mention of Bardesan’s coming under the influence of a Bishop of Edessa (Hystaspes), we have collateral information on the existence of some type of organized “Christianity” (or “Christianities”) in Edessa in the middle of the second century.

We also know about Tatian, who born near Edessa and having studied under Justin in Rome from ca. 155 to 165, writes the Diatessaron (a harmony, in Syriac, of the four gospels) and teaches his own flavor of “Christianity” in Edessa until his death ca. 180 CE.

Also, the Chronicle of Edessa (a fourth century document) says:

5 Agapius of Mabbug (10th century), Kitab-al-'Umwan, edited by A. Vasilev, PO 7, Paris, 1911, pg 518.
Also: Michael the Syrian (lived 1126-1199, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch from 1166 to 1199), Chronicle, Book IV, Chapter VI, published for the first time and translated into French by J.-B. Chabot, Paris, Ernest Leroux, Editor. 1899.
Bar Hebraeus (Ebn al-‘Ebrī, 1225-1286) also writes about Bardesan.
Modern sources:
Mitchell, F. W. S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Heretics (1921) vol. 1.
Segal, J. B. Edessa (1970)
In the [Greek calendar] year 513 in the reign of [Roman Emperor] Septimus Severus [i.e. 201 CE], and the reign of King Abgar the spring of water that comes forth from the great palace... overflowed on all side... [The waters] destroyed the great and beautiful palace of our lord king and removed everything that was found in their path – the charming and beautiful buildings of the city, everything that was near the river to the south and north. They caused damage, moreover, to the nave [shrine] of the church of the Christians. In this incident there died more than two thousand persons. 6

From Bardesanes himself we have a report that the King himself (Abgar, a contemporary of Bardesanes) becoming a Christian then.

The Book of the Laws of Countries:

In Syria and in Edessa men used to part with their manhood in honour of Tharatha; but, when King Abgar became a believer he commanded that every one that did so should have his hand cut off, and from that day until now no one does so in the country of Edessa. 7

However some caution is due here, as the same section has been preserved by Eusebius in Preparatio Evangelica, Book VI, Ch 10, and there there is no reference to the king becoming “a believer”:

In Syria and Osroene many used to mutilate themselves in honour of Rhea: hereupon king Abgar at one stroke commanded that those who cut off the genital organs should also have their hands cut off, and from thenceforth no one in Osroene mutilated himself. 8

Julius Africanus (a Christian writer who accompanied Roman Emperor Septimus Severus to Edessa in 195 CE) gives additional evidence towards King Abgar being a Christian, as he (Africanus, being a Christian) calls Abgar “A holy man” (if Abgar were a pagan, Africanus would not choose the words “holy man”). 9

From Eusebius we also know that one of Bardesanes’ primary opposition targets in Edessa were the (ultra Pauline) Marcionites and Eusebius and Epiphanius charge Bardesanes himself of being a Valentinian Gnostic (Valentinus taught in Alexandria Egypt circa 124 CE and then in Rome; his movement achieved noticeable following in Egypt, Syria, and throughout the Roman empire):

Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica, Book IV, Ch. 30:

1. In the same reign, as heresies were abounding in the region between the rivers, a certain Bardesanes, a most able man and a most skillful disputant in the Syriac tongue, having composed dialogues against Marcion's followers and...
against certain others who were authors of various opinions, committed them
to writing in his own language, together with many other works. His pupils, of
whom he had very many (for he was a powerful defender of the faith), translated
these productions from the Syriac into Greek.

2. Among them there is also his most able dialogue On Fate, addressed to
Antoninus, and other works which they say he wrote on occasion of the
persecution which arose at that time.

3. He indeed was at first a follower of Valentinus, but afterward, having
rejected his teaching and having refuted most of his fictions, he fancied that he
had come over to the more correct opinion. Nevertheless he did not entirely
wash off the filth of the old heresy.

Porphyry, a Neoplatonist (among other things) philosopher (born 234 CE in Tyre,
modern day Lebanon; died 305 CE, Rome) who wrote against the Christians, mentions
that Bardesanes was also well acquainted with Indian philosophy and religion:

Porphyry, On abstinence from animal food; (written ca. 268-270) Book 4, Ch17:

For the polity of the Indians being distributed into many parts, there is one
tribe among them of men divinely wise, whom the Greeks are accustomed to
call Gymnosophists. But of these there are two sects, over one of which the
Bramins preside, but over the other the Samanaeans. The race of the Bramins,
however, receive divine wisdom of this kind by succession, in the same manner
as the priesthood. But the Samanaeans are elected, and consist of those who
wish to possess divine knowledge. And the particulars respecting them are the
following, as the Babylonian Bardesanes narrates, who lived in the times of our
fathers, and was familiar with those Indians who, together with Damadamis,
were sent to Caesar.10

From these references we can infer that Edessa in the mid-and-late second century
was host to a wide variety of Jesus cults as well as native and foreign religions. Edessa’s
location as a passage between East and West would have made it a fertile ground for a
multitude of philosophical currents. But let us now examine two of the key schools
that taught there in this time. We start with Bardesanes, a intriguing “Osrhoenian Jesus
Movement”, as we shall see.

Bardesanes of Edessa (154-222CE):

Bardesanes was a courtesan in the court of King Abgar of Osrhoene. The writer
Michael the Syrian (Patriarch of the Jacobite Church, 1166-1199) in his Chronicle, Book
IV, Chapter VI 11, says the following:

---

10 Translation by Thomas Taylor, from Select works of Porphyry: Containing his four books On abstinence from animal
food; his treatise On the Homeric cave of the nymphs; and his Auxiliaries to the perception of intelligible natures. (1823).
See also Stobaeus (Eccles., iii, 56, 141) for another ancient witness to Bardesanes’ acquaintance with Indian
religion.

11 Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch (1166-1199), published for the first time
and translated into French by J.-B. Chabot, Paris, Ernest Leroux, Editor. 1899
In the year 475, which is the year 15 of Sahroq, son of Narses, king of the Persians, Nouhâmâ and his wife Nahsiram escaped to Edessa, Osrhoe. As they passed the river which is by the side of the city, Nahsiram bore; And they gave the child the name of Bar-Daisan, named after the river Daisan. Thence they went to Yerapolis, which is Mahboug. They lived there in the house of Anoudouzbar, the priest. The latter took Bar-Daisan, raised him and taught him the pagan hymns. He was twenty-five years old, when the priest sent him to Edesse to buy certain articles. Passing by the church built by Addai, he heard the voice of Hystaspe explaining the scriptures to the people. This Hystaspe is the one who succeeded Yazni as bishop of Edessa. The speech pleased Bar-Daisan, and he wished to be initiated into the mysteries of the Christians. The Bishop, having heard of it, made him his disciple, instructed him, baptized him, and made him a deacon.

Bardesanes was a scientist, scholar, astrologer, philosopher and poet, and religious leader of a very unique type of, what he calls, “Christianity”. From Bardesanes himself (his single mainly complete surviving work is “The Book of the Laws of Countries”, probably penned by one of his disciples, although he is also quoted by various patristic sources as well), we have an ancient witnesses of a type of Jesus following in Edessa during second half of the second century. Speaking of his own disciples in Edessa, Bardesanes affirms that they observe the Sunday and not the Sabbath, and that they do not circumcise, “just like the Christians in Judea also do not circumcise”.

The Book of the Laws of Countries:

In Syria and in Edessa men used to part with their manhood in honour of Tharatha; but, when King Abgar became a believer he commanded that every one that did so should have his hand cut off, and from that day until now no one does so in the country of Edessa.

And what shall we say of the new race of us Christians, whom Christ at His advent planted in every country and in every region? For, lo! Wherever we are, we are all called after the one name of Christ—Christians. On one day, the first of the week [Sunday], we assemble ourselves together, and on the days of the readings we abstain from taking sustenance. The brethren who are in Gaul do not take males for wives; nor those who are in Parthia two wives, nor do those who are in Judæa circumcise themselves [Et fratres nostri qui in Gallia sunt masculos non ducunt, nec illi qui in Parthia duas uxorres ducunt, nec illi qui in Iudaeas circumciduntur]; nor do our sisters who are among the Geli consort with strangers; nor do those brethren who are in Persia take their daughters for wives; nor do those who are in Media abandon their dead, or bury them alive, or give them as food to the dogs; nor do those who are in Edessa kill their wives or their sisters when they commit impurity, but they withdraw from them, and give them over to the judgment of God; nor do those who are in Hatra stone thieves to death; but, wherever they are, and in whatever place they are found, the laws of the several countries do not hinder them from obeying the law of their

---

12 Translation by Cureton, Spicilegium Syriacum, 1855; see also Latin translation by F. Nau, contained in Patrologia Syriaca – Pars Prima, Tomus Secundus, page 606.
Sovereign, Christ; nor does the Fate of the celestial Governors compel them to make use of things which they regard as impure.

Hence, Bardesanes and his community present us evidence of a Jesus-following in Edessa by late second century; He calls himself “Christian”. On the one hand, he is not aware of any “Christians” following Sinai ritual laws (Circumcision, etc.) either in Judea or in his own locale. On the other hand, to call him and his community “Christian”, in the Pauline sense, would be a stretch. Bardesanes’ “Christianity” believes in Jesus Christ as the Logos, instrument of God for the creation of the world, and cosmic hero of humanity; however when it comes to soteriology (how are people to be saved) Bardesanes places the doing of ethical Commandments as God-given and main prerequisite for communion with God. There is no mention of salvation “only thru Jesus’ death and only by confessing Jesus as savior”, and there is no mention of equality between “Jesus” and “God”. Furthermore, he recounts without a shred of negativity how the Jews follow (and rely on) the Sinai Commandments. Bardesanes was also known to be a avid anti-Marcionite (Marcion, of course, being the “ultra-Paulist”, who discards the entire Torah, calling it, paraphrasing, “the work of a evil god, the god of Israel”). By way of example, here Bardesanes describes the Law of the Judeans, without any mention that their validity would have in any way been altered by Jesus:

But let me mention to you a fact which more than anything else is likely to convince the foolish, and such as are wanting in faith. All the Jews, who received the law through Moses, circumcise their male children on the eighth day, without waiting for the coming of the proper stars, or standing in fear of the law of the country where they are living. Nor does the star which has authority over the zone govern them by force; but, whether they be in Edom, or in Arabia, or in Greece, or in Persia, or in the north, or in the south, they carry out this law which was made for them by their fathers. It is evident that what they do is not from Nativity [astrological alignment of the stars at the time of a person’s birth]: for it is impossible that for all the Jews, on the eighth day, on which they are circumcised, Mars should 'be in the ascendant,' so that steel should pass upon them, and their blood be shed. Moreover, all of them, wherever they are, abstain from paying reverence to idols. One day in seven, also, they and their children cease from all work, from all building, and from all travelling, and from all buying and selling; nor do they kill an animal on the Sabbath day, nor kindle a fire, nor administer justice; and there is not found among them any one whom Fate compels, either to go to law on the Sabbath day and gain his cause, or to go to law and lose it, or to pull down, or to build up, or to do any one of those things which are done by all those men who have not received this law. They have also other things in respect to which they do not on the Sabbath conduct themselves like the rest of mankind, though on this same day they both bring forth and are born, and fall sick and die: for these things do not pertain to the power of man.

In the next passage, we have the emphasis on ethical deeds as Commandments of God, and as essential prerequisite for how God judges people:

Avida here, said we to him, was saying to us, 'If God is one, as you say, and if He is the creator of men, and if it is His will that you should do that which
you are commanded, why did He not so create men that they should not be able
to do wrong, but should constantly be doing that which is right? For in this way
His will would have been accomplished.'

Tell me, my son Avida, said Bardesan to him, why it has come into your
mind that the God of all is not One; or that He is One, but does not will that
men should behave themselves justly and uprightly? ... If you were simply
desirous of becoming acquainted with this subject, and hast no opinion of your
own about it, as a man who has but lately joined the disciples and is a recent
inquirer, I will tell you respecting it; so that you may not go from us empty away.

... I too, said Avida, shall be much gratified to hear and to be convinced:
because it is not from another that I have heard of this subject, but I have spoken
of it to my brethren here out of my own mind; and they have not cared to
convince me; but they say, 'Only believe, and you will then be able to know
everything.' But for my part, I cannot believe unless I be convinced.

... He [Bardesanes] began accordingly to address us as follows: Many men are
there who have not faith, and have not received knowledge from the True
Wisdom. ... With regard to what Avida has said: 'How is it that God did not so
make us that we should not sin and incur condemnation?' — if man had been
made so, he would not have belonged to himself, but would have been the
instrument of him that moved him; and it is evident also, that he who moves an
instrument as he pleases, moves it either for good or for evil. And how, in that
case, would a man differ from a harp, on which another plays; or from a ship,
which another guides: where the praise and the blame reside in the hand of the
performer or the steersman, and the harp itself knows not what is played on it,
on nor the ship itself whether it be well steered and guided or ill, they being only
instruments made for the use of him in whom is the requisite skill? God in His
benignity chose not so to make man; but by freedom He exalted him above
many of His creatures, and even made him equal with the angels. For look at
the sun, and the moon, and the signs of the zodiac, and all the other creatures
which are greater than we in some points, and see how individual freedom has
been denied them. ...

Not so, however, with man: for, if everything ministered, who would be he
that is ministered to? And, if everything were ministered to, who would be he
that ministered? In that case, too, there would not be one thing diverse from
another: yet that which is one, and in which there is no diversity of parts, is a
being which up to this time has not been fashioned. But those things which are
destined for ministering have been fixed in the power of man: because in the
image of Elohim was he made. Therefore have these things, in the benignity of
God, been given to him, that they may minister to him for a season. It has also
been given to him to be guided by his own will; so that whatever he is able to
do, if he will he may do it, and if he do not will he may not do it, and that so he
may justify himself or condemn. For, had he been made so as not to be able to
do evil and thereby incur condemnation, in like manner also the good which he
did would not have been his own, and he could not have been justified by it.
For, if anyone should not of his own will do that which is good or that which is evil, his justification and his condemnation would rest simply with that Fortune to which he is subjected.

It will therefore be manifest to you, that the goodness of God is great toward man, and that freedom has been given to him in greater measure than to any of those elemental bodies of which we have spoken, in order that by this freedom he may justify himself, and order his conduct in a godlike manner, and be copartner with angels, who are likewise possessed of personal freedom. For we are sure that, if the angels likewise had not been possessed of personal freedom, they would not have consorted with the daughters of men, and sinned, and fallen from their places. In like manner, too, those other angels, who did the will of their Lord, were, by reason of their self-control, raised to higher rank, and sanctified, and received noble gifts. For every being in existence is in need of the Lord of all; of His gifts also there is no end.

... Those things, said Avida to him, which you have said, are very good; but, lo! The commands which have been given to men are severe, and they cannot perform them. This, said Bardesan, is the saying of one who has not the will to do that which is right; nay, more, of him who has already yielded obedience and submission to his foe. For men have not been commanded to do anything but that which they are able to do. For the commandments set before us are only two, and they are such as are compatible with freedom and consistent with equity: one, that we refrain from everything which is wrong, and which we should not like to have done to ourselves; and the other, that we should do that which is right, and which we love and are pleased to have done to us likewise. Who, then, is the man that is too weak to avoid stealing, or to avoid lying, or to avoid acts of profligacy, or to avoid hatred and deception? For, lo! All these things are under the control of the mind of man; and are not dependent on the strength of the body, but on the will of the soul. For even if a man be poor, and sick, and old, and disabled in his limbs, he is able to avoid all these things. And, as he is able to avoid doing these things, so is he able to love, and to bless, and to speak the truth, and to pray for what is good for every one with whom he is acquainted; and if he be in health, and capable of working, he is able also to give of that which he has; moreover, to support with strength of body him that is sick and enfeebled—this also he can do.

Who, then, is that is not capable of doing that which men destitute of faith complain of, I know not. For my part, I think that it is precisely in respect to these commandments that man has more power than in anything else. For they are easy, and there are no circumstances that can hinder their performance. For we are not commanded to carry heavy loads of stones, or of timber, or of anything else, which those only who have great bodily strength can do; nor to build fortresses and found cities, which kings only can do; nor to steer a ship, which mariners only have the skill to steer; nor to measure and divide land, which land-measurers only know how to do; nor to practise any one of those arts which are possessed by some, while the rest are destitute of them. But there
have been given to us, in accordance with the benignity of God, commandments having no harshness in them — such as any living man whatsoever may rejoice to do. For there is no man that does not rejoice when he does that which is right, nor any one that is not gladdened within himself if he abstains from things that are bad — except those who were not created for this good thing, and are called tares. For would not the judge be unjust who should censure a man with regard to any such thing as he has not the ability to do?

... Possibly, said Avida, a man may be able to abstain from the things that are bad; but as for doing the things that are good, what man is capable of this?

It is easier, said Bardesan, to do good than to abstain from evil. For the good comes from the man himself, and therefore he rejoices whenever he does good; but the evil is the work of the Enemy, and therefore it is that, only when a man is excited by some evil passion, and is not in his sound natural condition, he does the things that are bad. For know, my son, that for a man to praise and bless his friend is an easy thing; but for a man to refrain from taunting and reviling one whom he hates is not easy: nevertheless, it is possible. When, too, a man does that which is right, his mind is gladdened, and his conscience at ease, and he is pleased for every one to see what he does. But, when a man behaves amiss and commits wrong, he is troubled and excited, and full of anger and rage, and distressed in his soul and in his body; and, when he is in this state of mind, he does not like to be seen by any one; and even those things in which he rejoices, and which are accompanied with praise and blessing from others, are spurned from his thoughts, while those things by which he is agitated and disturbed are rendered more distressing to him because accompanied by the curse of conscious guilt.

Avida here, ...has also been speaking thus: 'It is from his nature that man does wrong; for, were he not naturally formed to do wrong, he would not do it.'

... Men ... are not governed thus; but, while in the matters pertaining to their bodies they preserve their nature like animals, in the matters pertaining to their minds they do that which they choose, as those who are free, and endowed with power, and as made in the likeness of God. For there are some of them that eat flesh, and do not touch bread; and there are some of them that make a distinction between the several kinds of flesh-food; and there are some of them that do not eat the flesh of any animal whatever. There are some of them that become the husbands of their mothers, and of their sisters, and of their daughters; and there are some who do not consort with women at all. There are those who take it upon themselves to inflict vengeance, like lions and leopards; and there are those who strike him that has not done them any wrong, like scorpions; and there are those that are led like sheep, and do not harm their conductors. There are some that behave themselves with kindness, and some with justice, and some with wickedness.

If any one should say that each one of them has a nature so to do, let him be assured that it is not so. For there are those who once were profligates and
drunkards; and, when the admonition of good counsels reached them, they became pure and sober, and spurned their bodily appetites. And there are those who once behaved with purity and sobriety; and when they turned away from right admonition, and dared to set themselves against the commands of Deity and of their teachers, they fell from the way of truth, and became profligates and revellers. And there are those who after their fall repented again, and fear came and abode upon them, and they turned themselves afresh towards the truth which they had before held.

What, therefore, is the nature of man? For, lo! All men differ one from another in their conduct and in their aims, and such only as are of one mind and of one purpose resemble one another. But those men who, up to the present moment, have been enticed by their appetites and governed by their anger, are resolved to ascribe any wrong they do to their Maker, that they themselves may be found faultless, and that He who made them may, in the idle talk of men, bear the blame. They do not consider that nature is amenable to no law. For a man is not found fault with for being tall or short in his stature, or white or black, or because his eyes are large or small, or for any bodily defect whatsoever; but he is found fault with if he steal, or lie, or practise deceit, or poison another, or be abusive, or do any other such-like things.

From hence, lo! It will be evident, that for those things which are not in our own hands, but which we have from nature, we are in no wise condemned, nor are we in any wise justified; but by those things which we do in the exercise of our personal freedom, if they be right we are justified and entitled to praise, and if they be wrong we are condemned and subjected to blame.

Again we questioned him, and said to him: There are others who say that men are governed by the decree of Fate, so as to act at one time wickedly, and at another time well.

I too am aware, O Philip and Bar-yama, said he to us, that there are such men: those who are called Chaldæans, and also others who are fond of this subtle knowledge, as I myself also once was. ...
humans, part of God’s creation, and will be judged at the Last Day], who assume to themselves that which was not given them. I will begin my enumeration of these laws, so far as I can remember them, from the East, the beginning of the whole world:—

[Here Bardesanes lists a roster of nations, for each describing the Laws which they consistently follow, i.e., defying the argument that the Fates control human behavior.]

The truth is, that in all countries, every day, and at all hours, men are born under Nativities diverse from one another, and the laws of men prevail over the decree of the stars, and they are governed by their customs. Fate does not compel the Seres [whose Laws prohibit killing] to commit murder against their wish, nor the Brahmans [whose Laws prohibit eating meat] to eat flesh; nor does it hinder the Persians [whose Laws allow incest] from taking as wives their daughters and their sisters, nor the Hindus from being burnt, nor the Medes [who leave their dead for the dogs] from being devoured by dogs, nor the Parthians [whose Laws allow polygamy] from taking many wives, nor among the Britons [who are monogamous] many men from taking one and the same wife, nor the Edessæans from cultivating chastity, nor the Greeks from practising gymnastics,..., nor the Romans [who accept aggressive warfare] from perpetually seizing upon other countries, nor the men of the Gauls [who practice homosexuality] from marrying one another; nor does it compel the Amazons [who abandon their male newborns] to rear the males; nor does his Nativity compel any man within the circumference of the whole world to cultivate the art of the Muses; but, as I have already said, in every country and in every nation all men avail themselves of the freedom of their nature in any way they choose, and, by reason of the body with which they are clothed, do service to Fate and to Nature, sometimes as they wish, and at other times as they do not wish. For in every country and in every nation there are rich and poor, and rulers and subjects, and people in health and those who are sick — each one according as Fate and his Nativity have affected him.

Rather than a “Christianity” (as in “Salvation only thru confessing allegiance to Jesus and his atoning death”) per se, Bardesanes’ movement is more of a combination of: (a) Hellenistic Judaism (fully onboarding the Genesys narrative, and also onboarding the notion (see Philo) of the “Logos” being God’s instrument that is accountable for the world’s creation), (b) messianic expectation (where the Logos has now come via Jesus and illuminates his followers on the right path), (c) a very Jewish-style acceptance of Commandments (in this case ethical, as we are dealing with a non-Sinai community) as the basis for final judgement by God (Jesus is not mentioned as the final Judge), (d) certain Gnostic elements (the Logos provides enlightening teaching); (e) a dualism typical of Zoroastrianism, where “the Devil” is autonomous (or at least has license to take people down the path of darkness), and (f) a strong Astrological (Persian Zoroastrian Magian?) aspect, where the Stars/Potentates, although put in place by God, influence people’s environment in this or that direction, yet not thoroughly (hence the merit in striving to follow ethical commandments).
What is also interesting is that Bardesanes’ worldview does not malign that nations have established Laws. Unlike Saint Paul, the anti-nomian par-excellence, Bardesanes matter-of-factly accepts that the various nations have received freedom from God to establish Laws, including in some cases, rituals, thru which each can connect with God on a day-to-day basis. Not only does he not frown on Israel’s Sinai Laws, he does not frown on any nation’s Laws (except perhaps where he finds unethical practices, which he calls out).

The philosophy of Bardesanes, although synchretistic (combining elements of various backgrounds), is essentially (a) a Jesus-taught emphasis on ethical (let’s say, Noachide, not Sinai) Commandments as a pre-requisite for Salvation, (b) layered on top of the existing Persian/Mesopotamian/Syrian cosmological understandings of Bardesanes’ Edessan community. To the extent that there can be a native (in this case Aramean/Syrian/Osrhoenian) Torah-ethics-observant version of the Original Jesus Movement, Bardesanes’ is precisely that:

- He does not replace “the need to strive to do the works of the Commandments” with “Confess Jesus as Savior”,
- He is compliant with the Noachide Laws (the ethical Laws from Genesis, incumbent on all nations),
- He maintains unique features of his local Gentile religion, without contradicting the Noachide norms.

This Osrhoenian Jesus movement will not last. As Edessa becomes more absorbed into the Roman sphere in the early 200’s, so too will the Pauline influence grow. According to the Doctrine of Addai, (our received text is a 4th century writing, either created or influenced heavily by Constantinian/Nicene Christian orthodoxy) by circa 200, a new bishop by the name of Palut appeared on the scene, whose consecration the Doctrine reports as coming from Antioch’s Rome-aligned Serapion (Bishop, 192-209), and not from the line that began with Thadeus and Addai. The specifics on Palut’s tenure have been doubted (for example, the Doctrine has Palut begin his career under Addai’s disciple Aggai, which would be too early in time, eg., 100 CE or earlier, for him to have also been consecrated circa 200 CE by Serapion). In any case, the Doctrine of Addai, written or edited after Constantine in a Nicean dominated Roman Empire, wants to emphasize (invent?) a early Rome-aligned pedigree for the Jesus-following in Edessa. However the Bardesanaites will continue to be mentioned (and vilified) by that growing Pauline faction on to the late fourth century (and beyond). In fact, much to the frustration of the Nicene Christians of Edessa, Ephrem the Syrian (Nicene Bishop of Edessa, died 373) complains that Nicene Christians are not called “Christians” in Edessa, but simply “Palutians”. In other words, Nicene Christianity in Edessa will remain small enough thru late fourth century, such that the other “Christians” (Bardesanaites, Marcionites, Manicheans) can venture to label them “heretics”, after their teacher Palut.

Interestingly, Michael the Syrian’s source provides a listing of Edessa Bishops thru the time of Bardesanes; and it is different than that of the Doctrine of Addai:
Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, Book IV, Ch VI: 13

At Edessa, to Barsamia, who converted the priest Sarbil, succeeded Tiridates; To him, Bouzni; To Bouzni, Saloula; To him another servant [and then Gurial]; To Gouria another servant; To this one Yazni; After Yazni, came Hystaspe [and after him] 'Aqai. In the time of this appeared the heresy of Bardaisan and he anathematized it.

It is unlikely that, so early on, there could have been two Jesus movements in Edessa prior to Bardesanes. Michael the Syrian, a Jacobite, would have had no interest in perpetuating a Nicene agenda (where Palut is consecrated by Roman-aligned Serapion of Antioch). One could argue that Michael the Syrian has invented his list, although the detail that he provides does not seem legendary or fictitious, as the *Doctrine’s* does. The names on Michael’s list are all Syrian/Osrhoenian/Persian, even semitic.

Tatian (ca. 120 to ca. 180 CE).  

Tatian was born ca. 120 CE, “in the land of the Assyrians” according to his main extant work, *Oratio ad Graecos.* 14 At a young age Tatian travelled extensively through the Greek world, in a intellectual pursuit of “truth”, becoming well acquainted with Greek philosophy, Greek pagan religion, and Greek culture. The reader will recall that, starting Trajan’s conquests of 116 CE, the land of Osrhoene on the Euphrates is now newly under the sphere of Roman influence, hence it should not be too surprising that Tatian chose to travel westward. Coming from a “good upbringing” as he puts it in *Oratio,* he may have also been schooled as a child in Greek (as opposed to native Aramaic/Syriac). He becomes disillusioned with Greek pagan religion and finds Christianity. At this point he travels to Rome and, according to Ireneaus (and later Ireneaus-dependent sources), studies under Justin. This would have been from circa 155, thru Justin’s death circa 165. After Justin’s martyrdom, Tatian, in developing his own world-view and teaching, falls from favor of the Roman community and is expelled in 172, according to Eusebius (*Chronicon*). After some time, he returns east, settling in Edessa, where he would have taught and written. He dies there, circa 180.

In coming (returning?) to Edessa shortly after 172, Tatian would have also encountered the same Jesus cults that Bardesanes was exposed to, including Marcionites, Gnostics, “Orthodox”; and Bardaisanites too.

Tatian is best known for his influential Diatessaron, the harmony of the four gospels written in Syriac. Through the early fifth century, the Diatessaron would be the

---

13 *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch from 1166 to his death in 1199), published for the first time and translated into French by J.-B. Chabot, Paris, Ernest Leroux, Editor. 1899

Other editions:
- E. Schwartz, Tatiani *Oratio ad Graecos,* TU 4.1; Leipzig, J.C. Heinrichs, Editor, 1888.
Christian scripture used in the area of the Euphrates, which was a Syriac, and not Greek, speaking culture. Tatian’s world-view is of interest, given that it is an example of a Gentile background (backgrounds, to be precise) taking on following Jesus, at a time when the meaning of “following Jesus” was not yet well defined in areas outside of the immediate communities that we have discussed thus far (ie. those seeded by Jamesian and apostolic envoys, or by Paul and his followers). As we shall see, Tatian’s background (in addition to what he acquired under Justin, in Rome), includes his Greek instruction (philosophical and pagan religion) as well as the elements from his native “Assyria”/Osrhoene (that is, a mixture of Astrological/Babylonian and Magian/Persian religion, perhaps Gnosticism, and Encratism (a extreme asceticism, ie., abstention from material things and pleasures). However, unlike Bardesanes, Tatian’s teaching is not known to have produced a Current or Movement. His world-view probably took hold only locally and during his life-time. Nevertheless, it was of sufficient note to come to the attention of later “heresy hunters” of the emerging second century “Orthodox” Christian Church. Let us take a look.

Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.28.1:

… the ones called Encratites, issuing from Saturninus and Marcion, preached abstinence from marriage… and they have introduced abstinence from what they call living things …. They likewise deny the salvation of him who was the first formed [Adam]. But this last idea was recently invented among them, when a certain Tatian first introduced this blasphemy. He was a pupil of Justin … and, exalted at the prospect of being a teacher, and puffed up as if he were superior to everyone else, he created a unique doctrine. Like those who follow Valentinus, he expounded an account of invisible Aeons; and like Marcion and Saturninus he said marriage was corruption and fornication. But denying the salvation of Adam was his own doing.

Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica* Book IV), quoting Irenaeus, has the following to say about Tatian:

Ch. 29 The Heresy of Tatian

1. He is the one whose words we quoted a little above in regard to that admirable man, Justin, and whom we stated to have been a disciple of the martyr. Irenaeus declares this in the first book of his work *Against Heresies*, where he writes as follows concerning both him and his heresy:

2. Those who are called Encratites, and who sprung from Saturninus and Marcion, preached celibacy, setting aside the original arrangement of God and tacitly censuring him who made male and female for the propagation of the human race. They introduced also abstinence from the things called by them animate, thus showing ingratitude to the God who made all things. And they deny the salvation of the first man.

3. But this has been only recently discovered by them, a certain Tatian being the first to introduce this blasphemy. He was a hearer of Justin, and expressed no such opinion while he was with him, but after the martyrdom of the latter he left the Church, and becoming exalted with the thought of being a teacher, and puffed up with the idea that he was superior to others, he established a peculiar type of doctrine of his own, inventing certain
invisible æons like the followers of Valentinus, while, like Marcion and Saturninus, he pronounced marriage to be corruption and fornication. His argument against the salvation of Adam, however, he devised for himself. Irenæus at that time wrote thus.

4. But a little later a certain man named Severus put new strength into the aforesaid heresy, and thus brought it about that those who took their origin from it were called, after him, Severians.

5. They, indeed, use the Law and Prophets and Gospels, but interpret in their own way the utterances of the Sacred Scriptures. And they abuse Paul the apostle and reject his epistles, and do not accept even the Acts of the Apostles.

6. But their original founder, Tatian, formed a certain combination and collection of the Gospels, I know not how, to which he gave the title Diatessaron, and which is still in the hands of some. But they say that he ventured to paraphrase certain words of the apostle, in order to improve their style.

7. He has left a great many writings. Of these the one most in use among many persons is his celebrated Address to the Greeks, which also appears to be the best and most useful of all his works. In it he deals with the most ancient times, and shows that Moses and the Hebrew prophets were older than all the celebrated men among the Greeks. So much in regard to these men.

A reading of Oratio ad graecos confirms a few things stated of Tatian by his detractors (mainly Irenæus) (even if some charges may be exaggerated) as well as other "features" of his teaching.

The charge of Encratism. In refuting Greek pagan religion, Tatian indeed shows a pronounced disdain for things of this world. Yet more than that, even a arrogant and prudish obsession against marriage, drinking, eating of meats, and any worldly enjoyments. He says: “I have no desire to rule, I do not wish to be rich; I do not seek command, I hate fornication, I am not driven by greed to go on voyages.” (Oratio 11.1). Ascetism is nothing new to the ancient world. It is certainly there in the Torah’s Nazirite Vow, and was practiced by the Essenes, John Baptist, Jesus and his followers. Paul’s Christianity itself shows displeasure with things of this world, including marriage. It is not surprising, however, that Tatian’s “holier than thou” extreme ascetism was readily rejected by his Roman correligiousaries, and later Church Fathers.

A second charge from Irenæus we shall find exaggerated: it is the charge of being a Valentinian (which was equivalent to labelling him a “Gnostic”15, a certain negative

---

15 According to William Petersen (Tatian the Assyrian, in A Companion to Second Century Christian ‘Heretics’, edited by A. Marjanen and P. Luomanen, Bril, Leiden & Boston, 2008), his colleague Prof. Gilles Quispel
stigma in the mind of any “Orthodox” Christian). The charge originates from Tatian’s cosmology, which employs the concept of Aeons, and Tatian’s exploration into “dualistic components” of the Creator (see footnote). For Tatian, God (which he also calls the “Celestial Word”) is composed of “Spirit/Pneuma” (feminine in Hebrew and Syriac) and “Word/Logos” (masculine). With this said, Tatian’s system does not present the other aspects of Gnosticism:

- Tatian certainly accepts Jesus as the Logos demiurge (adopting Johannine Platonic theogony), responsible for the creation of the universe, however he does not present the Logos at odds with the transcendent God. Although Tatian is certainly disdainful of worldly temptations, he does not present creation per se as a work of evil or work of imperfection. Rather, Tatian onboards without question the Genesis narrative, where the created world, with its inherent temptations, is part and parcel of God’s plan after Adam’s fall from paradise. The negative aspects of the world are simply God’s just and righteous implementation of Adam’s original rebuke of God’s Commandment.

- Tatian, presents the Mosaic system as superior to the Greek ethical system, and takes pride in “Christians abiding by the commandments of the Father”: “With us [Christians], there is no desire for false glory, nor do we employ subtleties of doctrine. Withdrawn from public and earthly talk, obedient to God’s commands, and following the law of the incorruptible Father, we reject all that is based on human opinion” (Oratio 32:1-2).

Later Church Fathers, such as Epiphanius (writing ca. 375) will amplify Irenaeus’ criticisms of Tatian. Epiphanius will criticize Tatian’s emphasis of the Logos as creator of angels and humans. Ironically, in doing so, Epiphanius unwittingly contradicts vintage Pauline cosmology itself! (1 Cor 8:6 …for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we exist. And there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we exist.). Irenaeus, and certainly post-Nicean Epiphanius would like Tatian to come out stronger

(Utrecht) has called out six markers for identifying Gnostic systems. Leveraging this, we provide the following list:

1. Onboarding the Platonic concepts of: (a) God as “perfect” and completely transcendent, and (b) the need for the Demiurge: because God is completely transcendent, a “artisan” (Greek: demiuorgos) is required to do the creation of the universe;
2. Gnostic systems take the Demiurge concept one step further: The Demiurge is at odds with God in the sense that the Demiurge ends up creating a imperfect world, where there is, both, good and evil;
3. A highly developed angelology;
4. Highly developed dualisms, where opposite types unite to create new beings. Also, God, although fully transcendent, possesses “attributes” (eg. Wisdom; Greek Sophos, female: Sophia, which gives rise to the imperfect Demiurge);
5. Humanity retains a spark of the transcendent God;
6. Through hard-to-find (ie secret) Knowledge (Greek: Gnosis), the divine spark can lead the person to the re-encounter with the transcendent God, escaping from the Demiurge’s evil-ridden creation.

Gnosticism existed before Jesus’ time. In “Christian” Gnostic systems (arising in the late first or early second century) we have Jesus portrayed as the messenger from the transcendent God, coming to give us secret gnosis to escape the Demiurge’s creation. Typically these systems identify the Creator from Jewish scripture with the Demiurge, not with the transcendent God. A consequence of this is that the entire Mosaic Legal system becomes the imperfect (evil prone) creation of the Demiurge (usually named “Ialdabaoth”) and thus something to be dispensed with.
in his Christology and equate the Logos with God as did John’s Gospel’s author (John 1:1-3). In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; This one was in the beginning with God; All things through him did happen, and without him happened not even one thing that hath happened. [Young’s Literal Translation], something that even Paul did not do (at least not explicitly). Although Tatian’s Diatessaron complies by including John’s formula from the very start, Tatian is probably being faithful to the text widely accepted by the emerging “Orthodoxy” that he learned in Rome. However, Tatian’s Oratio is completely aloof on the subject of equating the Logos with God. His conception of the Logos does not go beyond where Paul went, and is in fact not inconsistent with Torah scripture on the all-powerful (in the created world) Messiah, as conceived by Daniel’s vision (’I was seeing in the visions of the night, and lo, with the clouds of the heavens as a son of man was [one] coming, and unto the Ancient of Days he hath come, and before Him they have brought him near. And to him is given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and languages do serve him, his dominion [is] a dominion age-enduring, that passeth not away, and his kingdom that which is not destroyed. [Daniel 7:13-14, YLT])

In short, Tatian’s demiurge is not that of the Gnostics. It is that of Hellenistic Judaism, one that synthesizes Plato’s Logos and Judaism’s One-Like-the-Son-of Man. It is also the Logos of Paul, and the Logos of the later Arian Christians: a being of superior power in the created world, yet nevertheless subservient to the transcendent God. He should wear the label of “heretic to the emerging Roman orthodoxy” proudly.

The discussion on Gnosticism shall keep us a bit longer here. Tatian’s conception of humanity (which does share traits with Gnosticism) is of interest. It is not from Jewish thought, but more his diverse Gentile melting-pot background. In Oratio, humanity starts off before Adam’s fall as having: “two different kinds of spirits, one of which is called soul, but the other is greater than the soul; it is the image and likeness of God. The first men were endowed with both, so that they might be part of the material world and at the same time above it.’ (Oratio 12.1) After the Fall, humans are left with mainly the soul and their only way to return to God is by gaining “the knowledge (gnosis) of God” (Oratio 13.1), which is Jesus’ mission on earth. He says: “We ought now to search for what we once had [in Adam] and have lost, and link the soul to the Holy Spirit and busy ourselves with the union ordained by God.” (Oratio 15.1).

In short, Tatian’s human saga is indeed of a gnostic type (although not “Gnostic” with capital “G”). Striving for God’s (ethical) Commandments is stated as a ‘must’ with pride in Oratio, however there is a type of essene-like sense of predestination: only those favored by God will attain what is needed to achieve communion. In Tatian’s case, that pre-requisite is the “knowledge of God”.

A last peave that the Church Fathers charged Tatian with is that he deems Adam to not have been saved. For Tatian, Adam’s rejection of God’s Commandments (ironically, the Commandment was “to stay away from the tree of knowledge”!!) means that Adam chose to reject God. Tatian refuses to find a salvation for Adam. To the
emerging Roman “Orthodoxy”, which brought forth the idea of Jesus descending to Hades/Sheol and preaching to all the dead, Tatian’s refusal was heresy.

In summary, thru Tatian’s *Oratio* we see a unique Gentile type of Jesus movement, once which relies on two bases: the Jewish scripture, and Tatian’s eclectic mixture of Greek (Platonic mainly), Syriac, and Gnostic thought currents. He:

- Extolls the validity and superiority of Mosaic Law against Greek paganism.
- Extolls the concept of Platonic Logos in a manner not inconsistent with the Danielic cosmic One-like-a-son-of-man Messiah concept, alluded to by Jesus and (as we have seen in the chapter on James) the Jamesian school itself. That this is also consistent with Paul’s cosmic Christ idea of 1 Cor 8:6 should not make Tatian a “Pauline Christian”, nor should his inclusion of John 1:1-3 in the Diatessaron make us label him deifier of Jesus.
- Although deeds are paramount (especially ascetic behavior), people who call out to the Creator require a special “sense” on how to do so, a “gnosis” that only the Logos can impart. Together with ethical behavior, this *gnosis* is also required for Salvation.

150-199 CE, Armenia (north-east of the Euphrates)

Cassius Dio (historian, wrote his “Roman History” between 200CE and 220CE).

Cassius Dio tells us that during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (178-179CE), one of his legions, the Armenian Legion, was made up of Christ followers, and that during a battle against the Germans, they invoked a prayer which produced two miracles which turned the tide in favor of the Romans. Regardless of what type of “Christ followers” these Armenians were, it is clear that Armenia already had a well established population of Christ-followers. From this evidence alone (ie. for the Armenian Legion to be described as “made up of Christ followers”) one would infer that a Jesus following had to develop in Armenia at least fifty (if not more) years prior, ie. early second century. This is certainly consistent with the legend of Theudas bringing Jesus’ message in the mid first century. Here is Cassius Dio’s account (paraphrased by Xiphilinus, a 11th century CE Christian monk who summarized Cassius Dio’s work; hence, the use of the term “Christ” and “Christians” is Xiphilinus’. It is not clear if Cassius Dio used these exact words):

Xiphilinus, Summary (Epitome) of Cassius Dio’s Roman History Book 72: 9 …

Marcus had a division of soldiers (the Romans call a division a legion) from Melitene; and these people are all worshippers of Christ. Now it is stated that in this battle, when Marcus found himself at a loss what to do in the circumstances and feared for his whole army, the prefect approached him and told him that those who are called Christians can accomplish anything whatever by their prayers and that in the army there chanced to be a whole division of this sect. Marcus on hearing this appealed to them to pray to their God; and when they had prayed, their God immediately gave ear and smote the enemy with a thunderbolt and comforted the Romans with a shower of rain. Marcus was
greatly astonished at this and not only honoured the Christians by an official decree but also named the legion the "thundering" Legion. It is also reported that there is a letter of Marcus extant on the subject. But the Greeks, though they know that the division was called the "Thundering" Legion and themselves bear witness to the fact, nevertheless make no statement whatever about the reason for its name.

10 Dio goes on to say that when the rain poured down, at first all turned their faces upwards and received the water in their mouths; then some held out their shields and some their helmets to catch it, and they not only took deep draughts themselves but also gave their horses to drink. And when the barbarians now charged upon them, they drank and fought at the same time; and some, becoming wounded, actually gulped down the blood that flowed into their helmets, along with the water. So intent, indeed, were most of them on drinking that they would have suffered severely from the enemy's onset, had not a violent hail-storm and numerous thunderbolts fallen upon the ranks of the foe. Thus in one and the same place one might have beheld water and fire descending from the sky simultaneously; so that while those on the one side were being consumed by fire and dying; and while the fire, on the one hand, did not touch the Romans, but, if it fell anywhere among them, was immediately extinguished, the shower, on the other hand, did the barbarians no good, but, like so much oil, actually fed the flames that were consuming them, and they had to search for water even while being drenched with rain. Some wounded themselves in order to quench the fire with their blood, and others rushed over to the side of the Romans, convinced that they alone had the saving water; in any case Marcus took pity on them. He was now saluted imperator by the soldiers, for the seventh time; and although he was not wont to accept any such honour before the senate voted it, nevertheless this time he took it as a gift from Heaven, and he sent a despatch to the senate.

In addition to Xiphilinus’ paraphrasing of Cassius Dio’s account, we have:

Tertulian, Letter to Scapula, Ch 4:
… Marcus Aurelius also, in his expedition to Germany, by the prayers his Christian soldiers offered to God, got rain in that well-known thirst.

Tertulian, Apology, Ch 5. Tertulian, discussing the persecutions brought to Christians by Roman authorities, makes a case of exceptions made by certain emperors.:
… But among so many princes from that time to the present day, with anything of divine and human wisdom in them, point out a single persecutor of the Christian name. So far from that, we, on the contrary, bring before you one who was their protector, as you will see by examining the letters of Marcus Aurelius, that most grave of emperors, in which he bears his testimony that that Germanic drought was removed by the rains obtained through the prayers of the Christians who chanced to be fighting under him. And as he did not by public law remove from Christians their legal disabilities, yet in another way he put them openly aside, even adding a sentence of condemnation, and that of greater severity, against their accusers. What sort of laws are these which the impious alone execute against us--and the unjust, the vile, the bloody, the
senseless, the insane? which Trajan to some extent made naught by forbidding Christians to be sought after; which neither a Hadrian, though fond of searching into all things strange and new, nor a Vespasian, though the subjugator of the Jews, nor a Pius, nor a Verus, ever enforced? It should surely be judged more natural for bad men to be eradicated by good princes as being their natural enemies, than by those of a spirit kindred with their own.

Eusebius (writing ca 324CE) mainly quotes from Tertulian; *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book 5, Ch. 5:

God sent Rain from Heaven for Marcus Aurelius Cæsar in Answer to the Prayers of our People.

1. It is reported that Marcus Aurelius Cæsar, brother of Antoninus, being about to engage in battle with the Germans and Sarmatians, was in great trouble on account of his army suffering from thirst. But the soldiers of the so-called Melitene legion, through the faith which has given strength from that time to the present, when they were drawn up before the enemy, kneeled on the ground, as is our custom in prayer, and engaged in supplications to God.

2. This was indeed a strange sight to the enemy, but it is reported that a stranger thing immediately followed. The lightning drove the enemy to flight and destruction, but a shower refreshed the army of those who had called on God, all of whom had been on the point of perishing with thirst.

3. This story is related by non-Christian writers who have been pleased to treat the times referred to, and it has also been recorded by our own people. By those historians who were strangers to the faith, the marvel is mentioned, but it is not acknowledged as an answer to our prayers. But by our own people, as friends of the truth, the occurrence is related in a simple and artless manner.

4. Among these is Apolinarius, who says that from that time the legion through whose prayers the wonder took place received from the emperor a title appropriate to the event, being called in the language of the Romans the Thundering Legion.

5. Tertullian is a trustworthy witness of these things. In the Apology for the Faith, which he addressed to the Roman Senate, and which work we have already mentioned, he confirms the history with greater and stronger proofs.

6. He writes that there are still extant letters of the most intelligent Emperor Marcus in which he testifies that his army, being on the point of perishing with thirst in Germany, was saved by the prayers of the Christians. And he says also that this emperor threatened death to those who brought accusation against us.

7. He adds further:

What kind of laws are those which impious, unjust, and cruel persons use against us alone? Which Vespasian, though he had conquered the Jews, did not regard; which Trajan partially annulled, forbidding Christians to be sought after; which neither Adrian, though inquisitive in all matters, nor he who was called Pius sanctioned. But let any one treat these things as he chooses; we must pass on to what followed.

The letter of Marcus Aurelius to the Senate, recounting the events, is clearly spurious, nevertheless for completion we include it here (abridged and updated by Paul Pavao):
A letter (supposed) of the emperor Marcus Aurelius; from the copy enjoined to Justin Martyr’s First Apology, as contained in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I.

The Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Germanicus, Parthicus, Sarmaticus, to the People of Rome, and to the sacred Senate, greeting!

I explained my plan to you and what advantages I had gained on the borders of Germany after much labor and suffering. Due to the circumstances of this war, I was surrounded by the enemy in Carnuntum. 74 cohorts cut us off from help, being stationed 9 miles off.

Then the scouts pointed out to us that the enemy was at hand. Our general, Pompeianus showed us that a mixed multitude of 977,000 men was closing in on us, which we all could see. I was cut off by this vast host, and I had with me only a battalion composed of the first, tenth, double, and marine legions.

I examined my own position and my army, considered the vast mass of the barbarian enemy, and I quickly betook myself to prayer to the gods of my country. They disregarded me.

So I summoned those among us who go by the name of Christians. After some inquiry, I determined that there was a great number and vast host of them. When they appeared before me, I raged against them. This was not appropriate, for afterwards I learned their power.

They began the battle not by preparing weapons or bugles. Such preparation is hateful to them because of the God they carry around in their conscience. We call them atheists, but it seems that they have a God as their ruling power in their conscience.

I say this because they threw themselves on the ground and prayed not only for me, but for the whole army as it stood, so that they might be delivered from the present thirst and famine. For five days we had gotten no water because there was none. We were in the heart of Germany and in the enemy's territory.

As soon as they threw themselves on the ground and began praying to God—a God of whom I am ignorant—water poured from heaven. On us it was most refreshing and cool, but upon the enemies of Rome it was a withering hail.

We also immediately recognized the presence of a God after their prayer, a God unconquerable and indestructible.

Because of this, then, let us pardon such as are Christians, lest they pray for and obtain such a weapon against us! And I counsel that no such person be accused by our courts only on the ground of being a Christian.

If anyone is found laying to the charge of a Christian that he is a Christian, I desire that it be made clear that he who is accused is a Christian. If he acknowledges that he is one and is accused of nothing else, then whoever arraigns him should be burned alive.

I also desire that whoever is entrusted with the government of the province shall not compel the Christian, who confesses and certifies such a matter, to retract.

These things should be confirmed by a decree of the Senate.

I command that this my edict be published in the Forum of Trajan in order that it may be read. The prefect Vitratus Pollio will also see that it is transmitted to all the provinces round about.
CA 180 CE, India

In History of the Church 5:10 Eusebius relates information about a community in India following a “Gospel of Matthew written in Hebrew” [However the reader must bear in mind that "India" was a name covering a very wide area, including even Arabia Felix.]:

[Pantaenus] displayed such zeal for the divine word that he was appointed as a herald of the Gospel of Christ to the nations of the east and was sent as far as India. ... It is reported that among the persons there [in India] who knew Christ, he [Pantaenus] found the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which had anticipated his own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language which they had preserved till that time. [“that time” would be the time when Pantaenus was sent to India, around 180CE (see below).]

Later in the fourth late century, Jerome in De Viris Illustribus, Ch. 36, also mentions: Pantaenus, a philosopher of the stoic school, according to some old Alexandrian custom, where, from the time of Mark the evangelist the ecclesiastics were always doctors, was of so great prudence and erudition both in scripture and secular literature that, on the request of the legates of that nation, he was sent to India by Demetrius bishop of Alexandria, where he found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, had preached the advent of the Lord Jesus according to the Gospel of Matthew, and on his return to Alexandria he brought this with him written in Hebrew characters. Many of his commentaries on Holy Scripture are indeed extant, but his living voice was of still greater benefit to the churches. He taught in the reigns of the emperor Severus and Antoninus surnamed Caracalla.

And in Letter 70 (To Magnus, an Orator of Rome), written in 397CE, Jerome also recorded the same: Pantaenus, a philosopher of the Stoic school, was on account of his great reputation for learning sent by Demetrius bishop of Alexandria to India, to preach Christ to the Brahmans and philosophers there.

Demetrius would have sent Pantaenus to India around 180CE. If Eusebius is accurate (in that there was by 180CE a community of Jesus-followers in India who read a Hebrew copy of Matthew) this would imply a pre-180CE beginnings of such a community by at least several decades.

CA 200 CE, Symmachus the Ebionite?

Eusebius, in HE 6.17 [Regarding the Translator Symmachus] refers to Symmachus (a well-known translator of the Torah to elegant Greek ca 200CE, and whom Eusebius
18 – After 135CE, through Nicaea (325 CE)

believes, without much foundation, to be an Ebionite). Symmachus lived during the times of (or just prior to) Origen (who lived 185-254CE):

As to these translators it should be stated that Symmachus was an Ebionite. But the heresy of the Ebionites, as it is called, asserts that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary, considering him a mere man, and insists strongly on keeping the law in a Jewish manner, as we have seen already in this history. Commentaries of Symmachus are still extant in which he appears to support this heresy by attacking the Gospel of Matthew. [Eusebius is referring here to the (canonical) Christian gospel of “Matthew”, not to the so-called “Hebrew Matthew” (so-called by Eusebius, Jerome, Epiphanius, and others)]. Origen states that he obtained these and other commentaries of Symmachus on the Scriptures from a certain Juliana, who, he says, received the books by inheritance from Symmachus himself.

Epiphanius, writing after Eusebius, in Weights and Measures simply calls Symmachus a convert from Samaritansim to Judaism.

200-250CE

Origen (184-253CE):

Origen, De Principiis 4.3.8:
…the Ebionites, who derive the appellation of "poor" from their very name (for "Ebion" means "poor" in Hebrew).

Origen, De Principiis Ch 4.22:
Now, if the statements made to us regarding Israel, and its tribes and its families, are calculated to impress us, when the Saviour says, "I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," we do not understand the expression as the Ebionites do, who are poor in understanding (deriving their name from the poverty of their intellect—"Ebion" signifying "poor" in Hebrew), so as to suppose that the Saviour came specially to the "carnal" Israelites.

Origen, Contra Celsus Book II, Ch 1:
The first book of our answer to the treatise of Celsus, entitled A True Discourse, which concluded with the representation of the Jew addressing Jesus, having now extended to a sufficient length, we intend the present part as a reply to the charges brought by him against those who have been converted from Judaism to Christianity. And we call attention, in the first place, to this special question, viz., why Celsus, when he had once resolved upon the introduction of individuals upon the stage of his book, did not represent the Jew as addressing the converts from heathenism rather than those from Judaism, seeing that his discourse, if directed to us, would have appeared more likely to produce an impression. But probably this claimant to universal knowledge does
not know what is appropriate in the matter of such representations; and therefore let us proceed to consider what he has to say to the converts from Judaism. He asserts that "they have forsaken the law of their fathers, in consequence of their minds being led captive by Jesus; that they have been most ridiculously deceived, and that they have become deserters to another name and to another mode of life." Here he has not observed that the Jewish converts have not deserted the law of their fathers, inasmuch as they live according to its prescriptions, receiving their very name from the poverty of the law, according to the literal acceptance of the word; for Ebion signifies "poor" among the Jews, and those Jews who have received Jesus as Christ are called by the name of Ebionites. Nay, Peter himself seems to have observed for a considerable time the Jewish observances enjoined by the law of Moses, not having yet learned from Jesus to ascend from the law that is regulated according to the letter, to that which is interpreted according to the spirit,—a fact which we learn from the Acts of the Apostles. For on the day after the angel of God appeared to Cornelius, suggesting to him "to send to Joppa, to Simon surnamed Peter," Peter "went up into the upper room to pray about the sixth hour. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, and creeping things of the earth, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, call not common." Now observe how, by this instance, Peter is represented as still observing the Jewish customs respecting clean and unclean animals. And from the narrative that follows, it is manifest that he, as being yet a Jew, and living according to their traditions, and despising those who were beyond the pale of Judaism, stood in need of a vision to lead him to communicate to Cornelius (who was not an Israelite according to the flesh), and to those who were with him, the word of faith. Moreover, in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul states that Peter, still from fear of the Jews, ceased upon the arrival of James to eat with the Gentiles, and "separated himself from them, fearing them that were of the circumcision;" and the rest of the Jews, and Barnabas also, followed the same course. And certainly it was quite consistent that those should not abstain from the observance of Jewish usages who were sent to minister to the circumcision, when they who "seemed to be pillars" gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, in order that, while devoting themselves to the circumcision, the latter might preach to the Gentiles. And why do I mention that they who preached to the circumcision withdrew and separated themselves from the heathen, when even Paul himself "became as a Jew to the Jews, that he might gain the Jews?" Wherefore also in the Acts of the Apostles it is related that he even brought an offering to the altar, that he might satisfy the Jews that he was no apostate from their law. Now, if Celsus had been acquainted with all these circumstances, he would not have represented the Jew holding such language as this to the converts from Judaism: "What induced you, my fellow citizens, to abandon the law of your fathers, and to allow your minds to be led captive by him with whom we have just conversed, and thus be
most ridiculously deluded, so as to become deserters from us to another name, and to the practices of another life?"

Origen, Contra Celsus Book V, Ch 61:

Let it be admitted, moreover, that there are some who accept Jesus, and who boast on that account of being Christians, and yet would regulate their lives, like the Jewish multitude, in accordance with the Jewish law—and these are the twofold sect of Ebionites, who either acknowledge with us that Jesus was born of a virgin, or deny this, and maintain that He was begotten like other human beings.

Origen, Commentaries on John 2.12:

If somebody accepts the gospel according to the Hebrews [Greek: Ἐβραῖος εὐαγγέλιον], where the Savior himself says: A moment ago my Mother, the Holy Spirit [Greek: ἁγίον πνεύμα], took me by the hairs and brought me to the great hill, the Tabor. [Also in Origen’s Homilia Jeremiah. 15.4]. [Also in Jerome’s Commentary on Isaiah 40.9-11, Jerome’s Commentaries on Ezechiel 16.13 and Jerome’s Commentaries on Micah 7.5-7].

Origen, Committarius in Matthaeum (Commentaries on Matthew) 11.12 (Things Clean and Unclean According to the Law and the Gospel):

"And He called to Him the multitude and said unto them, ‘Hear and understand, [It is not what goes into a man’s mouth that makes him unclean; what makes a man unclean is what comes out of his mouth.]’" [Matthew 15:10-11] … We are clearly taught in these words by the Saviour that, when we read in Leviticus and Deuteronomy the precepts about meat clean and unclean, for the transgression of which we are accused by the material Jews and by the Ebionites who differ little from them, we are not to think that the scope of the Scripture is found in any superficial understanding of them. For if "not that which enters into the mouth defiles the man, but that which proceeds out of the mouth," … we are not defiled when we eat those things which the Jews who desire to be in bondage to the letter of the law declare to be unclean.

Origen, Homilia in Genesim (Homilies on Genesis) 3.5:

For the Jew immediately constrains me with this testimony of the prophet and says: "Behold, the prophet designates both a circumcision of the flesh and heart; no place remains for allegory where both kinds of circumcision are demanded."

If you help me with your prayers, that "the Word of the living God" may think fit to be present "in the opening of" our "mouth", we shall be able with him as our leader to go forth through this narrow way of inquiry to the breadth of truth. For we must refute not only the Jews in the flesh concerning circumcision of the flesh, but also some of these who appear to have taken up the name of Christ and nevertheless think circumcision of the flesh is to be received, as the Ebionites and any others who err with them in similar poverty of understanding.
History of the Original Jesus Movement

250CE, Pamphylia, Asia Minor

The Martyrdom of Conon, speaks of a Jesus follower, Conon, martyred in Pamphylia circa mid third century, who, upon being questioned, says:

Martyrdom of Conon, 4:2: *I am of the city of Nazareth, in Galilee; I am of the family of Christ, whose worship I have inherited from my ancestors, and whom I recognize as God over all things.*

241-272CE, Persia

Kartir, Zoroastrian High Priest appointed during the reign of Iranian Sassanid emperor Shapur I (reigned 241-272 CE).

Kartir’s Inscription at the Cube of Zarathustra, located at Naqsh-e Rajab, Iran, contains the following reference to various religions that he sought to extricate from Persia. It clearly shows a distinction between “Nazoreans” and “Christians” alive and well during the late third century CE (text in brackets mine):

And in kingdom after kingdom and place after place throughout the whole empire the services of Ahura Mazda and the Yazads became preeminent, and great dignity came to the Mazdayasnian religion and the magi in the empire, and the Yazads and water and fire and small cattle in the empire attained great satisfaction, while Ahriman and the devs were punished and rebuked, and the teachings of Ahriman and the devs departed from the empire and were abandoned. And Yahud [Jews], Sramans [Buddhists], Brahmins [Hindu high-priestly caste], Nasara, Kristiyan, Maktak [Baptisers], and Zandiks [Manichaeans] in the empire were smitten, and destruction of idols and scattering of the stores of the devs and god-seats and nests was abandoned. And in kingdom after kingdom and place after place many divine services in magnificence and many Warharan fires were established, and many magi became happy and prosperous, and many fires and magi were imperially installed. And in documents and imperial rescripts and records, under Varahran, King of Kings, son of Varahran, (II) which were made, in was recorded, "Kartir, Varahran's Soul-Savior, Ahura Mazda's Magus-master."

By the early fourth century, the Christian population of the empire had grown to be a large minority. It was no longer advantageous to keep such a large portion of the population disenfranchised, nor was it wise to maintain adversity to their deity.

**Edit of Toleration, by Emperor Galerius (311 CE)**

Among other arrangements which we are always accustomed to make for the prosperity and welfare of the republic, we had desired formerly to bring all things into harmony with the ancient laws and public order of the Romans, and to provide that even the Christians who had left the religion of their fathers should come back to reason; since, indeed, the Christians themselves, for some reason, had followed such a caprice and had fallen into such a folly that they would not obey the institutes of antiquity, which perchance their own ancestors had first established; but at their own will and pleasure, they would thus make laws unto themselves which they should observe and would collect various peoples in diverse places in congregations. Finally when our law had been promulgated to the effect that they should conform to the institutes of antiquity, many were subdued by the fear of danger, many even suffered death. And yet since most of them persevered in their determination, and we saw that they neither paid the reverence and awe due to the gods nor worshipped the God of the Christians, in view of our most mild clemency and the constant habit by which we are accustomed to grant indulgence to all, we thought that we ought to grant our most prompt indulgence also to these, so that they may again be Christians and may hold their conventicles, provided they do nothing contrary to good order. But we shall tell the magistrates in another letter what they ought to do.

Wherefore, for this our indulgence, they ought to pray to their god for our safety, for that of the republic, and for their own, that the republic may continue uninjured on every side, and that they may be able to live securely in their homes.

This edict is published at Nicomedia on the day before the Kalends of May, in our eighth consulship and the second of Maximinus.
On 28 October 312, Constantine defeats Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, on the outskirts of Rome, taking his place among the tetrarchy of emperors ruling the empire. Constantine was already a devotee of the Christian deity, although he continued as well his devotion to the Sun god Apollo. Licinius (as probably Constantine) was also eager to re-assure the Christian population, now a growing segment. In 311, the two Western Emperors declared this further reassurance to Christians, and (in theory) all other religions:

**The "Edict of Milan " (313 CE)**

When I, Constantine Augustus, as well as I Licinius Augustus fortunately met near Mediolanurn (Milan), and were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we thought, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred; whence any divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule. And thus by this wholesome counsel and most upright provision we thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the Supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts, may show in all things His usual favor and benevolence. Therefore, your Worship should know that it has pleased us to remove all conditions whatsoever, which were in the rescripts formerly given to you officially, concerning the Christians and now any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation. We thought it fit to commend these things most fully to your care that you may know that we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship. When you see that this has been granted to them by us, your Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases; this regulation is made we that we may not seem to detract from any dignity or any religion.

Moreover, in the case of the Christians especially we esteemed it best to order that if it happens anyone heretofore has bought from our treasury from anyone whatsoever, those places where they were previously accustomed to assemble, concerning which a certain decree had been made and a letter sent to you officially, the same shall be restored to the Christians without payment or any claim of recompense and without any kind of fraud or deception. Those, moreover, who have obtained the same by gift, are likewise to return them at once to the Christians. Besides, both those who have purchased and those who have secured them by gift, are to appeal to the vicar if they seek any recompense from our bounty, that they may be cared for through our clemency,. All this property ought to be delivered at once to the community of the Christians through your intercession, and without delay. And since these Christians are
known to have possessed not only those places in which they were accustomed
to assemble, but also other property, namely the churches, belonging to them
as a corporation and not as individuals, all these things which we have included
under the above law, you will order to be restored, without any hesitation or
controversy at all, to these Christians, that is to say to the corporations and their
conventicles: providing, of course, that the above arrangements be followed so
that those who return the same without payment, as we have said, may hope for
an indemnity from our bounty. In all these circumstances you ought to tender
your most efficacious intervention to the community of the Christians, that our
command may be carried into effect as quickly as possible, whereby, moreover,
through our clemency, public order may be secured. Let this be done so that, as
we have said above, Divine favor towards us, which, under the most important
circumstances we have already experienced, may, for all time, preserve and
prosper our successes together with the good of the state. Moreover, in order
that the statement of this decree of our good will may come to the notice of all,
this rescript, published by your decree, shall be announced everywhere and
brought to the knowledge of all, so that the decree of this, our benevolence,
cannot be concealed.

During the Council of Nicaea, Constantine’s grave anti-Judaism becomes
formalized as part of the new Christian mindset, soon to dominate the entire religious
realm of Rome. Constantine’s own letter to those Christian bishops who were unable
to attend, says it all:

Constantinus Augustus to the Churches:

“Viewing the common public prosperity enjoyed at this moment, as the
result of the great power of divine grace, I am desirous above all things that the
blessed members of the Catholic Church should be preserved in one faith, in
sincere love, and in one form of religion, towards Almighty God. But, since no
firmer or more effective measure could be adopted to secure this end, than that
of submitting everything relating to our most holy religion to the examination
of all, or most of all, the bishops, I convened as many of them as possible, and
took my seat among them as one of yourselves; for I would not deny that truth
which is the source of my greatest joy, namely, that I am your fellow-servant.
Every point obtained its due investigation, until the doctrine pleasing to the all-
seeing God, and conducive to unity, was made clear, so that no room should
remain for division or controversy concerning the faith.

“The commemoration of the most sacred paschal feast being then debated,
was unanimously decided, that it would be well that it should be everywhere
celebrated upon the same day. What can be more fair, or more seemly, than that
that festival by which we have received the hope of immortality should be
carefully celebrated by all, on plain grounds, with the same order and
exactitude? It was, in the first place, declared improper to follow the custom of
the Jews in the celebration of this holy festival, because, their hands having been
stained with crime, the minds of these wretched men are necessarily blinded.
By rejecting their custom, we establish and hand down to succeeding ages one
which is more reasonable, and which has been observed ever since the day of
our Lord’s sufferings. Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who
are our adversaries. For we have received from our Saviour another way. A better and more lawful line of conduct is inculcated by our holy religion. Let us with one accord walk therein, my much-honoured brethren, studiously avoiding all contact with that evil way. They boast that without their instructions we should be unable to commemorate the festival properly. This is the highest pitch of absurdity. For how can they entertain right views on any point who, after having compassed the death of the Lord, being out of their minds, are guided not by sound reason, but by an unrestrained passion, wherever their innate madness carries them. Hence it follows that they have so far lost sight of truth, wandering as far as possible from the correct revival, that they celebrate a second Passover in the same year. What motive can we have for following those who are thus confessedly unsound and in dire error? For we could never tolerate celebrating the Passover twice in one year. But even if all these facts did not exist, your own sagacity would prompt you to watch with diligence and with prayer, lest your pure minds should appear to share in the customs of a people so utterly depraved. It must also be borne in mind, that upon so important a point as the celebration of a feast of such sanctity, discord is wrong. One day has our Saviour set apart for a commemoration of our deliverance, namely, of His most holy Passion. One hath He wished His Catholic Church to be, whereof the members, though dispersed throughout the most various parts of the world, are yet nourished by one spirit, that is, by the divine will. Let your pious sagacity reflect how evil and improper it is, that days devoted by some to fasting, should be spent by others in convivial feasting; and that after the paschal feast, some are rejoicing in festivals and relaxations, while others give themselves up to the appointed fasts. That this impropriety should be rectified, and that all these diversities of commemoration should be resolved into one form, is the will of divine Providence, as I am convinced you will all perceive. Therefore, this irregularity must be corrected, in order that we may no more have any thing in common with those parricides and the murderers of our Lord. An orderly and excellent form of commemoration is observed in all the churches of the western, of the southern, and of the northern parts of the world, and by some of the eastern; this form being universally commended, I engaged that you would be ready to adopt it likewise, and thus gladly accept the rule unanimously adopted in the city of Rome, throughout Italy, in all Africa, in Egypt, the Spains, the Gauls, the Britains, Libya, Greece, in the dioceses of Asia, and of Pontus, and in Cilicia, taking into your consideration not only that the churches of the places above-mentioned are greater in point of number, but also that it is most pious that all should unanimously agree in that course which accurate reasoning seems to demand, and which has no single point in common with the perjury of the Jews.

“Briefly to summarize the whole of the preceding, the judgment of all is, that the holy Paschal feast should be held on one and the same day; for, in so holy a matter, it is not becoming that any difference of custom should exist, and it is better to follow the opinion which has not the least association with error and sin. This being the case, receive with gladness the heavenly gift and the plainly divine command; for all that is transacted in the holy councils of the bishops is to be referred to the Divine will. Therefore, when you have made known to all our beloved brethren the subject of this epistle, regard yourselves bound to
accept what has gone before, and to arrange for the regular observance of this holy day, so that when, according to my long-cherished desire, I shall see you face to face, I may be able to celebrate with you this holy festival upon one and the same day; and may rejoice with you all in witnessing the cruelty of the devil destroyed by our efforts, through Divine grace, while our faith and peace and concord flourish throughout the world. May God preserve you, beloved brethren.”

Hence forward Christianity will flex its new found power, while at the same time subjugating Judaism.

Codex Theodosian 16.8.1, October 18 (19), 315 (also Codex Justinian 1.9.3, August 13, 339):

Emperor Constantine Augustus to Evagrius. It is our will that Judeans and their elders and patriarchs shall be informed that if, after the issuance of this law, any of them should dare to attempt to assail with stones or with any other kind of madness—a thing which we have learned is now being done—any person who has fled their feral sect and has resorted to the worship of God, such assailant shall be immediately delivered to the flames and burned, with all his accomplices. Moreover, if any person from the people should betake himself to their nefarious sect and should join their assemblies, he shall sustain with them the deserved punishments. Given on the fiteenth day before the kalends of November at Murgillum [The fourteenth day before the kalends at Milan in Vatic. 273.] in the year of the fourth consulship of Constantine Augustus and Licinius.

Codex Theodosian 16.8.5, October 22, 335:

The same [Constantine] Augustus to Felix, Praetorian Prefect. [After other matters] Judeans shall not be permitted to disturb any man who has been converted from Judaism to Christianity or to assail him with any outrage. Such contumely shall be punished according to the nature of the act which has been committed. [etc.] Given on the eleventh day before the kalends of November at Constantinople. [October 22 (21), 335]. Posted on the eighth day before the ides of May at Carthage in the year of the consulship of Nepotianus and Facundus. [May 8, 336]

Codex Theodosian Sirm 4, October 21, 336; 335:

Emperor Constantine Augustus to Felix, Praetorian Prefect. The very salutary sanction of Our constitution was formerly promulgated which We renew by the veneration of Our repeated law. It is Our will that if any Judean should purchase a Christian slave or a slave of any other sect whatever and should not greatly fear to circumcise such slave, the person thus circumcised shall be rendered master of his freedom by the measures of this statute and shall obtain possession of the privileges thereof. It shall not be permissible for a Judean who has circumcised a slave of the aforesaid class to retain such slave in the service of slavery. For by this same sanction We command that if any Judean should unlock for himself the door of eternal life, should deliver himself to our holy worship, and should choose to be a Christian, he shall not suffer any
disquietude or molestation from the Judeans. If any Judean should suppose that he should assail with outrage any person who has been converted from Judaism to Christianity, it is Our will that as the contriver of such contumely he shall be subjected to avenging punishments in proportion to the nature of the crime which he has committed, O Felix, dearest Father. Wherefore on account of the love of Divine Providence We trust that such a person will be safe in the entire Roman world and that due reverence for Us will be observed. It is Our will that Your Excellent Sublimity by your letters dispatched throughout the diocese that is entrusted to you shall admonish the judges most earnestly to enforce such due reverence. Given on the twelfth day before the kalends of November [October 21, 336; 335]. Posted on the seventh day before the ides of March at Carthage in the year of the consulship of Nepotianus and Facundus. [March 9, 337; 336]

In 365CE we have the Council of Laodicea canon 29: "Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day. Rather, they should be honoring the Lord's Day (Sunday). But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema (against) from Christ".

Sa’id ibn Batriq or Bitriq (also known as Eutychius) was the Christian Melkite patriarch of Alexandria in the 10th century CE. His writings include the chronicle Nazm al-Jauhar ("Row of Jewels"), written in Arabic, also known by its Latin title Eutychii Annales ("The Annals of Eutychius"). Far removed from the fourth century, he preserves a record of a Constantinian dictum against the Jews. Although some of the accuracy of his testimony is doubted by scholars, nevertheless some aspects may be true:

20. The King Constantine gave orders that no Jew should live in Jerusalem or pass through it, and he also ordered to put to death all those who refused to become Christians. [editorial: Eutychius is not credible here. Constantine is not known for having mandated Christianity. Pagan religion remained perfectly legal thru 380 CE; Judaism, also trampled on, was not made illegal. Lastly, Constantine is not known for having banished Jews from Jerusalem.] Many pagans and Jews then embraced the Christian faith and Christianity took root everywhere. It was then told to king Constantine that the Jews had become Christians for fear of being killed but that they continued to follow their religion. The king said: “How will we know?” Paul, the patriarch of Constantinople, said: “The Torah forbids [eating] pork and it is for this reason that the Jews do not eat meat. Order that the throats of pigs be cut, that the meat should be cooked, and fed to the members of this community. In this way you will find that all those who refuse to eat are still tied to their religion.” King Constantine replied. “But if the Torah forbids the pig, why is lawful for us to eat its flesh and make others eat it?” Patriarch Paul replied: “You must know that Christ our Lord, repealed all provisions of the Torah and gave us a new law which is the Gospel. He said in the Holy Gospel: “Not everything that enters the mouth defiles a man (and he meant any food). What defiles a man is just what comes out of his mouth”, i.e. folly and wickedness, and all that is similar to this. The apostle Paul said so in his first letter to the Corinthians: “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is
After Nicaea

...and it is also written in the Acts: “Peter, chief of the Apostles, was in the city of Jaffa in the house of a tanner named Simon. At the sixth hour of the day he went out on the terrace of the house to pray, but a deep sleep fell upon him and saw the sky open. From the sky he saw a mantle descend to earth in which there was every kind of quadruped, wild beasts, flying things and birds of the air, and he heard a voice saying: ‘O Peter, get up, kill and eat.’ Peter replied: ‘O Lord, I have never eaten anything unclean.’ But a second time the voice said: ‘Eat, what God has cleansed you must not consider unclean.’ The voice repeated it three times. Then the mantle was taken back into heaven.” Peter was amazed and wondered what it meant. Because of that vision and because of what Christ our Lord said in the Holy Gospel, Peter and Paul ordered us to eat the flesh of every quadruped and therefore it is not wrong to eat pork or any other animal.”

The king then ordered him to kill the pigs, cook the meat and put it at the doors of the churches in all his kingdom on Easter Sunday. To everyone coming out of the church a bite of pork was given, and those who refused to eat it were killed. Thus it was that many Jews were killed in that circumstance.

Constantine erected a wall around Byzantium and called it Constantinople. This was in his thirtieth year of the reign. Helena, mother of Constantine, died at the age of eighty years. Constantine reigned for thirty-two years and died. He lived in all for sixty-five years. He left three children. The first was given his name, Constantine, he had called the second with the name of his father, Constantius, and the third was called Constans. To Constantine he gave the city of Constantinople, to Constantius Antioch, Syria and Egypt, and Rome to Constans. 1

Note: Bellarmino Bagatti, in *The Church of the Circumcision*, pg 14., interprets Eutychius’ testimony as evidence of persecution against Torah-Observant Jesus followers (eg. Nazarenes, Ebionites, other). He says:

“That there existed strife between the different branches of the faithful [Bagatti means, between Gentile/Pauline vs Torah Observant Jesus Followers, which Bagatti calls “Judeo-Christians”] can easily be gathered from… the late account of Eutychius that just at this time the faithful while they were leaving the church on Easter day, were forced to eat pork under pain of death. We know how the Judaeo-Christians refused this in order not to transgress the Mosaic Law, to which they held they were bound.

This can hardly be the case. The Jews of the above testimony from Eutychius are more to be likened to forced converts to Christianity, exactly in the same vein as the Inquisition’s conversos. Hence it does not constitute evidence of original Jewish Jesus followers. What is however likely is that we are dealing here also with tendencies of...
Pauline Gentiles to also observe Torah-rituals (in the same vein as Paul’s Galatians). We have seen this “problem” also in the early second century, where gross anti-semites like Ignatius of Antioch wish to be legitimized by “taking possession” of Jesus’ Jewish heritage, such as observing the Resurrection three days after the 14th of Nissan (instead of on the neighboring Sunday). None of these groups should be confused with our Torah-Observant Jesus followers, for whom striving to meet God’s Commandments is a pre-requisite for Salvation. 2

At any rate, we shall see that the empire will continue to muster significant energies against Judaizing. Much to the chagrin of Pauline hierarchy, Judaizing, with the inherent dangerous implication of subjecting Roman Law to the judgement of a foreign (i.e. Jewish) culture, is a real viable way to live by Jesus’ teaching (i.e. the teaching that God’s Commandments are sacred, eternal, and necessary to usher-in the Kingdom). Judaizing, that is, the insistence that one can not expect to ask for atonement unless one has striven to do the works of the Commandments, will be a ever present problem within (Pauline) Christianity throughout the next two millennia! And for our “heretical” band of Torah-observant Jesus followers, the Constantinian mindset of the empire will mean only more harassment and clandestinity. For the Jewish community in general, well, we all know what the next 1700 years look like; indignity, oppression, persecution, pogroms, Inquisition, Expulsions, and the hatred that contributed to the Shoah.

By 380 CE the empire will anathemize all other religions:

Theodosius’ edict: It is our pleasure that all nations, which are governed by our clemency and moderation, should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by Peter to the Romans. . . . We authorize the followers of this doctrine to assume the title of Catholic Christians; and as we judge, that all others are extravagant madmen, we brand them with the infamous name of Heretics.

But let us return to the early fourth century. We will see our little communities of Ebionites and Nazoreans (as well as countless “backsliding Judaizing Christians”) continue to irritate the new religion of Rome.

325 CE

Eusebius

Historia Ecclesiastica [HE] /History of the Church) (completed in 324CE):

2 Even modern Seventh-Day Adventists are a good example of Pauline religion (which discards the Commandments being necessary for Salvation) still relying (very selectively) on Sinai Commandments. Why, sometimes even Roman orthodoxy has found it “convenient” to preserve some Torah Laws: Rome encourages Catholics to multiply, harking to the first Noachide Commandment “Thou shalt be fruitful…”, and the concept of tithes (Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22-23,28; 2 Chron.31:5-6.) is highly encouraged in Western Christianity.
HE 3:25.5 (in his list of antilegomena, i.e., writings whose canonicity was disputed): And among them some have placed the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* which is the especial delight of those of the Hebrews who have accepted Christ.

HE Ch 3:27: The spirit of wickedness, being unable to shake some in their love of Christ, yet finding them susceptible to impressions in other respects, brought them over to his purposes. These are properly called Ebionites by the ancients, as those who cherished low and average opinions of Christ. For they considered him a plain and common man, and justified only by his advances in virtue, and that he was born of the Virgin Mary [here it is Eusebius who calls Mary a Virgin, not the Ebionites] *by natural generation* [i.e. not thru a virginal birth] . With them the observance of the law was altogether necessary, as if they could not be saved only by faith in Christ and a corresponding life. Others, however, besides these, but of the same name [Ebionim], indeed avoided the absurdity of the opinions maintained by the former, not denying that the Lord was born of the Virgin by the Holy Ghost, and yet in like manner not acknowledging his pre-existence, though he was God, the Word and Wisdom, they turned aside into the same irreligion, as with the former they showed great zeal to observe the ritual service of the Law. These indeed thought on the one hand that all the epistles of the apostles ought to be rejected, calling him [Paul, the author of the majority of the NT epistles] an apostate from the Law, but on the other hand only using the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, they esteem the others as of but little value. They also observe the Sabbath and other discipline of the Jews, just like them, but on the other hand, they also celebrate the Lord’s days very much like us, in commemoration of his resurrection. Whence, in consequence of such a course, they have also received their epithet, the name of Ebionites, exhibiting the poverty of their intellect. For it is thus that the Hebrews call a poor man.

As already mentioned, in HE 3:39.16, speaking of the early writer Papias, Eusebius refers to a “Gospel of the Hebrews”: *He [Papias] has also set forth another story, about a woman accused of many sins before the Lord*, which the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* also contains.

Eusebius, *Theophania / Teophany* (preserved in Syriac):

4.12 (On Matthew 10:34-36): …as we have found somewhere in the *Gospel which the Jews have in the Hebrew tongue*, where it is said: “I choose for myself them that are good (or well pleasing): the good are they whom my Father which in heaven gives (or has given) me.”

22 (On Matthew 25:14-15, a passage preserved in Syriac and Greek also): *But since the Gospel written in Hebrew characters which has reached our hands turns the threat not against the man who hid the talent, but against him who had lived riotously* (for it told of three servants, one who devoured his master's substance with harlots and flute-girls, another who multiplied it by trading, and another
who hid the talent; and made the one to be accepted, another only rebuked, and another to be shut up in prison), the question occurs to me whether in Matthew, after the conclusion of the speech against the man who did nothing, the threat that follows may refer, not to him, but by epanalepsis (i.e. taking up a former subject again) be said of the first, who ate and drank with the drunken.

325 CE, Mount Zion

Eusebius, in Historia Ecclesiastica Book 7, Ch 19, tells us that in Jerusalem the local assembly of Jesus followers still keeps James’ seat. Eusebius speaks in the present tense, thus showing that as of his time, we find our Original Jesus Movement people (Eusebius calls them “the brethren who have followed Christ in succession”) in Jerusalem (presumably at Mount Zion).

The chair of James, who first received the episcopate of the church at Jerusalem from the Saviour himself and the apostles, and who, as the divine records show, was called a brother of Christ, has been preserved until now, the brethren who have followed him in succession there exhibiting clearly to all the reverence which both those of old times and those of our own day maintained and do maintain for holy men on account of their piety. So much as to this matter.

Having said this, Eusebius is not without contempt of the Jerusalem-based community. As we would expect, he finds them too attached to expectations here on Earth:

Eikologae Propheticae 4:13 How simple-minded and almost ridiculous is the opinion of those, who in a material sense expect that a stone of those, which are held to be very perfect and most praise-worthy, will be inserted into the foundation of the real Sion by the action of the Lord himself and whoever shall put his trust in that stone will not be confounded as prophesied. Hence, while objecting to such foolish Jewish stories, which the Apostle [Paul, Colossians 2:18] calls myths, we accept the prophecies as worthy of God and divinely inspired. For he [Isaiah 28:16] says: ‘Behold, I place a stone into the foundation of Sion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: He who believes will not be in haste.’

The passage also tells us that the Jerusalem community is not only active at the time of Eusebius, but in fact quite proud of their Mount Zion synagogue, particularly the stones that had been used to build it. As we remarked before, the eastern wall shows to this day the Herodian stones that the community used to build the synagogue, upon their return to Jerusalem in 73 CE.

The reason why the Jerusalem community held on to James’ name and held on to the pedigree of their Mount Zion synagogue’s construction should be evident by now: Thru James (and the succession of Jesus’ Davidic relatives) the community is living out

---

the reestablishment of the Messianic House of David, physically on Mount Zion as called for by prophecy. This vision is expressed variously throughout the Prophets; a few examples can suffice:

Micah 4:1-2: In days to come the mountain of YH-H’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Amos 9:11-12: On that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name, says YH-H who does this.

333, Eretz Israel

The Pilgrim of Bordeaux (travelled to the Holy Land 333 CE)

The Pilgrim of Bordeaux travelled from Bordeaux to Jerusalem and back (including Rome on his return to Bordeaux). He or she gives us a fascinating glimpse of the sites that were considered established places of biblical import. In particular, the Pilgrim is a witness to the brand new construction impetus in Jerusalem, as the Empire begins its new Christian era, under Constantine. We have included the full text of the journey thru the Holy Land, and will comment on topics of import for our main purpose.
City of Caesarea Palaestinae (Kaisarieh), that is, Judaea - miles viii.

Total from Tyre to Caesarea Palaestina 73 miles, 2 changes, 3 halts.

Here is the bath [balneus] of Cornelius the centurion who gave many alms [See Acts 10:2; 47-48].
At the third milestone from thence is the mountain Syna, where there is a fountain, in which, if a woman bathes, she becomes pregnant.

City of Maximianopolis - miles xviii.
City of Stradela (Jezreel, Zerin) - miles x.

Here reigned King Ahab, and here Helias prophesied [1 Kings 17]. Here is the field in which David slew Goliath [Ayn Jalud ?, see 1Sam 17:49-51].

City of Scythopolis [Bethshean, Beisan] - miles xii.
[587] Aser [Teyasir] , where was the house of Job - miles vi.
City of Neapolis [Nablus] - miles xv.

Here is the Mount Gerizim. Here the Samaritans say that Abraham offered sacrifice [Mount Moriah], and one reaches the top of the mountain by steps, three hundred in number. Beyond this, at the foot of the mountain itself, is a place called Sichem. Here is a tomb in which Joseph is laid, in the 'parcel of ground' which Jacob his father gave to him [Jos 24:32]. From thence Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, was carried off by the children of the Amorites [Gen 34:1-31]. A mile from thence is a place named Sichar, from which the woman of Samaria came down to the same place in which Jacob dug the well, to draw water from it, and our Lord Jesus Christ talked with her [John 4:1-42]; in which place are plane-trees, which Jacob planted, and a bath [balneus – baptistery] which is supplied with water from the well.

Twenty-eight miles from thence on the left hand, as one goes towards Jerusalem, is a village named Bethar [Bethel, Beitin] . A mile from thence is the place where Jacob slept when he was journeying into Mesopotamia [Gen 28:10-22] , and here is the almond tree; here Jacob saw the vision and the angel wrestled with him [Gen 32:22-32]. Here was King Jeroboam when the prophet was sent to him, that he should turn himself to the Most High God; and the prophet was ordered not to eat bread with the false prophet whom the king had with him, and because he was beguiled by the false prophet and ate bread with him, as he was returning a lion fell upon the prophet on the way and slew him [1Kings 13:1-34] .

Thence to Jerusalem - miles xii.

Total from Caesarea Palaestina to Jerusalem 116 miles, 4 halts, 4 changes.

There are in Jerusalem two large pools [piscinae] at the side of the temple, that is, one upon the right hand, and one upon the left, which were made by Solomon; and further in the city are twin pools, with five porticoes, which are called Bethsaida [John 5:2-18] . There persons who have been sick for many years are cured; the pools contain water which is red when it is disturbed.
The twin pools of Betzatha (called also Probatica, Bethesda, and Bethsaida) were a prominent topographic element of the Jerusalem landscape, mentioned by many 4th century authors. Cyril of Jerusalem explains the presence of five porticoes (Omily on the paralytic of the Probatica - ca. 448 AD) with these words: "four porticoes were built all around, and the fifth stood in between". A Christian basilica, resting on a row of huge pillars, was erected in the 5th century over the twin pools. 

[http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/pilgr/bord/10Bord07aPcts.html]

There is also here a crypt, in which Solomon used to torture devils.

Here is also the corner of [590] an exceeding high tower, where our Lord ascended and the tempter said to Him, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.' . And the Lord answered, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, but him only shalt thou serve.' [Matt 4:1-11] . There is a great corner-stone, of which it was said, 'The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.' [Matt 21:42, Ps 118:22].
The Pinnacle of the Temple is identified, by many Jerusalem guides, in the southeastern corner of the Haram al-Sharif ("the noble precinct"). The lower portion of this corner is part of the Herodian Temple of Jerusalem (destroyed by the Roman army in 70 AD). Many stones of enormous size can be seen, some of them reach the estimated weight of 100 tons. At the times of the anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux, two statues of the Emperor Hadrian were standing in the center of the sacred precinct. [http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/pilgr/bord/10Bord07aPcts.html]

Under the pinnacle of the tower are many rooms, and here was Solomon's palace. There also is the chamber in which he sate and wrote the [Book of] Wisdom; this chamber is covered with a single stone. There are also large subterranean reservoirs for water and pools constructed with great labour. And [591] in the building itself, where stood the temple which Solomon built, they say that the blood of Zacharias [Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51] which was shed upon the stone pavement before the altar remains to this day. There are also to be seen the marks of the nails in the shoes of the soldiers who slew him, throughout the whole enclosure, so plain that you would think they were impressed upon wax. There are two statues of Hadrian, and not far from the statues there is a perforated stone [this of course is none other than the perforated stone that lays on top of the “cave of the souls” in today’s Haram Al Shariff, which used to be the Holy of Holies. See current photo, below] , to which the Jews come every year and anoint it, bewail themselves with groans, rend their garments, and so depart.
The Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhra). Bird’s eye view of the rock from the interior. There is almost unanimity in maintaining that this Islamic shrine is built on the exact spot where once stood the Holy of Holiest in the Jewish temple. A cave, the opening of which is seen on the rock surface, may be identified with the perforated stone mentioned in the pilgrim’s account. A Roman imperial decree barred Jews from living in Jerusalem, as a result they used to return once a year to bewail bitterly on the destruction of their nation. [http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/pilgr/bord/10Bord07aPcts.html]

There also is the house of Hezekiah King of Judah. Also as you come out of Jerusalem to go up Mount Sion, on the left hand, below in the valley, beside the wall, is a pool which is called Siloe [John 9:1-11] and has four porticoes; and there is another large pool outside it. This spring runs for six days and nights, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, it does not run at all, either by day or by night [the source of Gihon, which feeds the Siloe spring, is known for its intermittent, if not weekly resting, flow]. On this side one goes up Sion, and sees where the house of Caiaphas the priest was [see Mt 26:57-68], and there still stands a column against which Christ was beaten with rods. Within, however, inside the wall of Sion, is seen the place where was David's palace. Of seven synagogues which once were there, one alone remains; the rest are ploughed over and sown upon, as said Isaiah the prophet [Is 1:2.4-8; Michah 3:9-12].

From thence as you go out of the wall of Sion, as you walk towards the gate of Neapolis, towards the right, below in the valley, are walls, where was the house or prætorium of Pontius Pilate [Matt 27:11-31]. Here our Lord was tried before His passion. On the left hand is the little hill of Golgotha where the Lord was crucified [Matt 27:33-37]. [594] About a stone's throw from thence is a vault [crypta] wherein His body was laid, and rose again on the third day [Matt 27:57-60; 28:1-10]. There, at present, by the command of the Emperor Constantine [iussu Constantini], has been built a basilica, that is to say, a church [dominicum] of
wondrous beauty, having at the side reservoirs [excepturia] from which water is raised, and a bath behind in which infants are washed [baptized].

The city of Jerusalem, as rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian in 135 AD and enriched by several Christian Buildings during the Byzantine period, is represented in the 6th century Madaba Mosaic Map (found in Jordan in 1897). In the detail is shown the Constantinian basilica of the Holy Sepulcher. The Complex starts from the main colonnaded street and is composed of different parts: (1) A rectangular basilica called Martyrium, built where Constantine's mother Helena found “the true cross”. (2) A square atrium called Triporticus, in whose southeast corner the rock of Golgotha stood in the open air. (3) A round mausoleum called Anastasis (Greek for Resurrection) where the empty tomb of Jesus was the center of the pilgrims' devotion.

[http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/pilgr/bord/10Bord07aPcts.html]
Also, as one goes from Jerusalem to the gate which is to the eastward, in order to ascend the Mount of Olives, is the valley called that of Josaphat. Towards the left, where are vineyards, is a stone at the place where Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ [Matt 26,36-50]; on the [595] right is a palm-tree,
branches of which the children carried off and strewed in the way when Christ came [Matt 31:8]. Not far from thence, about a stone's-throw, are two notable tombs of wondrous beauty; in the one, which is a true monolith, lies Isaiah the prophet, and in the other Hezekiah, King of the Jews.

From thence you ascend to the Mount of Olives, where before the Passion, the Lord taught His disciples [Matt 24-25]. There by the orders of Constantine a basilica of wondrous beauty has been built. Not far from thence is the little hill which the Lord ascended to pray, when he took Peter [596] and John with Him, and Moses and Elias were beheld [Matt 17:1-8].

A mile and a half to the eastward is the village called Bethany. There is a vault [crypta] in which Lazarus, whom the Lord raised, was laid [John 11:1-44].

From Jerusalem to Jericho - miles xviii.

The area of Jericho (Ἰεριχώ), with its many shrines, is presented in full detail in the 6th century Madaba Mosaic map. At the top we see the river Jordan flowing into the Dead Sea. On its left shore is Bethabara (Βηθαβάρα) with the church of St. John the Forerunner built on the traditional site of the Baptism of Jesus. In another church, in Galgala Γάλγαλα (centre - left), the twelve stones (δώδεκακόλιθον) taken from the Jordan are shown. At the bottom, a small river flows from the fountain of Elisha (left) to water the city of Jericho, visible among the palm trees.

On the right hand side, as one descends from the mount, behind a tomb, is the sycamore tree into which Zacchaeus climbed that he might see Christ [Luke 19:1-10]. A mile-and-a-half from the town is the fountain of Elisha. Formerly if any woman drank of it she did not bear children. Beside it lies an earthenware vessel. Elisha threw salt into it, and came and stood over the fountain and said, 'Thus saith the Lord, I have cleansed these waters, and if any woman drink of this fountain she shall bear children.' [2Kings 2,1-22].
Above the same fountain [597] is the house of the harlot Rahab, to whom the spies came, and she hid them [Jos 2:1-21] , and alone was saved when Jericho was destroyed. Here stood the city of Jericho, round whose walls the children of Israel circled with the Ark of the Covenant, and the walls fell down [Jos 6:1-25]. Nothing is to be seen of it except the place where the Ark of the Covenant stood, and the twelve stones [Greek: dodekalython] which the children of Israel brought out of Jordan [Jos 4:1-24]. There Jesus, the son of Nave [Joshua the son of Nun], circumcised the children of Israel and buried their foreskins [Jos 5:2-9].

From Jericho to the Dead sea - miles ix.

The water of it is very bitter, and in it there is no kind of fish whatever, nor any vessel; and if a man casts himself into it in order to swim, the water turns him over.

[598] From thence to the Jordan, where the Lord was baptized by John [Matt 3:13-17] - miles v.

There is a place by the river, a little hill upon the further (left) bank, from which Elijah was caught up into heaven [2Kings 2:1-15].

From Jerusalem going to Bethlehem - miles vi.

On the road, on the right hand, is a tomb, in which lies Rachel, the wife of Jacob [Gen 35:16-20; Matt 2:16-18].

[http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/pilgr/bord/10Bord07aPcts.html]
Two miles from thence, on the left hand, is Bethlehem, where our Lord Jesus Christ was born [Matt 2:18-25; Luke 2:1-7]. A basilica has been built there by the orders of Constantine.

[http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/pilgr/bord/10Bord07aPcts.html]

Mosaic floor in the Constantinian basilica of Bethlehem. Excavations carried out by the British Mandatory Government in 1934-1935 brought to light the remains of the 4th century basilica some 30/70cm below the level of the floor of the present church. Above the sacred Grotto, traditionally indicated as that in which Jesus was born from the Virgin Mary, he built an octagonal monument against which abutted on the western side a colonnaded basilica.

Not far from thence is the tomb of Ezekiel, Asaph, Job, Jesse, David, and Solomon, whose names are inscribed in Hebrew letters upon the wall as you go down into the vault itself.


There is the fountain in which Philip baptized the eunuch [Acts 8:26-40].

Thence to Terebinthus [Mamre, Ramet el-Khalil] - miles viii.
Here Abraham dwelt, and dug a well under a terebinth tree, and spoke with angels, and ate food with them [Gen 18:1-14]. Here a basilica of wondrous beauty has been built by the command of Constantine.

From Terebinthus [Ramet el-Khalil] to Hebron [el-Khalil] - miles ii.

Here is a monument [memoria] of square form built of stone of wondrous beauty, in which lie Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Rebecca, and Leah [Gen 23:1-19; 25:7-10; 49:29-43].

384
History of the Original Jesus Movement

Aerial view of the Haram (sacred precinct) of Hebron. The Arabic name of the town "Al-Khalil" means "the intimate friend (of God)". The main wall is still standing as it was some two thousands years ago when it was built, yet some elements should be considered as later additions. The mosque (formerly a church) now occupies half of the internal space, minarets rise in two opposite corners, and a crenellation shows up on the external walls. Six stone monuments, fully clothed with colored drapes, commemorate the Fathers and Mothers of the Jewish, Christian, and Moslem Faiths: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Rebecca, and Leah.

[http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/pilgr/bord/10Bord07aPcts.html]

From Jerusalem as follows:

City of Nicopolis [Amwas] - miles xxii.
City of Lydda [Ludd] - miles x.
Change at Antipatris [Ras el-Ain] - miles x.
Change at Betthar [Tirch] - miles x.
City of Caesarea [Kaisarich] - miles xvi.

Total from Constantinople to Jerusalem 1,159 miles, 69 changes, 58 halts.


Epiphanius of Salamis (wrote ca 375 CE thru ca 400 CE)

We have already called out Epiphanius’ testimony that the Movement returned to Zion from Pella, after the war of 70CE, and that during Hadrian’s Jerusalem visit in 135CE (after the Second War), Aquila (Hadrian’s appointee to rebuild Jerusalem as “Aelia Capitolina”) encountered the Jesus people there. Epiphanius’ testimony tells us that as of the time of Constantine (325CE) they were still there:
Epiphanius' *On Weights and Measures* 14-15: He [Emperor Hadrian, in his visit of 130CE] found the entire city devastated and the temple of God trampled down, except for a few houses and the church of God, which was small, where the disciples, after they returned when the savior was taken up from the Mount of Olives, went up to the upper room. For there it had been built, that is, in the part of Zion that was kept from the destruction, and the blocks of houses around Zion itself, and seven synagogues, which stood alone like huts, one of which remained until the time of Maximona the bishop [350 CE] and Constantine the king, "like a booth in a vineyard," as it is written. 4

It is of interest that Epiphanius, writing ca 400CE, only considers the Upper Room assembly to have existed only thru 350 CE. As we shall see from Jerome (writing early fifth century), the community will still be found active there during Jerome’s time. Perhaps the community DID continue to exist thru Epiphanius’ time (375-400CE), but Epiphanius considers it apostacized, that is “gone from the fold”, due to its Jewish leanings.

Epiphanius' *On Weights and Measures* 14-15: He [Emperor Hadrian, in his visit of 130CE] found the entire city devastated and the temple of God trampled down, except for a few houses and the church of God, which was small, where the disciples, after they returned when the savior was taken up from the Mount of Olives, went up to the upper room. For there it had been built, that is, in the part of Zion that was kept from the destruction, and the blocks of houses around Zion itself, and seven synagogues, which stood alone like huts, one of which remained until the time of Maximona the bishop [350 CE] and Constantine the king, "like a booth in a vineyard," as it is written. 4

It is of interest that Epiphanius, writing ca 400CE, only considers the Upper Room assembly to have existed only thru 350 CE. As we shall see from Jerome (writing early fifth century), the community will still be found active there during Jerome’s time. Perhaps the community DID continue to exist thru Epiphanius’ time (375-400CE), but Epiphanius considers it apostacized, that is “gone from the fold”, due to its Jewish leanings.

Hilarius Bishop of Poitiers (died 368CE)

Hilarius Bishop of Poitiers, On the Trinity, Book VII, Ch. 3:

If I undertake to tell how the Son of God was born from Mary, Photinus, the Ebion of our day, will be prompt to twist this assertion of the truth into a confirmation of his lie.

Hilarius Bishop of Poitiers, On the Trinity, Book VII Ch 7:

Again, how glorious a victory for our faith is that in which Ebion—in other words, Photinus—both wins the day and loses it! He castigates Sabellius for denying that the Son of God is Man, and in his turn has to submit to the reproaches of Arian fanatics for failing to see that this Man is the Son of God. Against Sabellius he calls the Gospels to his aid, with their evidence concerning the Son of Mary; Arius deprives him of this ally by proving that the Gospels make Christ something more than the Son of Mary. Sabellius denies that there is a Son of God; against him Photinus elevates man to the place of Son. Photinus will hear nothing of a Son born before the worlds; against him, Arius denies that the only birth of the Son of God was His human birth. Let them defeat one another to their hearts' content, for every victory which each of them wins is balanced by a defeat. Our present adversaries are ranted in the matter of the Divine nature of the Son; Sabellius in the matter of the Son's revealed existence; Photinus is convicted of ignorance, or else of falsehood, in his denial of the Son's birth before the worlds. Meanwhile the Church, whose faith is based upon the teaching of Evangelists and Apostles, holds fast, against Sabellius, her assertion that the Son exists; against Arius, that He is God by nature; against Photinus,

that **He created the universe.** And she is the more convinced of her faith, in that they cannot combine to contradict it. For Sabellius points to the works of Christ in proof of the Divinity of Him Who wrought them, though he knows not that the Son was their Author. The Arians grant Him the name of Son, though they confess not that the true nature of God dwelt in Him. Photinus maintains His manhood, though in maintaining it he forgets that Christ was born as God before the worlds. Thus, in their several assertions and denials, there are points in which each heresy is in the right in defence or attack; and the result of their conflicts is that the truth of our confession is brought into clearer light.

### 360-370, Edessa

Ephrem the Syrian, born 306CE in Roman-ruled Nisibis (slightly west of the northern part of the Tigris river, modern day Turkey), grew under the tutelage of Jacob, second (orthodox / Nicene) Christian Bishop of Nisibis; left for Edessa when Nisibis was conquered by Sassanid Persian King Shapur II in 363CE

Ephrem comments that orthodox Nicene Christians were simply called "Palutians" in Edessa, after a former bishop. Arians, Marcionites, Manichees, Bardaisanites, and various gnostic sects proclaimed themselves as the true Christians, all of which Ephrem considers heretical. There is no mention of ebionites or Nazarenes.

### 380-390, Jerusalem

Epiphanius (born 310 in Judea, died 403, wrote late fourth century)

From Epiphanius' descriptions in *Panarion - Adversus Haereses* (Medicine Chest - Against Heresies), written ca. 375 CE, when Nazarenes and Ebionites had already existed for more than three hundred years, it can be determined that they were very much alive in Epiphanius' time. Epiphanius confirms them being very dependent upon the Jewish world and its traditions, rejecting antinomianism, and having a "low" Christology, rejecting the Christian Trinity, and any equality between Jesus and God.

Epiphanius gave this description of the Nazarenes in *Panarion* Ch 29:

29.4.9 ... I have come to the topic of the reason why those who had come to faith in Christ were called Jessaeans before they were called Christians, we said that Jesse was the father of David. And they had been named Jessaeans, either because of this Jesse, or from the name of our Lord Jesus since, being his disciples, they were derived from Jesus. ... In any case, they received this name before they were called Christians. It was in Antioch, as I have mentioned before, that the disciples and the whole church of God began to be called Christians. 5.1 *If you enjoy study and have read the passage about them (the
Jesseans) in Philo’s historical writings, in his book entitled "Jesseans" [peri Iessaion / περὶ Ἰεσσαίων], you can find that in giving his account of their way of life and their hymns and describing their monasteries in the vicinity of the Marean marsh, Philo described none other than Christians. [editorial: Obviously Epiphanius likes to think of the Jesseans, original followers of Jesus, as being of his own, Pauline persuasion, hence is quite happy to call them “Christians” here. As a separate point, one must question the entire association to any type of Jesus followers, made here by Epiphanius, because Philo wrote thru the mid-late forties CE. Therefore the community that Philo is referring to would have formed much earlier (at least one or two decades prior?). The probability that Jesus groups would have formed in Egypt by the mid thirties is highly unlikely.] For when he visited the area - that place is called Mareotis - and was entertained by them at their monasteries in the region, he was edified. ... 5.4 So when they were called Jessaeans then shortly after the Savior's ascension and after Mark had preached in Egypt, in those times certain other persons, supposed followers of the apostles, seceded in their turn. I mean the Nazoreans, whom I am discussing here. They were Jewish, were attached to the Law, and had circumcision. 5.5 But it was as though people had viewed fire under a misapprehension. Not understanding why, or for what use, the persons who had kindled this fire were doing it - either to cook their rations with the fire, or burn some dead trees and brush, which are usually destroyed by fire - they kindled fire too, in imitation, and set themselves ablaze. 5.6 For by hearing just Jesus' name, and seeing the miracles performed by the hands of the apostles, they came to faith in Jesus themselves. And since they found that he had been conceived at Nazareth and brought up in Joseph's home, and for this reason is called "Jesus the Nazorean" in the Gospel - as the apostles say, "Jesus the Nazorean [Ἰησοῦς τὸν Ναζωραῖον / Iesous ton Nazoraion], a man approved by signs and wonders", and so on - they adopted this name, so as to be called Nazoreans [Ναζωραῖος / Nazoraious]. 5.7 Not "Nazirites" [Ναζιραῖος / Naziraious] - that means "consecrated persons". Anciety this rank belonged to firstborn sons and men who had been dedicated to God.

29.7.1: But these sectarians... did not call themselves Christians--but "Nazoreans," ... However they are simply complete Jews. They use not only the New Testament but the Old Testament as well, as the Jews do... They have no different ideas, but confess everything exactly as the Law proclaims it and in the Jewish fashion - except for their belief in Messiah, if you please! For they acknowledge both the resurrection of the dead and the divine creation of all things, and declare that God is one, and that his son is Jesus the Christ. They are trained to a nicety in Hebrew. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets, and the... Writings... are read in Hebrew, as they surely are by the Jews. They are different from the Jews, and different from Christians, only in the following. They disagree with Jews because they have come to faith in Christ; but since they are still fettered by the Law - circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest - they are not in accord with Christians.... they are nothing but Jews.... They have the Good News according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew. For it is clear that they still preserve this, in the Hebrew alphabet, as it was originally written.
This sect of the Nazoreans is to be found in Beroea near Coele-syria, in the Decapolis near Pella, and in Bashanitis at the place called Cocabe, Kochabe in Hebrew. For that was its place of origin since all the disciples had settled in Pella after their remove from Jerusalem - Christ having told them to abandon Jerusalem and withdraw from it because of the siege it was about to undergo. And they settled in Peraea for this reason and, as I said, lived their lives there. It was from this that the Nazorean sect had its origin.

But they too are wrong to boast of circumcision, and persons like themselves are still "under a curse", since they can not fulfill the Law. For how will they be able to fulfill the Law's provision, "Three times per year you shall appear before the LORD your God, at the feasts of Unleavened Bread, Tabernacles, and Pentecost", on the site of Jerusalem? For since the site is closed off, and the Law's provisions cannot be fulfilled, it must be plain to anyone with sense that Christ came to be the fulfiller of the Law ... and to lift the curse that had been pronounced on transgression of the Law. For after Moses had given every commandment he came to the end of the book and "included the whole in a curse" by saying: "Cursed is he that continues not in all the words that are written in this book to do them".

In this Sect too, my brief discussion will be enough. People like these are refutable at once and easy to cure-or rather, they are nothing but Jews themselves. To the Jews they are very much enemies. Not only do Jewish people bear hatred against them; they even stand up at dawn, at midday, and toward evening, three times a day when they recite their prayers in the synagogues, and curse and anathemize them - saying three times a day, "God curse the Nazoreans". For they harbor a further grudge against them, if you please, because despite their Jewish origin, they preach that Jesus is the Christ - something that is the opposite of those who are still Jews and have not accepted Jesus. They have the Gospel according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew. For it is clear that they still preserve this as it was originally written, in the Hebrew alphabet. But I do not know whether they have also excised the genealogies from Abraham till Christ.

Panarion Ch 30 (On the Ebionites):

Ebionites are very like the Cerinthians and Nazoraeans; the sect of the Sampsaeans and Elkasaites was associated with them to a degree.

For this Ebion was contemporary with the Jews and ... he was derived from them. In the first place, he said that Christ was conceived by sexual intercourse and the seed of a man, Joseph. ...his adherence to Judaism's Law of the Sabbath, circumcision, and all the other Jewish and Samaritan observances. But like the Samaritans he goes still further than the Jews. He added the rule about taking care not to touch a gentile; and that every day, if a man has been with a woman and has left her, he must immerse himself in water. ... Moreover, if he should meet anyone while returning from his immersion and bath in the water, he runs back again for another immersion, often even with his clothes on.
This sect now forbids celibacy and continence altogether, as do other sects which are like it. For at one time they prided themselves on virginity, presumably because James the Lord's brother, and thus address their treatises to "elders and virgins". Their origin came after the fall of Jerusalem. For since practically all who had come to faith in Christ had settled in Peraea then, in Pella, a town in the Decapolis the Gospel mentions, which is near Batanea and Bashanitis - as they had moved there then and were living there, this provided an opportunity for Ebion. And as far as I know, he first lived in a village called Cocabe in the district of Qarnaim - also called Ashtaroth - in Bashanitis. There he began his evil teaching - the place, if you please, where the aforementioned Nazoreans came from. For since Ebion was connected with them and they with him, each party shared its own wickedness with the other. Each also differed from the other to some extent, but they emulated each other in malice. ...

And at first, as I said, Ebion declared that Christ is the offspring of a man, that is Joseph. For a while now, however, various of his followers have been giving conflicting accounts of Christ, as though they have decided on something untenable and impossible themselves. 3.2 But I think it may be since they were joined by Elkasai - the false prophet that I mentioned in the tracts on "Sampsaeans", "Ossenes", and "Elkasaites" - that they tell an imaginary story about Christ and the Holy Spirit as he did. 3.3 For some of them even say that Adam is the Christ - the man who was formed first and infused with God's breath. 3.4 But others among them say that he is from above; created before all things, a spirit both higher than the angels and Lord of all; and that he is called Christ, the heir of the world there. But he comes when he chooses, as he came in Adam and appeared to the patriarchs clothed with Adam's body. And in the last days the same Christ who had come to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, came and donned Adam's body, and appeared to men, was crucified, rose and ascended. 3.6 But again, when they choose to, they say "No!, the Spirit, that is the Christ, came to him and put on the man called Jesus. And they get all giddy from making different suppositions about him at different times. 3.7 They too [like the Nazoreans] accept the Gospel according to Matthew. Like the Cerinthians and Merinthians, they too use it alone. They call it "According to the Hebrews", and it is true to say that only Matthew expounded and preached the Gospel in the Hebrew language and alphabet in the New Testament.

Now in what they call a Gospel according to Matthew, though it is not the entire Gospel but is corrupt and mutilated - and they call this thing "Hebrew"! - the following passage is found: "There was a certain man named Jesus, and he was about thirty years of age, who chose us. And coming to Capernaum he entered into the house of Simon surnamed Peter, and opened his mouth and said 13.3 'Passing beside the Sea of Tiberias I chose John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and Simon and Andrew and [Philip and Bartholomew, James son of Alphaeus and Thomas] Thaddaeus [Θαδδαίος / Thaddaios], Simon the Zealot [Σίμωνα τὸν Ζηλωτὴν / Simona ton Zeloten], and Judas Iscariot [Ιούδαν τὸν
Ἰσκαρίωτον / Ioudan ton Iskarioton. You too, Matthew, seated at the receipt of custom, did I call and you did follow me. I will then that you be twelve apostles for a testimony to Israel'. And "John came bathing, and there went out unto him Pharisees and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. And John had a garment of camel's hair, and a girdle of skin about his loins. And his meat", it says, "was wild honey, whose taste was the taste of manna, as a cake in oil". This, if you please, to turn the account of the truth into falsehood, and substitute "a cake ἐγκρίδα / Egkrida in honey" for "locusts" ἀκρίδων / Akridon! 13.6 But the beginning of their Gospel is "It came to pass in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, in the high-priesthood of Caiaphas, that a certain man, John by name, came baptizing with the baptism of repentance [μετανοίας / metanoias] in the river Jordan, and he was said to be of the lineage of Aaron the priest, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and all went out unto him". 13.7 And after saying a good deal it adds, "When the people had been baptized Jesus came also and was baptized of John. And as he came up out of the water the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy Spirit [πνεύμα τὸ ἅγιον / pneuma to hagion] in the form of a dove [περιστεράς / peristeras] which descended and entered into him. And there came a voice from heaven saying, ‘You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased’, and again, ‘This day I have begotten you’. And straightaway a great light shone around about the place. Seeing this", it says, "John said unto him, 'Who are you, Lord?', and again there came a voice to him from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' 13.8 And then ”, it says, “John fell down before him and said, ‘I pray thee, Lord, you baptize me’). But he forbade him saying 'Let it alone for this it is to be fulfilled.' " .... They maintain that Jesus is really a man, as I said, but that Christ, who descended in the form of a dove, had entered him...

30.14.4-5 : For since they wish Jesus to be in reality a man, as I have said before, Christ came in him having descended in the form of a dove and was joined to him (as already we have found among other heresies also), and became the Christ from God above, but Jesus was born from the seed of man and woman.

30.15.1 But they use certain other books as well - supposedly the so-called "Travels of Peter" [Periodoi Petrou] written by Clement [of Rome, died 99CE and was a overseer of the Christian community of Rome] Chapter Note 1, though they corrupt their contents while leaving a few genuine passages. 15.2 Clement himself convicts them of this in every way in his general epistles which are read in the holy churches...

30.15.3 In the Travels, they have changed everything to suit themselves and slandered Peter in many ways, saying that he was baptized daily for purification as they are. And they say that he abstained from flesh and dressed meat as they do, and any other dish made from meat - since both Ebion himself, and
Ebionites, entirely abstain from these. 15.4 When you ask one of them why they do not eat meat, having no explanation they answer foolishly and say, "Since it is a product of the congress and intercourse of bodies, we do not eat it". Thus, according to their own foolish regurgitations, they are wholly abominable themselves, since they are the results of the intercourse of a man and a woman.

30.16.1 They too receive baptism, apart from their daily baptisms. And they celebrate supposed mysteries from year to year in imitation of the sacred mysteries of the church [eucharist], using unleavened bread - and the other part of the mystery with water ONLY [not wine].

30.16.4-5: They do not say that he was born of God the Father, but that he was created as one of the archangels, that he rules both the angels and all those things created by the Almighty, and he came and gave instructions to abolish sacrifices as the gospel which they recognize contains the provision that "I came to abolish sacrifices, and unless you cease sacrificing, my anger will not cease from you". These and such like them are their deceitful conceptions.

30.16.6 They speak of other Acts of Apostles in which there is much thoroughly impious material, and from them arm themselves against the truth in deadly earnest. 16.7 They lay down certain ascents and instructions in the supposed "Ascents of James" [Anabathmoi lakoobou] Chapter Note 2, as though he were giving orders against the temple and sacrifices, and the fire on the altar - and much else that is full of nonsense. 16.8 Nor are they ashamed to accuse Paul here with certain fabrications of their false apostles' villany and imposture. They say that he was Tarsean (which he admits himself and does not deny), and they suppose that the was of Greek parentage, taking the occasion for this from the (same) passage because of his frank statement, "I am a man of Tarsus, a citizen of mean city". 16.9 They then claim that he was Greek and the son of a Greek mother and Greek father, but that he had gone up to Jerusalem, stayed there for a while, desired to marry a daughter of the hight priest, and had therefore become a proselyte and been circumcised. but since he still could not marry that sort of girl he became angry and wrote against circumcision, and against the Sabbath and the Law.

30.17.1 But he is making a completely false accusation, this horrid serpent with his poverty of understanding. For "Ebion", translated from Hebrew to Greek, means "poor". For truly he is poor, un understanding, hope, and actuality, since he regards Christ as a mere man, and thus has come to hope in him with poverty of faith. 17.2 They themselves, if you please, boastfully claim that they are poor because they sold their possessions in the apostles' time and laid them at the apostles' feet, and went over to a life of poverty and renunciation; and thus, they say, they are called "poor" by everyone. 17.3 But there is no truth to this claim of their either; he was really named Ebion. I suppose the poor wretch was named prophetically by his father and mother.

30.18.1 Ebion too preached in Asia and Rome, but the roots of these thorny side-growth come mostly from Nabataea and Banias, Moabitis, and Cocabe in Bashanitis beyond Adrai - in Cyprus as well. 18.2 They compel them to give
their children in marriage even when they are too young -with the permission of their teachers, if you please! (Ebionites have elders and heads of synagogues, and they call their church a synagogue, not a church; and they take pride in Christ's name only). 18.3 And they do not allow people to contract only one marriage; even if someone should want to be release from his first marriage and contract another, they permit it - they allow everything without hesitation - down to a second, and a third, and a seventh marriage. 18.4 They acknowledge Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron - and Joshua the son of Nun simply as Moses' successor, though he is of no importance. But after these they acknowledge no more of the prophets, but even anathemize David and Solomon and make fun of them. Similarly the disregard Isaiah and Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, Elijah and Elisha; for they pay them no heed and blaspheme their prophecies, but accept only the Gospel.

30.18.5-9: They say that the Christ is the True Prophet and that the Christ is son of God by spiritual progress and a union which came to him by a lifting up from above; but they say that the prophets are prophets through their own intelligence and not from truth. Him alone they wish to be both prophet and man, and son of God and Christ, and mere man, as we have mentioned before, but because of excellence of life he came to be called the Son of God. And neither do they receive the whole pentateuch of Moses, but cast out certain passages. But whenever you speak to them about food which has life in it, "How therefore did Abraham set before the angels the calf and the milk?" Or, "How did Noah eat, and he heard God saying, 'Sacrifice and eat'? How did Isaac and Jacob sacrifice to God? Likewise, also Moses in the desert?" It is incredible to them and he says, "What need is there for me to read the things in the Law since the gospel has come?" "Whence is it to you to know the things concerning Moses and Abraham? For I know that you confess them to be righteous and to acknowledge them as your own fathers." Then he replies and says that Christ revealed it to me, and he discredits even more the matters pertaining to Mosaic Law and the accounts concerning Sampson, David, Elijah, Samuel, Elisha, and the others.

30.21.1: But next I shall discuss the other false accusations which they make, against Peter and the other apostles - that every day, before so much as eating bread, Peter had had immersions. 21.2 Observe the whole of their slander, and the badness hidden under their cheap teaching! Since they are defiled themselves and often indulge themselves sexually on earth, they make lavish use of water for their own reassurance, to deceive themselves if you please, under the impression that they have purification through baptisms. 21.3 And they are not ashamed to say these offensive things about the apostles, even though the Lord exposes their perversity since, when he came to wash Peter's feet, Peter said "You shall never wash my feet", and the Savior's answer was, "If I do not wash your feet you have no part with me". 21.4 And when Peter replied, "Not the feet only, but also the head", [Jesus replied] "He that is washed once needs not wash his head, but his feet only, for he is clean every with." [John 13:8-10]
21.5 He showed, then, that there is no need to make use of immersions, useless customs, and commandments and teachings of men, as he says in the Gospel in agreement with the prophet, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men".

30.22.1 And how can their stupidity about the eating of meat not be exposed out of hand? First of all because the Lord ate the Jewish Passover. Now the Jewish Passover was a sheep and unleavened bread - sheep's flesh roasted with fire and eaten, 22.2 as his disciples say to him, "Where do you wish that we prepare for you, that you may eat the Passover?" And the Lord himself says, "Go you into the city, and you shall find a man bearing a pitcher of water and you shall follow him where-ever he goes, and you shall say to the goodman of the house: 'Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall keep the Passover with my disciples?', and he shall show you an upper room furnished; there make ready."

30.22.3-5 : Again the Lord himself says, "I have eagerly desired to eat this passover with you". And he does not say simply "passover" but "this passover", lest someone treat it according to his own opinion. However, it was a passover, as I said, with meat broiled in fire and all the rest. But they, having removed from themselves the sequence of truth, changed the saying, which is manifest to all from the readings joined to it, and they make the disciples say, "Where do you wish that we should prepare for you to eat the Passover?" And he then replies, "I have no desire whatsoever to eat this Passover meat with you." For what reason will their fraud not be detected, when the sequence cries out that the negative has been added? For instead of saying, "I have eagerly desired", they added the word "no".

30.22.6 But they will also be convicted by the vision which was shown St. Peter, through the sheet which contained all sorts of wild beasts, domestic animals, reptiles and birds, and the Lord's voice saying "Arise, slay and eat!" And when Peter said, "Not so, Lord; nothing common or unclean has entered into my mouth", the Lord replied, "What God has cleansed, that you can not call unclean." 22.7 For the proof of the truth can be arrived at by two methods. If they say that St. Peter's remark refers inclusively to all foods when he says "Nothing common or unclean has at any time entered into my mouth", so that he would have called cattle, goats, sheep and birds unclean, they will be exposed at once by his previous mode of life. 22.8 It was after marrying, fathering children and having a mother-in-law that he met the Savior, and he was Jewish. But Jews eat flesh, and among them the eating of meat is not considered abominable or forbidden. 22.9 Since he had always eaten meat, then - even if we say that he did it only until he met the Savior - this will prove that he considered nothing unclean which was not declared to be unclean. For in fact he did not attribute commonness or uncleanness to all sorts of meat, but only to the ones the Law called common or unclean. 22.10 But again - since it is established that he did not hold of all kinds of meat that they were all common, but that he held this of the kinds of meat which were called unclean in the Law - to teach him
the character of Christ's holy church God told him to consider nothing unclean. "For all things are pure, when they are received with thanks and praise to God".

22.11 But even though the riffle referred to the call of the gentiles so that Peter would not regard the uncircumcised as profane or unclean, the expression Peter used did not refer to people but meant the foods the Law prohibits, as anyone can see. And their silly argument has failed from every point of view.

30.23.1 They pretendedly accept the names of the apostles in order to convince their dupes, and have composed forged books in their names, supposedly by James, Matthew, and other apostles. 23.2 They list the name of the apostle John among these to make their stupidity detectible in every way. For not only does he refute them in every way by saying "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." 23.3 It is clear from his Gospel moreover, that he accepts the testimonies of the holy prophets too. ....

30.25.1 And how much do i have to say about their blasphemies of St. Paul? First, they say that he was Greek and of gentile parentage, but that he had later become a proselyte. ...

30.25.4 What frightful shrieks and snake's hisses of the horrid serpents, and what deadly nonsense! Whose word shall I take? Ebion's and his kind, of St. Peter's, who says, "As my brother, Paul, hath written unto you, which things are deep and hard to be understood, which they who are unlearned and unstable pervert by their own ignorance?". ....

30.26.1 Again, they are proud of having circumcision, and boast, if you please, that this is the sign and mark of the patriarchs and the righteous men who have lived by the Law; and they think that it makes them their equals. ...

30.33.3 But why does Ebion boast of circumcision, when both the idolaters and the Egyptian priests have it? Moreover the Saracens, also called Ishmaelites, have circumcision, and the Samaritans, Idumaeans, and Homerites. Most of these do this, not because of having a Law, but from some senseless custom.

30.34.6 But I have already said how each of them palms off something different about Christ. .... At times, the Ebionites... say that Christ has a heavenly power from God: "The Son". And that the Son puts Adam on and takes him off when convenient. By the power of God I have refuted their various opinions.

350-390, Mount Zion, Jerusalem

Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (born ca 313 near Caesarea, died 386 in Jerusalem)
He tells us that during his time, his Christian community does not make use (or have access to) the “Upper Room” (Cenacle) on Mount Zion (even though, Cyril states, they “should”). Presumably it could have still been in use by competing Jesus followers.

Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures XVI, Ch 4 : ... And in truth it were most fitting, that as we discourse concerning Christ and Golgotha [presumably during Easter] here in Golgotha, so also we should speak concerning the Holy Ghost in the Upper Church; yet since He who descended there jointly partakes of the glory of Him who was crucified here, we here speak concerning Him also who descended there: for their worship is indivisible.

This is consistent with the comments we have seen from Epiphanius (writing ca. 375 CE) where Epiphanius accepts a community at Zion only until Bishop Maximona (350 CE). The explanation is, again, the same: a community DID exist at this time, but not one acceptable to Christians. Also in Epiphanius’ Ancoratus (“Anchored”, Epiphanius’ earliest work, written 373 CE), he enumerates the holy sites associated with Jesus, yet he skips Mount Zion, site of the last supper and the post-resurrection Pentecost commission. As Bellarmino Bagatti has observed 5, the omission must be intentional (driven by Epiphanius’ not wanting to draw attention to it. Why? Because he considers it removed from the fold.)

Epiphanius, Ancoratus, Ch 40: And having become flesh from Mary, he is conceived, born in Bethlehem, from Bethlehem passes over into Nazareth, from Nazareth into Capernaum, from Capernaum into Jerusalem and the sea in which he walked upon the water, and parts of Tyre and Nain and Judaea and Jericho and into Bethpage and Bethany, and into Jerusalem and the Temple and the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane, into the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium [of Pilate] and to Herod, to the place Golgotha into the tomb, and even as far as Hades, into the earth and after the resurrection, into heaven. 6

Gregory Bishop of Nyssa, Cappadocia (died ca 395)

Two of Gregory of Nyssa’s letters mention his travel to the Holy Land and visits to pilgrimage sites. His travels there would have taken place shortly after the Council of Constantinople (381 CE). As Father Bellarmino Bagatti has noted (The Church of the Circumcision, pg. 11), Gregory of Nyssa enumerates only Bethlehem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Calvary (aka Golgotha), and the Mount of Olives; all places where Constantine erected basilicas, and places where Nicean Orthodoxy was kept. He does not mention Zion. But what he does mention is the state of division from different Jesus sects in Jerusalem. Again we have the same explanation: a community exists in Zion, but it is not friendly or acceptable to Christians.

---

6 Translations of Epiphanius’ Ancoratus:
   Latin: J.P. Migne, editor, Epiphanius, Patrologia Graeca, 41-43

... If the Divine grace was more abundant about Jerusalem than elsewhere, sin would not be so much the fashion amongst those that live there; but as it is, there is no form of uncleanness that is not perpetrated amongst them; rascality, adultery, theft, idolatry, poisoning, quarrelling, murder, are rife; and the last kind of evil is so excessively prevalent, that nowhere in the world are people so ready to kill each other as there; where kinsmen attack each other like wild beasts, and spill each other’s blood, merely for the sake of lifeless plunder. Well, in a place where such things go on, what proof, I ask, have you of the abundance of Divine grace? But I know what many will retort to all that I have said; they will say, “Why did you not lay down this rule for yourself as well? If there is no gain for the godly pilgrim in return for having been there, for what reason did you undergo the toil of so long a journey?” Let them hear from me my plea for this. ... It was my duty, for the purpose of the correction which the Holy Council had resolved upon, to visit the places where the Church in Arabia is; secondly, as Arabia is on the confines of the Jerusalem district, I had promised that I would confer also with the Heads of the Holy Jerusalem Churches, because matters with them were in confusion, and needed an arbiter. ... [Yet,] before we saw Bethlehem we [already] knew His being made man by means of the Virgin; before we saw His Grave we [already] believed in His Resurrection from the dead; apart from seeing the Mount of Olives, we confessed that His Ascension into heaven was real.


Gregory of Nyssa, in To Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa, writes to three ascetic women living in the Holy Land, whom he is acquainted with:

The meeting with the good and the beloved, and the memorials of the immense love of the Lord for us men, which are shown in your localities, have been the source to me of the most intense joy and gladness. Doubly indeed have these shone upon divinely festal days; both in beholding the saving tokens of the God who gave us life, and in meeting with souls in whom the tokens of the Lord’s grace are to be discerned spiritually in such clearness, that one can believe that Bethlehem and Golgotha, and Olivet, and the scene of the Resurrection are really in the God-containing heart. For when through a good conscience Christ has been formed in a person, ... such a person, in my opinion, is to be counted in the number of those famous ones in whom the memorials of the Lord’s love for us men are to be seen. When, then, I not only saw with the sense of sight those Sacred Places, but I saw the tokens of places like them, plain in yourselves as well, I was filled with joy so great that the description of its blessing is beyond the power of utterance. But because it is a difficult, not to say an impossible thing for a human being to enjoy unmixed with evil any blessing, therefore something of bitterness was mingled with the sweets I tasted: and by this, after the enjoyment of those blessings, I was saddened in my journey back to my native land, estimating now the truth of the Lord’s words, that “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” so that no single part of the inhabited earth is without its share of degeneracy. For if the spot itself that has received the footprints of the very Life is not clear of the wicked thorns, what are
we to think of other places where communion with the Blessing has been inculcated by hearing and preaching alone. With what view I say this, need not be explained more fully in words; facts themselves proclaim more loudly than any speech, however intelligible, the melancholy truth.

... I affirm, then, that it is a lawful thing to hate God’s enemies, and that this kind of hatred is pleasing to our Lord: and by God’s enemies I mean those who deny the glory of our Lord, be they Jews, or downright idolaters, or those who through Arius’ teaching idolize the creature, and so adopt the error of the Jews.

... what plausible excuse for fighting is left these over-refined disputants, who are rending the seamless robe, and parting the Lord’s name between Paul and Cephas, and undisguisedly abhorring contact with those who worship Christ, all but exclaiming in so many words, “Away from me, I am holy”? Granting that the knowledge which they believe themselves to have acquired is somewhat greater than that of others: yet can they possess more than the belief that the Son of the Very God is Very God, seeing that in that article of the Very God every idea that is orthodox, every idea that is our salvation, is included?

... Now if we loudly preach all this..., that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, always changeless, always imperishable, though He comes in the changeable and the perishable; never stained Himself, but making clean that which is stained; what is the crime that we commit, and wherefore are we hated? And what means this opposing array of new Altars? Do we announce another Jesus? Do we hint at another? Do we produce other scriptures? Have any of ourselves dared to say “Mother of Man” of the Holy Virgin, the Mother of God: which is what we hear that some of them say without restraint? Do we romance about three Resurrections? Do we promise the gluttony of the Millennium? Do we declare that the Jewish animal-sacrifices shall be restored? Do we lower men’s hopes again to the Jerusalem below, imagining its rebuilding with stones of a more brilliant material? What charge like these can be brought against us, that our company should be reckoned a thing to be avoided, and that in some places another altar should be erected in opposition to us, as if we should defile their sanctuaries? My heart was in a state of burning indignation about this...


The decades and centuries after Nicea were rife with sectarianism within Christianity, much of this related to Christological debates. Although it is likely that Jerusalem was no exception, it is significant that Gregory of Nyssa alludes to “heresies” like millenarianism, and the hope in the rebuilding of the Temple, and revival of sacrifices, in addition to beliefs in a low Christology (“Mary, mother of a man”). These all sound like Nazarene or Ebionite communities. “Proper” Christian heretics of the empire (Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites, Apollinarians, etc etc etc) all shared in the Pauline belief that Jesus, like God, saves, and that he has issued a once-and-for-all dispensation from the Sinai Laws. Not so with the Torah-ritual community described here by Gregory of Nyssa.
The Spanish pilgrim Egeria The Spanish pilgrim Egeria traveled to the Holy Land ca 381 thru 384 CE. While describing the liturgies conducted in Jerusalem at the time of her visit, she records the belief already at that time, that it was at Mount Zion that the Pentecost event took place; Furthermore she records that the Pentecost event was being commemorated by Christians there, where a new construction has been built next to or overlapping with the original (perhaps built after Gregory of Nyssa’s 382 sojourn but before Egeria’s 384 visit), and that at the original place where Pentecost took place “there is another church there now”. In other words, the new building (Hagia Zion) must have been built because the original one was occupied by unfriendly “Christians”, namely our Jewish Jesus people. It is only starting now, with Egeria’s testimony, that we start seeing Christians mentioning activities at Zion (but as we will see, still in parallel with those of the competing “heretics”, the Jewish Nazarenes). Here is Egeria’s testimony 7:

And when the dismissal has been made at the Martyrium [aka Church of the Holy Sepulchre / Golgotha], all the people, to a man, escort the bishop with hymns to Sion, [so that] they are in Sion when the third hour is fully come. And on their arrival there, the passage from the Acts of the Apostles is read, where the Spirit came down so that all tongues [were heard, and all men] understood the things that were being spoken, and the dismissal takes place afterwards in due course; For the priests read there from the Acts of the Apostles concerning the selfsame thing, because that is the place in Sion - there is another church there now- where once, after the Lord’s Passion, the multitude was gathered together with the Apostles, and where this was done, as we have said above.

Afterwards the dismissal takes place in due course, and the oblation is made there. Then, that the people may be dismissed, the archdeacon raises his voice, and says: "Let us all be ready to day in Eleona [the Mount of Olives], in the Imbomon [place of the Ascension], directly after the sixth hour."

Georgian Liturgical Calendar Evidence of construction of a new structure does point to circa 384, at the time when Bishop John II succeeded Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem. Bargil Pixner tells us 8:

The following entry is found in the old Georgian Liturgical Calendar: “In memory of John, the archbishop of Jerusalem, who first built Zion…”. The mention of the activity of John can refer only to the [new church, built during Emperor Theodosius] because everyone knew that the Church of the Apostles had already stood for centuries on Mount Zion”.

Early fifth century, continued Patristic reports on the Ebionim and Nazoraioi


8 Pixner, Paths of the Messiah and sites of the early church from Galilee to Jerusalem, pg 351. See also Bagatti, The Church of the Circumcision, pg10-12.
Tyrannius Rufinus (ca 342CE-410CE)

Commentarius in Symbolum Apostlorum (Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed), Ch 39:

Ebion's is a Council of vanity since he teaches that, while we believe in Christ, we are withal to observe the circumcision of the flesh, the keeping of the Sabbath, the accustomed sacrifices, and all the other ordinances according to the letter of the Law.

Jerome (347-420CE)

Jerome’s criticism of the Nazoreans/Ebionites is noticeably more direct and negative than that of Epiphanius. Jerome, in spite of having good command of Hebrew, also adopts prior writers’ ascription of ebionitism to someone called “Ebion”, ignoring that "ebionim" means "poor" in Hebrew. Jerome spent many years in Rome, as well as Antioch and the Holy Land, settling in his final decades in Bethlehem, where he continued his prolific writings while also being a ascetic and spiritual teacher of a community of followers there. Of particular importance here is that Jerome is a witness to the existence of Nazarenes and Ebionites in Eretz Israel during his lifetime. Furthermore he claims to have knowledge of their use of a version of Matthew which he states as “believed to be original” (that is prior to the Greek), written in Syriac/Aramaic but with Hebrew characters. Jerome provides a number of quotes from said text (which he calls “Gospel of the Hebrews”), and even claims to have translated it from the Hebrew/Syriac.

Jerome, in On Isaiah 8:14, refers to Nazarenes as those "...who accept Messiah in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old Law."

Jerome, in Commentary on Ezekiel 16:16 (in Book 4), mentions the Nazarenes and complains with bitterness that the city of Jerusalem (would this be on Mount Zion?), despite its significance as a “vision of peace”, is cut off due to their heresy.

Our own Jerusalem, which means a vision of peace, the heretics have cut off, when one and another scripture they pluck from their proper place, trying to sew them to where they are unable to adapt; ... which the Lord forbids, in the Gospel: “One does not take a piece of new cloth unto an old garment.” Such are the Nazarenes, that the observance of the old Law, they try to fit to the grace of the Gospel.

Nostra autem Jerusalem, quae interpretatur, visio pacis, ab haereticis scinditur, quando unum et alterum testimonium Scripturarum de propriis carptentes locis, conantur assumere his, quibus non queunt coaptare. ... quod Dominus fieri prohibens , loquitur in Evangelio : Nemo assumit comissuram panni rudis in veteri vestimento. Tales sunt Nazarei, qui veteris Legis observantiam, Evangelicae gratiae aptare conantur.

[JP Migne, Patrologia Latina, Vol 25, pg 139]
Jerome’s writings also tell us that during his time the influence of Judaism upon Jesus followers was constantly present. Jerome is a hardened antinomian, dismissing the Torah not only for Gentiles but also for Jews:

Epistle from Jerome to Augustine (Epistle 112 in Jerome's compendium ; Epistle 75 in Augustine's compendium), Ch 4.13 :

...your opinion regarding the matter in debate is summed up in this: that since the preaching of the gospel of Christ, the believing Jews do well in observing the precepts of the law, i.e. in offering sacrifices as Paul did, in circumcising their children, as Paul did in the case of Timothy, and keeping the Jewish Sabbath, as all the Jews have been accustomed to do. If this be true, we fall into the heresy of Cerinthus and Ebion, who, though believing in Christ, were anathematized by the fathers for this one error, that they mixed up the ceremonies of the law with the gospel of Christ, and professed their faith in that which was new, without letting go what was old. Why do I speak of the Ebionites, who make pretensions to the name of Christian? In our own day there exists a sect among the Jews throughout all the synagogues of the East, which is called the sect of the Minei, and is even now condemned by the Pharisees [indeed the Talmud has condemning references to a group called the "Minim", or "heretics"].

The adherents to this sect are known commonly as Nazarenes; they believe in Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; and they say that He who suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose again, is the same as the one in whom we believe. But while they desire to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither the one nor the other. I therefore beseech you, who think that you are called upon to heal my slight wound, which is no more, so to speak, than a prick or scratch from a needle, to devote your skill in the healing art to this grievous wound, which has been opened by a spear driven home with the impetus of a javelin. For there is surely no proportion between the culpability of him who exhibits the various opinions held by the church fathers in a commentary on Scripture, and the guilt of him who reintroduces within the Church a most pestilential heresy. If, however, there is for us no alternative but to receive the Jews into the Church, along with the usages prescribed by their law; if, in short, it shall be declared lawful for them to continue in the Churches of Christ what they have been accustomed to practice in the synagogues of Satan, I will tell you my opinion of the matter: they will not become Christians, but they will make us Jews.

Epistle from Jerome to Augustine (Epistle 112 in Jerome's compendium ; Epistle 75 in Augustine's compendium), Ch4:

16. We have learned from you what evil things peculiar to the Jews Paul had abandoned; let us now learn from your teaching what good things which were Jewish he retained. You will reply: "The ceremonial observances in which they continued to follow the practice of their fathers, in the way in which these were complied with by Paul himself, without believing them to be at all necessary to salvation." I do not fully understand what you mean by the words, "without believing them to be at all necessary to salvation." For if they do not contribute to salvation, why are they observed? And if they must be observed, they by all
means contribute to salvation; especially seeing that, because of observing them, some have been made martyrs: for they would not be observed unless they contributed to salvation. For they are not things indifferent—neither good nor bad, as philosophers say. Self-control is good, self-indulgence is bad: between these, and indifferent, as having no moral quality, are such things as walking, blowing one's nose, expectorating phlegm, etc. Such an action is neither good nor bad; for whether you do it or leave it undone, it does not affect your standing as righteous or unrighteous. But the observance of legal ceremonies is not a thing indifferent; it is either good or bad. You say it is good. I affirm it to be bad, and bad not only when done by Gentile converts, but also when done by Jews who have believed. In this passage you fall, if I am not mistaken, into one error while avoiding another. For while you guard yourself against the blasphemies of Porphyry, you become entangled in the snares of Ebion; pronouncing that the law is binding on those who from among the Jews have believed. Perceiving, again, that what you have said is a dangerous doctrine, you attempt to qualify it by words which are only superfluous: viz., "The law must be observed not from any belief, such as prompted the Jews to keep it, that this is necessary to salvation, and not in any misleading dissimulation such as Paul reproved in Peter."

17. Peter therefore pretended to keep the law; but this censor of Peter boldly observed the things prescribed by the law. The next words of your letter are these: "For if Paul observed these sacraments in order, by pretending to be a Jew, to gain the Jews, why did he not also take part with the Gentiles in heathen sacrifices, when to them that were without law he became as without law, that he might gain them also? The explanation is found in this, that he took part in the Jewish rites as being himself a Jew; and that when he said all this which I have quoted, he meant not that he pretended to be what he was not, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumphant vindication of Paul! You prove that he did not pretend to share the error of the Jews, but was actually involved in it; and that he refused to imitate Peter in a course of deception, dissembling through fear of the Jews what he really was, but that he felt with true compassion that he must bring such help to them as would be needful for himself if he were involved in their error. Herein he exercised not the subtlety of a deceiver, but the sympathy of a compassionate deliverer." A triumph...
pretended to be what they were not. As to your argument against our view, that he ought to have become to the Gentiles a Gentile, if to the Jews he became a Jew, this favours our opinion rather than yours: for as he did not actually become a Jew, so he did not actually become a heathen; and as he did not actually become a heathen, so he did not actually become a Jew. His conformity to the Gentiles consisted in this, that he received as Christians the uncircumcised who believed in Christ, and left them free to use without scruple meats which the Jewish law prohibited; but not, as you suppose, in taking part in their worship of idols. For "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but the keeping of the commandments of God."

Epistle from Augustine to Jerome (Epistle 82 in Augustine's Epistles compendium, also Epistle 116 in Jerome's Epistles compendium), Ch 2.16:

Shall I also sum up "the matter in debate, or rather your opinion concerning it" (to quote your own expression)? It seems to me to be this: that after the gospel of Christ has been published, the Jews who believe do rightly if they offer sacrifices as Paul did, if they circumcise their children as Paul circumcised Timothy, and if they observe the "seventh day of the week, as the Jews have always done, provided only that they do all this as dissemblers and deceivers."

If this is your doctrine, we are now precipitated, not into the heresy of Ebion, or of those who are commonly called Nazarenes, or any other known heresy, but into some new error, which is all the more pernicious because it originates not in mistake, but in deliberate and designed endeavour to deceive. If, in order to clear yourself from the charge of entertaining such sentiments, you answer that the apostles were to be commended for dissimulation in these instances, their purpose being to avoid giving offense to the many weak Jewish believers who did not yet understand that these things were to be rejected, but that now, when the doctrine of Christ's grace has been firmly established throughout so many nations, and when, by the reading of the Law and the Prophets throughout all the churches of Christ, it is well known that these are not read for our observance, but for our instruction, any man who should propose to feign compliance with these rites would be regarded as a madman. What objection can there be to my affirming that the Apostle Paul, and other sound and faithful Christians, were bound sincerely to declare the worth of these old observances by occasionally honouring them, lest it should be thought that these institutions, originally full of prophetic significance, and cherished sacredly by their most pious forefathers, were to be abhorred by their posterity as profane inventions of the devil? For now, when the faith had come, which, previously foreshadowed by these ceremonies, was revealed after the death and resurrection of the Lord, they became, so far as their office was concerned, defunct. But just as it is seemly that the bodies of the deceased be carried honourably to the grave by their kindred, so was it fitting that these rites should be removed in a manner worthy of their origin and history, and this not with pretence of respect, but as a religious duty, instead of being forsaken at once, or cast forth to be torn in pieces by the reproaches of their enemies, as by the teeth of dogs. To carry the illustration further, if now any Christian (though he may have been converted from Judaism) were proposing to imitate the apostles
in the observance of these ceremonies, like one who disturbs the ashes of those who rest, he would be not piously performing his part in the obsequies, but impiously violating the sepulchre.

Jerome: De Viris Illustribus (On Illustrious Men):

Chapter 2 highlights James, the brother of Jesus:

The Gospel also which is called the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin and which also Origen often makes use of, after the account of the resurrection of the Saviour says, "but the Lord, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from among those that sleep)" and again, a little later, it says "'Bring a table and bread,' said the Lord." And immediately it is added, "He brought bread and blessed and broke and gave to James the Just and said to him, 'my brother eat your bread, for the son of man is risen from among those that sleep.'" And so he ruled the church of Jerusalem thirty years, that is until the seventh year of Nero, and was buried near the temple from which he had been cast down. His tombstone with its inscription was well known until the siege of Titus and the end of Hadrian's reign. Some of our writers think he was buried in Mount Olivet, but they are mistaken.

The comment “some of our writers” is interesting. If “our writers” signifies Christians, then who would be those who are not “our writers”? Jerome must have in mind Jesus followers who are not of his community, that is non-Christian Jesus followers in Jerusalem.

There is a tradition that James was buried on the east side of the Kedron valley (which separates Mount Moriah where the Temple Mount is, from the Mount of Olives). In theory, the discrepancy in location that Jerome refers to is not a large discrepancy, since the base of the Mount of Olives (the Kedron valley) is indeed also the base of the hill of the Temple Mount. The Kedron valley of course is the well-known valley of the tombs, where royal and hundreds of non-royal tombs have been found. In other words, it is possible that someone can be buried near the base of the Mount of Olives, and still be facing the Temple Mount.

Chapter 3 highlights Matthew:

Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforetimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek, though by what author is uncertain. The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library at Cæsarea which Pamphilus so diligently gathered. I have also had the opportunity of having the volume shown to me by
the Nazarenes of Berœa\(^9\), a city of Syria, who use it. In this it is to be noted that wherever the Evangelist, whether on his own account or in the person of our Lord the Saviour, quotes the testimony of the Old Testament, he does not follow the authority of the translators of the Septuagint but the Hebrew. Wherefore these two forms exist "Out of Egypt have I called my son," and "for he shall be called a Nazarene."

Mattheus, qui et Lovi, ex publicano apostolus (Matth. IX, 9; Marc. II, 14; Luc. V, 27), primus in Judæa propter eos qui ex circumciscione crediderant, Evangelium Christi Hebraicis litteris verbisque composuit: quod quis postea in Graecum transitulerit, non satis certum est. Porro ipsum Hebraicum habetur usque hodie in Caesariensi bibliotheca, quam Pamphilus martyr studiosissime confecit. Mihi quoque a Nazareis, qui in Berœa urbe Syriae hoc volumine utuntur, describendi facultas fuit. In quo animadvertendum, quod ubicumque Evangelista, sive ex persona sua, sive ex persona Domini Salvatoris, veteris Scripturæ testimoniis abutitur, non sequatur Septuaginta translatorum auctoritatem, sed Hebraicum, e quibus illa duo sunt: Ex Aegypto vocavi filium meum; et: Quoniam Nazaraeus vocabitur.

One of Jerome’s points here, is that Matthew follows the Masoretic (Hebrew) renderings and not the Septuagint. This is of course evident from our Greek Matthew textus receptus:

- Matthew 2:15 Greek textus receptus reads: Ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱὸν / Out-of Egypt have-I-called the son. Hosea 11:1 in the Masoretic Hebrew text reads “When Israel [was] an infant, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” while the Septuagint Greek translation reads: “ For Israel [was] an infant, and I loved him, and out of Egypt I called his children.”

- Matthew 2:23 Greek textus receptus reads “Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται ” / “Nazoriaios klethesetai” / “Nazoriais will-be-called”. The Septuagint of Judges 13:5 (referring to Samson) reads “ ὅτι Ναζιριών τῷ θεῷ ἔσται τὸ παιδάριον ” / “ for Naziriote(Nazirion) to God will-be the boy ”, while the Masoretic Hebrew uses NZR, pronounced “Nazir”. Here it is not clear that the Septuagint and the Masoretic would differ from each other. Certainly the Nazoriais of Matthew matches neither! Perhaps Jerome was looking at a different version of the Torah, which used Nazoraios?

At any rate, Jerome’s point is not that the Greek Matthew differs from the Nazarene Hebrew Matthew in this case, but simply that Matthew in general (whether Nazarene Hebrew Matthew or Greek textus receptus Matthew) does not follow the Greek Septuagint of Judges 13:5. Also curious is how Jerome’s latin uses “Nazareus”, which has further distance to the Torah term (Nazar / Naziraios).

Chapter 4 highlights Jude the brother of James and Jesus:

**Jude the brother of James**, left a short epistle which is reckoned among the seven catholic epistles, and because in it he quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch it is rejected by many. Nevertheless by age and use it has gained authority and is reckoned among the Holy Scriptures. [There is no reference here

---

\(^9\) Berœa in Syria is known as Aleppo today.
to Ebionites or Nazarenes; nevertheless it is of interest to the reader that Jude quotes Enoch. As is well known, the Book of Enoch was known in Jewish circles during the time of Jesus. It is also quoted in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of particular interest is that it makes extensive allusions to the “Son of Man”. [Chapter Note 3]

Chapter 9, on John the apostle:

John, the apostle whom Jesus most loved, the son of Zebedee and brother of James, the apostle whom Herod, after our Lord's passion, beheaded, most recently of all the evangelists wrote a Gospel, at the request of the bishops of Asia, against Cerinthus and other heretics and especially against the then growing dogma of the Ebionites, who assert that Christ did not exist before Mary. On this account he was compelled to maintain His divine nativity.

This is certainly an amazing statement by Jerome, who knows of a tradition that the Gospel of John was written to contradict especially the Ebionim. If there is one text in the Christian New Testament that explicitly claims deity status for Jesus, that is the Gospel of John. It is also the one New Testament text that puts in the mouth of Jesus the claims that Jesus is the only way to God the Father, and unlike the three synoptics, it is the only gospel that uses the term “the Jews” widely and negatively. None of these anti-Jewish traits can be found in the ancient manuscripts of Mark or in the “Q” source, nor in received Greek Matthew, or Luke, or in any of the patristic quotes from gospels used by the Ebionim and Nazoreans.

Chapter 16, on Ignatius of Antioch:

Ignatius, third bishop of the church of Antioch after Peter the apostle, condemned to the wild beasts during the persecution of Trajan, was sent bound to Rome, and when he had come on his voyage as far as Smyrna, where Polycarp the pupil of John was bishop, he wrote one epistle to the Ephesians, another to the Magnesians, a third to the Trallians, a fourth to the Romans, and going thence, he wrote to the Philadelphians and to the Smyrneans and especially to Polycarp, commending to him the church at Antioch. In this last [actually in “To the Smyrneans”, see below] he bore witness to the Gospel which I have recently translated, in respect of the person of Christ saying: "I [Ignatius] indeed saw him in the flesh after the resurrection and I believe that he is [in the flesh], and when he came to Peter and those who were with Peter, he said to them ‘Behold! Touch me and see me how that I am not an incorporeal spirit’ and straightway they touched him and believed.”

Part of Jerome’s quote is in error; nevertheless, Ignatius’ quote from a gospel is correctly quoted by Jerome. In the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans, in Chapter 3 (titled “Christ was possessed of a body after His resurrection”), Ignatius says:

For I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, "Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit." And immediately they touched Him, and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit.

Also from Jerome in Commentaries on Isaiah, Preface to Book 18:

For when the Apostles thought him to be a spirit, or, in the words of the Gospel which is of the Hebrews, which the Nazarenes are wont to read, 'a bodiless daemon', he said to them: [Luke 24:38-39] “Why are you troubled, and
why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ ”

Jerome, Commentary on Ezekiel 18.7:

And in the Gospel according to the Hebrews which the Nazarenes are accustomed to read, it is placed among the greatest sins 'if a man have grieved the spirit of his brother'.

Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah, Book 4 (on Isaiah 11.1-3, “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him”):

In him the whole fullness of the godhead took pleasure to dwell corporeally, not partially as in the case of other holy men, but according to the gospel which was written in the Hebrew language and read by the Nazarenes: “The whole fountain of the Holy Spirit came upon him.” ... Further in the gospel which we mentioned above, we find that the following is written: “It happened when the Lord ascended from the water, that the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him and said to him: ‘My son, I expected you among all the prophets that you should come and that I should rest upon you. For you are my rest, you are my first-born son who shall reign in eternity.’ ”

Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah Book 2 (on Isaiah 40.9-11):

In that Gospel written according to the Hebrews, which is read by the Nazoreans, the Lord says: A moment ago my Mother, the Holy Spirit, took me by the hairs and brought me to the great hill, the Tabor.

Jerome, Preface to the Commentary on Matthew:

The first evangelist is Matthew, the publican, who was surnamed Levi. He published his Gospel in Judæa in the Hebrew language, chiefly for the sake of Jewish believers in Christ, who adhered in vain to the shadow of the law, although the substance of the Gospel had come.

Jerome certainly has chutzpah: He is telling his audience that the first gospel is a misguided scripture that adheres to the vain aspiration of God’s Commandments!! For our benefit, his saving grace is that at least he admits Matthew’s gospel is indeed faithful to the Commandments!

Jerome, in Commentary on Matthew 2.5 (see also his Epistle to Pammachius, Epistle 57, ch 8), states (when reading a Hebrew version of Matthew) that he believes the Greek (which says “Judea”) has been mistranslated from the Hebrew, which reads “Judah”. As we know, Judea is commonly used in Greek and Latin as the word for Judah, hence this can hardly be called a “mistranslation”. The usefulness in quoting Jerome here is limited to his reference to a Hebrew copy of Matthew:
“But they said to him: ‘In Bethlehem of Judea’ ". This [Judea] is an error of the copyists. For we think that it was first published by the evangelist as we read in the actual Hebrew: Judah, not Judea.

Jerome, Commentary on Matthew, Book 1, On Matthew 6.11 (the Lord's Prayer) (also in Ps 135):

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews for 'super-substantial' bread I found mahar, which means 'of tomorrow', so that the sense is: Our bread of tomorrow, that is, of the future, give us this day.

The Christian canonical Matthew in Greek (as also Luke) uses the word “epiousios”, which is extremely rare in Greek and thought to mean “of every day”. Jerome translated it into Latin as “supersubstantial”: “panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie”). However, Jerome’s copy of the Gospel of the Hebrews has “mahar” (tomorrow). This is in keeping with the prayer’s request that God’s future Kingdom be made a reality today.

Jerome, Commentary on Matthew 12.2

But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Behold your disciples are doing what is not lawful for them to do on the Sabbath." Note that the apostles of the Savior are the first to destroy the letter of the Sabbath (thus contradicting the Ebionites, who, although they receive the other apostles, repudiate Paul as a transgressor of the Law).

Excursus: Needless to say, Jerome is over-eager to establish Jesus as a Law breaker. Jesus’ statement about his disciples harvesting left-over food is actually a defense of the Torah, where his interpretation is that exerting effort in saving a life or in preventing severe hunger does not constitute a violation of the Sabbath. As an aside, this interpretation is fully consistent with Rabbinical interpretation today. A similar debate can be had on Jesus’ statement that “it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” Here Jesus uses the same method used by the prophets when they quote God as saying “I do not desire sacrifice, but steadfast love”. In other words, it is a exaggeration, where the more important commandment is stated overruling the less-important one. Both Jesus and the prophets know (and accept) that God has indeed mandated kosher eating and ritual sacrifices. They are important, but completely ineffective if there is absence of righteous behavior.

Jerome, Commentary on Matthew, Book 2, On Matthew 12.13:

In the gospel which the Nazarenes and the Ebionites use, which we translated recently from Hebrew to Greek and which is called the authentic text of Matthew by a good many, it is written that the man with the withered hand is a mason, praying for help with words of this kind: “I was a mason earning my living with my hands, I pray for you, Jesus, to restore my health lest I must beg shamefully for my food.” [see Matthew 12:9-14 and Mark 3:1-6 and Luke 6:6-11].

Jerome, Letter to Damasus (Letter 20 of Jerome), regarding Matthew 21.9:

Matthew, who wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew speech, put it thus: Osanna barrama, i.e. Osanna in the highest.
Jerome, Commentary on Matthew, Book 4 (On Matthew 23.35):

In the Gospel which the Nazarenes use, for 'son of Barachias', I find 'son of Joiada' written.

Excursus: In canonical Matthew 23:35, Jesus refers to “the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”. Earliest manuscripts known today (like the Codex Sinaiticus) do not have “son of Barachias”, but Jerome’s Greek copy does. Apparently “son of Barachias” was a addition made by a well-intended copyist at some point. However the well-intended addition is in error. The Zacharias who was slain on the temple-grounds in Second Chronicles 24:20 was the son of Jehoida. His martyrdom occurred in about 825 BCE. Zacharias the son of Barachias (a.k.a. Berechiah) was the prophet who, in an entirely different era, served as one of the Minor Prophets (Zechariah 1:1 identifies the author as Zechariah, the son of Berechiah and dates his ministry to the 500s BCE). Evidently, Jerome’s Hebrew Matthew has corrected the erroneous addition. Because the phrase is entirely missing from early codices like Sinaiticus, it is possible that the author of Jerome’s Hebrew Matthew may have had a Greek copy as a source which he corrected by changing “son of Barachias” to “son of Joiada”.

Jerome, Commentary on Matthew, Book 4 (On Matthew 27.16):

This Barabbas, in the Gospel entitled (written) according to the Hebrews, is interpreted 'son of their master' (teacher).

Excursus: In “New Testament Apocrypha”, author M.R. James quotes Lagrange’s explanation: the Hebrew text may have used a form such as Bar Rabban (Son of a Teacher).

Jerome, Commentary on Matthew 27.51:

In the Gospel I so often mention we read that a lintel of the temple of immense size was broken and divided.

Jerome in Epistula ad Hedibiam / Letter to Hedibia (aka Letter #120 from Jerome) section 8:

But in the Gospel that is written in Hebrew letters we read, not that the veil of the temple was rent, but that the lintel of the temple of wondrous size fell.

Excursus: M.R. James in “New Testament Apocrypha” suggests: “This was probably a change made under the influence of Isa. vi. 4, ‘the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried.’” If this is the case, here we have again a possibility that the author of Gospel of Hebrews has utilized (and corrected) a Greek text of Matthew (instead of viceversa, as there is no reason the change would be beneficial in the other direction, i.e. a author of canonical Greek Matthew having changed “lintel” in a Hebrew Matthew into “veil”).

Jerome, Commentary on Ephesians, Book 3, On Ephesians 5.4:

...as we read in the Hebrew gospel, that the Lord said to the disciples: And never rejoice, he said, unless you look at your brother in love.
In the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is written in the Chaldee and Syrian language, but in Hebrew characters, and is used by the Nazarenes to this day (I mean the Gospel according to the Apostles, or, as is generally maintained, the Gospel according to Matthew, a copy of which is in the library at Cæsarea), we find, "Behold, the mother of our Lord and His brethren said to Him, John Baptist baptizes for the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But He said to them, what sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, haply, the very words which I have said are only ignorance."

And in the same volume, "‘If your brother sin against you in word, and make amends to you, receive him seven times in a day.’ Simon, His disciple, said to Him, ‘Seven times in a day?’ The Lord answered and said to him, ‘I say unto you until seventy times seven.’ Even the prophets, after they were anointed with the Holy Spirit, were guilty of sinful words.”

---

Jerome, Commentaries on Galatians, Book I, Chapter 1:

this passage [from Paul's epistles] annihilates the teaching of Ebion ... because it affirms that Christ is not just a man but also God.

---

Jerome, Commentaries on Galatians, Book II.

In an explanation of Paul's reference to “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree” in Paul’s Galatians, Jerome in passing refers to “The half-Christian half-Jewish heresiarch Ebion”.

---

Jerome, Commentaries on Galatians, Book II, Chapter 5 Section 3:

As for Ebion and his followers, who think that believers in Christ ought to be circumcised after receiving the Gospel, we shall force them either to observe circumcision and everything else prescribed by the Law or, if it is not feasible to observe everything, then to do away with circumcision, which has for all intents and purposes been rendered worthless along with the rest of the requirements of the Law. They might counter that they are obligated to do only what is in their power, arguing that God expects us to do what we can and not what we cannot do. We shall answer them by pointing out that the same God does not wish both for the Law to be kept and to forsake the keepers of the Law. Seeing that the Law has been abolished, on what ground will he pronounce guilty those who have the will but not the way when it comes to fulfilling all of its commandments? We, however, follow the spiritual Law, which says, "Do not muzzle and ox while it is treading out the grain". And we have the same mindset as the Apostle [Paul], "Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us." We are fastidious about observing Sabbath rests, not so that our ox and ass and lowly animals might enjoy themselves on the Sabbath, but so that these rests might be enjoyed by those men and animals about whom it is written, "O Lord, you will preserve both men and beasts".

---

In Book III Ch 5.3 of Commentary on Galatians, as well as in de Situ et Nominibus Locorum Hebraicorum 112, Commentarius in Esiam 1.1.12, and in Commentarius in...
Matthaeum 2.12.2, Jerome also says that the Ebionites were Jewish/observant to Torah.

John Cassian (ca 360CE – 435CE)

John Cassian, On the Incarnation, Book I : Chapter 2. Description of the different heretical monsters which spring from one another.

For these shoots of an unnatural seed are no new thing in the churches. The harvest of the Lord's field has always had to put up with burrs and briars, and in it the shoots of choking tares have constantly sprung up. For hence have arisen the Ebionites, Sabellians, Arians, as well as Eunomians and Macedonians, and Photinians and Apollinarians, and all the other tares of the churches, and thistles which destroy the fruits of good faith. And of these the earliest was Ebion, who while over-anxious about asserting our Lord's humanity robbed it of its union with Divinity. But after him the schism of Sabellius burst forth out of reaction against the above mentioned heresy, and as he declared that there was no distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, he impiously confounded, as far as was possible, the Persons, and failed to distinguish the holy and ineffable Trinity. Next after him whom we have mentioned there followed the blasphemy of Arian perversity, which, in order to avoid the appearance of confounding the Sacred Persons, declared that there were different and dissimilar substances in the Trinity. But after him in time though like him in wickedness came Eunomius, who, though allowing that the Persons of the Holy Trinity were divine and like each other, yet insisted that they were separate from each other; and so while admitting their likeness denied their equality. Macedonius also blaspheming against the Holy Ghost with unpardonable wickedness, while allowing that the Father and the Son were of one substance, termed the Holy Ghost a creature, and so sinned against the entire Divinity, because no injury can be offered to anything in the Trinity without affecting the entire Trinity. But Photinus, though allowing that Jesus who was born of the Virgin was God, yet erred in his notion that His Godhead began with the beginning of His manhood; while Apollinaris through inaccurately conceiving the union of God and man wrongly believed that He was without a human soul. For it is as bad an error to add to our Lord Jesus Christ what does not belong to Him as to rob Him of that which is His. For where He is spoken of otherwise than as He is—even though it seems to add to His glory—yet it is an offense. And so one after another out of reaction against heresies they give rise to heresies, and all teach things different from each other, but equally opposed to the faith. And just lately also, i.e., in our own days, we saw a most poisonous heresy spring up from the greatest city of the Belgæ, and though there was no doubt about its error, yet there was a doubt about its name, because it arose with a fresh head from the old stock of the Ebionites, and so it is still a question whether it ought to be called old or new. For it was new as far as its upholders were concerned; but old in the character of its errors. Indeed it blasphemously taught that our Lord Jesus Christ was born as a mere man, and maintained that the fact that He afterwards obtained the glory and power of the Godhead resulted from His human worth and not from His Divine nature; and by this it taught that He had not always His Divinity by
the right of His very own Divine nature which belonged to Him, but that He obtained it afterwards as a reward for His labours and sufferings. Whereas then it blasphemously taught that our Lord and Saviour was not God at His birth, but was subsequently taken into the Godhead, it was indeed bordering on this heresy which has now sprung up, and is as it were its first cousin and akin to it, and, harmonizing both with Ebionism and these new ones, came in point of time between them, and was linked with them both in point of wickedness. And although there are some others like those which we have mentioned yet it would take too long to describe them all. Nor have we now undertaken to enumerate those that are dead and gone, but to refute those which are novel.

Nicephorus (ca. 800CE): Stichometry in a chronicle by Nicephorus (the Stichometry data is of uncertain date, but much older than Nicephorus’ ninth-century chronicle to which it is attached). [A stichometry is a measurement of lines in a text.]

Antilegomena of the New Testament: Apocalyptic of John, Apocalyptic of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, and Gospel according to the Hebrews, 2,200 lines (300 lines less than the canonical Matthew).

Medieval Europe, 500 to 1000 CE

The Athingians (or Athingani) of the ninth century, were held by Cardinal Hergenrother, to have stood in intimate relation with Emperor Michael II (821-829) and he states that they held the Sabbath (Kirchengeschicte, 1, 527).

Europe, From 1073 (Pope Gregory VII) to 1294 (Pope Boniface VIII and early days of the Inquisition)

A sect of the middle ages, the Pasagians or Pasaginians (Pasagii or Pasagini), appeared in Lombardy in the twelfth century. They are first mentioned in the records of the council of Verona (1184), and are recorded by Bonacorsi (aka Bonacursus) (writing ca 1250) and Gerhard (aka Gregorius) of Bergamo (writing ca 1230). The papal bulls, especially those of Gregory I, and Gregory VII, and Nicolas I, are also sources of information concerning the Pasagini.

Dr. Carl Ullman, in his biography of Gregory of Nazianzum 10, summarizes and quotes, both, Bonacorsi and Gregorius of Bergamo thus:

[The Pasagians] took their name probably from the circumstance, that they (like many other sectarians of that century) were obliged, as birds of passage, to lead a rambling, wandering life, through fear of the persecutions of the dominant Church. The Pasagians were a Judaizing sect; they required the observance of the whole law of Moses, excepting the sacrifices; they kept the Sabbath, observed the Jewish law

10 London, John W. Parker, West Strand. 1870, pg. 343
of meats, and introduced again the rite of circumcision, from whence they also bore
the name of Circumcisi. Besides all this, they denied the divine nature of Christ,
declaring Him certainly to be the highest of created beings, but still only a created
being; and they rejected generally the whole doctrine of the Trinity.

Bonacorsi, in his *Vita Haereticorum*, runs thus:

*In primis dicunt, quod mosaica lex ad litteram observanda, et quod Sabbatum et circumcisionis, et aliae legates observantiae adhuc habere statum debeant. Dicunt enim, quod Christus, Dei filius, non sit aequalis Patri, et quod Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, istae tres personae non sint unus Deus et una substantia. Praeterea ad augmentum sui erroris, omnes ecclesiae doctores, et universaliter totam ecclesiam Romanum judicant et condemnant.* [First, they teach that we should obey the Law of Moses according to the letter – the Sabbath, and circumcision, and the legal precepts still being in force. They also teach that “Christ, the son of God, is not equal with God”, and that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – these three persons are not one God nor one being. This last was, without doubt, their chief crime, for the sake of which they were doomed by the Church of Rome to be persecuted as wandering passaggieri from country to country. Furthermore, to increase their error, they condemn and reject all the church Fathers, and the whole Roman Church.]

Gerhard (Gregorius) of Bergamo (about 1230 CE), in a short extract given by historian Muratori (died 1750) speaks of the Pasagians thus  12:

*Dicunt Christum esse primam et puram creaturam : et Vetus Testamentum esse observandum in solemnibus et circumcisione, et in ciborum perceptione, et in aliis fere omnibus, exceptis in sacrificiis. [They say that Christ is the first and a pure creature; And the Old Testament sacraments should be observed, in regard to circumcision, and in the distinctions of food, and in nearly all other matters, except in the sacrifices.]*

The Old Testament is to be observed as literally as the New; circumcision is to be kept according to the letter. They say that no good person before the advent of Christ descended into the lower regions; and that there is no one in the lower regions and in paradise until now, nor will there be until sentence has been rendered on the day of Judgement.

Compare also, on this sect, Schrockh's Church History, xxix. p. 655; and Mosheim's Ch. Hist. (ii. p. 628 of the German work), where also, in addition to

---

In 1183, Pope Lucius III, in collaboration with Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, at the Council of Verona, issued the Papal Bull Ad Abolendam ("Towards Abolishing"), establishing what is known today as the first Inquisition (aka Medieval Inquisition), naming the Passagines and other sects as heretical:

To abolish the malignity of divers heresies which are lately sprung up in most parts of the world, it is but fitting that the power committed to the church should be awakened, that by the concurring assistance of the imperial strength, both the insolence and malapertness of the heretics in their false designs may be crushed, and the truth of Catholic simplicity shining forth in the holy church, may demonstrate her pure and free from the execrableness of their false doctrines. More particularly, we declare all Catharists, Paterines, and those who call themselves' the poor of Lyons,' the Passagines, Josephists, Arnaldists, to lie under perpetual anathema. 14

In 1231, under Pope Gregory IX, the Inquisition would move to a Christendom-wide operation centered in Rome. Henceforth it would be known as the Papal Inquisition.

Shortly thereafter, a decree of Pope Gregory IX (1236) begins as follows: "We excommunicate and anathematize all the heretics, the Puritans, Paterines, the poor of Lyons, Pasagines, Josephines, Arnaldists, Speronists, and all others of what ever name: their faces might differ, but their tails are en tangled in one knot."

In the year 1243, Frederic II (Germany) issued another decree, which thus begins:

"We condemn to perpetual infamy the Puritans, Paterines, Speronists, Leonists, Arnaldists, Circumcised, Pasagines, Josephines, Garatensians, Albanensians, Francisks, Bagnorols, Comists, Waldensians, …"

German historian Augustus Neander has the following to say on the Pasaginians:

The name of this sect reminds one of the word pasagium (passage), which signifies tour, and was very commonly employed to denote pilgrimages to the East, to the holy sepulchre, crusades. May not this word, then, be regarded as an index, pointing to the origin of the sect as one that came from the East, intimating that it grew out of the intercourse with Palestine? May we not suppose that from very ancient times a party of Judaizing Christians had survived, of which this sect must be regarded as an offshoot? The way in which they expressed themselves concerning Christ as being the firstborn of creation, would point also, more

---

14 Decree of Lucian, c. 9, 10 de haereticis v. 7, quoted by W. Jones in History of the Christian Church, New York, 1824, 2, 13, 14.
directly, at the connection of their doctrine with some older Jewish theology, than at that later, purely Western, origin. 15

Add about Waldensians and Sabbath keepers, Also on the observance of the Decalogue in western Church History.

Chapter Notes

1. The “Travels of Peter” [*Periodoi Petrou*] is very likely referring to texts today found within the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, which describe Peter’s journeys in the course of his ministry in the years after Jesus’ death.

2. The “Ascents of Jacob” [*Anabathmoi Iakobou*], as recorded in the Pseudo Clementine Recognitions indeed records an incident with Paul (whom this document calls “the enemy”) attacking James, presumably during the time when Paul was persecuting the Jesus Movement, then led by James:

“Much blood is shed; there is a confused flight, in the midst of which that enemy attacked Jacob (James the Just), and threw him headlong from the top of the steps; and supposing him to be dead, he cared not to inflict further violence upon him. But our friends lifted him up, for they were both more numerous and powerful than the others; but, from fear of God, they rather allowed themselves to be killed by an inferior force than they would kill others. But when the evening came the priest shut up the Temple and we returned to Jacob’s house, and spent the night there in prayer. Then before daylight we went down to Jericho, to the number of five thousand men.”

3. Relevant Enoch texts referring to the Son of Man:

[1 Enoch.46.1-4] And there I saw the One to Whom belongs the time before time, and His head was white like wool. With Him was another being, whose countenance had the appearance of a man, and his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels. I asked the angel who went with me [...] concerning that son of man and who he was, and whence he was, and why he went with the One to Whom belongs the time before time.

He answered and said to me: ‘This is the son of man who has righteousness, with whom dwells righteousness, and who reveals all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of the spirits has chosen him, and whose lot has the pre-eminence before the Lord of the spirits in uprightness for ever. This son of man whom you have seen shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats and the strong from their thrones, and shall loosen the reins of the strong and break the teeth of the sinners.’

[1 Enoch.48.2-10] And at that hour that Son of Man was named in the presence of the Lord of the spirits, and his name before the the One to Whom belongs the time before time. Yes, before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of the heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of the spirits. He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to stay themselves and not fall, and he shall be the light of the gentiles and the hope of those who are troubled of heart. All who dwell on earth shall fall down and worship before him, and will praise and bless and celebrate with song the Lord of the spirits. For this reason has he been chosen and hidden before Him, before the creation of the world and for ever more. The wisdom of the Lord of the spirits has revealed him to the holy and righteous; for he has preserved the lot of the righteous, because they have hated and despised this world of unrighteousness, and have hated all its works and ways in the name of the Lord of the spirits: for in his name they are saved, and according to his good pleasure has it been in regard to their life.
In these days downcast in countenance shall the kings of the earth have become, and the strong who possess the land because of the works of their hands, for on the day of their anguish and affliction they shall not be able to save themselves. And I will give them over into the hands of My elect: as straw in the fire so shall they burn before the face of the holy, as lead in the water shall they sink before the face of the righteous, and no trace of them shall any more be found.

And on the day of their affliction there shall be rest on the earth, and before them they shall fall and not rise again. There shall be no one to take them with his hands and raise them, for they have denied the Lord of the spirits and His Messiah. The name of the Lord of the spirits be blessed.
APPENDIX I:  
WHO KILLED JESUS  
(AND JESUS’ BROTHER JAMES)?

The short answer:

Ananias Bar Seth (and his family clan of high priests) drove and succeeded in having Jesus put to death, as well as (thirty years later) James the brother of Jesus.

The long answer:

Jesus the Nazorean was put to death after leading a disturbance (the author of Mark calls it "a insurrection") that caused disruption and damages in the precincts of the Temple shortly before Passover in approx 33CE.

(1) The insurrection was aimed at the corrupt leadership of the Temple (dominated by the family of Ananias son of Seth).

At the same time, the actions of Jesus and his followers presented a challenge to the Roman secular powers ruling over the Jewish nation:

(2) in Judea, Rome was represented by Procurator Pontius Pilatus, and
(3) in Galilee, Rome was represented by Herod Antipas, Roman-appointed self-styled "King of the Jews" [Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great) had jurisdiction over Galilee, but nevertheless belonged to the Herodian dynasty, and like his father and brothers, continually held ambitions for regaining status of "King" over Judea (eventually his nephew Herod Agrippa I would regain that title, in 41CE).

Certainly Pilate and Herod Antipas avidly collaborated with Ananias to put Jesus to death. However we will focus on Ananias because his opposition to the Jesus Movement was not only the instigating drive (which Pilate and Herod were more than glad to help execute), but also because Ananias' opposition to the Jesus
Movement spanned 30 years and went far beyond Pilate and Herod Antipas.

Eventually (36CE) Pilate was disgraced and removed by Vitellius (Roman president of Syria, which included Judea and Samaria) due to his perceived incompetence and cruelty. He was removed from his post and sent by Vitellius to Rome to answer to the emperor Claudius (who died before Pilate's arrival in Rome). This is well documented by Philo and by Josephus, among others.

Similarly, Herod Antipas was eventually accused of treason by his relative Herod Agrippa I and, in 39CE, banished by the Roman Emperor Caius Caligula to Lyons, France (his title and possessions being given to Herod Agrippa I).

Ananias son of Seth and his family clan of high-priests:

It was first and foremost the Ananias clan who led the charge to dispose of Jesus. Ananias and his family clan controlled the position of High-Priest more or less continuously from 6CE until 66CE. The clan member officially holding the title of High-Priest during Jesus' ministry was Joseph Bar Qaiapha, son-in-law of Ananias Bar Seth (whom we shall also call Ananias the Elder).

What do we know of this dynasty of High-Priests, the clan of Ananias Bar Seth?

From Wikipedia: Ananias son of Seth (23 BCE – 66 CE) [also known as Ananus or Annas], was appointed as the High Priest of the Roman province of Iudaea in 6 CE by the Roman legate Quirinius (aka Cyrinius). Ananias officially served as High Priest for ten years (6–15 CE), when at the age of 36 he was deposed by the procurator Gratus 'for imposing and executing death penalties which had been forbidden by the imperial government.' Yet while having been officially removed from office, he remained as one of the nations most influential political & social individuals, aided greatly by the use of his five sons and his son-in-law as puppet High Priests until his assassination at the hands of Zealots in 66 CE (the start of the Jewish war against Rome) for advocating surrender to the Romans.

Here is what historian Josephus has to say (writing of the situation in Judea around 62CE, when Albinus was Roman procurator, and Agrippa I was King of Judea): Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. ... He increased in glory every day, and this to a great degree, and had obtained the favor and esteem of the citizens in a signal manner; for he was a great hoarder up of money: he therefore cultivated the friendship of [Roman procurator of Judea] Albinus, and of the [current] high priest, by making them presents; he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of the people, and went to the thrashing-floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give
these tithes to them. So the other high priests acted in the like manner, as did those his servants, without any one being able to prohibit them; so that priests, that of old were wont to be supported with those tithes, died for want of food. [Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews Book 20 Chapter 9 Sections 1.197 and 2.205]

Amazingly a similar accounting of the corrupt Ananias dynasty is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Pesahim 57a; Tosephta Menahot 13:21): Woe to me because of the house of Hanan [Ananias in Hebrew]; woe to me for their calumnies... Woe is me because of the House of Qathros [Qaiaphas], woe is me because of their pens ... For they are High Priests, and their sons are treasurers, and their sons-in-law are trustees, and their servants beat the people with staves." [James Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty*, 2007, pg 210]

These are the dates when the Ananias clan held its power over the Temple and many affairs in Judea:

* Ananias ben Seth (Ananias the Elder) (Appointed by Roman procurator Cyrenius/Quirinius in 6 CE; deposed in 15CE by Roman procurator Gratus for ordering executions without Roman approval, but held his title of "High-Priest" and remained the power behind the Temple priesthood until 66CE).

* Eleazar ben Ananus (16CE – 17CE) appointed and deposed by Roman procurator Gratus. Eventually in 66CE becomes a Zealot and uses his appointment as Temple Governor to the benefit of the Zealots in their war against Rome. Becomes General in charge of Idumea (southern Israel) in the war against Rome.

* Joseph bar Caiaphas (18CE – 36CE) (son-in-law of Ananias the Elder) appointed by Gratus in 18CE. Was high-priest during Pilate's procuratorship, and was removed by Vitellius (Roman president of Syria, which included Judea). [Vitellius also removed Roman procurator Pilate in the same year, due to Pilate's barbarous murders of Samaritans in that year.]

* Jonathan ben Ananus (36CE – 37CE)

* Theophilus ben Ananus (37CE – 41CE)

* Matthias ben Ananus (43CE)

* Jonathan ben Ananus (again; 44CE)

* Ananus ben Ananus (62CE) appointed by Herod Agrippa II. Deposed by Agrippa II in the same year specifically for having ordered the stoning of James the brother of Jesus without approval from Rome (this was done during the transition after Roman procurator Festus died and the new procurator Albinus was still in transit to Judea).
History and Chronology of the Ananias clan and what end it met at the hands of the anti-Roman revolution (led by the Galilean Zealots):

The year 6 CE was the beginning of a 60-year period of insurrection which culminated in the full-fledged War against Rome (starting 66 CE and ending in 70 CE with the complete destruction of the Temple and of the Jewish institutions in Judea and Galilee).

The trigger to these events was the tightening Roman grip over Judea, starting in 6 CE with Quirinius’ census for taxation and his replacement of the people-appointed high-priest (Joazar ben Boethus) with the mafioso Saducee Ananias son of Seth. This sparks the creation of the Zealot Movement by Judas the Galilean (aka Judas of Gamala in the Golan) in partnership with Zaddok the Pharisee. For the next 60 years, Judas and his sons (and grandsons) would wage a on-and-off guerilla war with the Roman authorities, their High-Priesthood Ananias clan collaborators, and the Herodian puppet kings.

Josephus gives his (unflattering) account of Judas the Galilean and the Zealot Movement (note: the reader must keep in mind that Josephus was a general in Galilee during the Jewish war. He changed sides to the Roman side after he was captured. Since then his public attitude towards the revolutionaries is demeaning; not surprisingly, since Josephus' books were written under the patronage of the Roman emperor. Whenever Josephus says "robbers" (lestai in Greek; exact wording used by the author of Mark to describe those that are crucified next to Jesus), the reader should understand "revolutionaries against Rome":

[Antiquities book 18, Ch 1, Sec 1 (4-10)] Yet was there one Judas, a Gaulonite, of a city whose name was Gamala, who, taking with him Zaddok, a Pharisee, became zealous to draw them to a revolt, who both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty. ... All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree; one violent war came upon us after another, and we lost our friends which used to alleviate our pains; there were also very great robberies and murder of our principal men. This was done in pretense indeed for the public welfare, but in reality for the hopes of gain to themselves; whence arose seditions, and from them murders of men, which sometimes fell on those of their own people, (by the madness of these men towards one another, while their desire was that none of the adverse party might be left,) and sometimes on their enemies; a famine also coming upon us, reduced us to the last degree of despair, as did also the taking and demolishing of cities; nay, the sedition at last increased so high, that the very temple of God was burnt down by their enemies' fire. Such were the consequences of this, that the customs of our fathers were altered, and such a change was made, as added a mighty weight toward bringing all to destruction, which these men occasioned by their thus conspiring together; for Judas and Sadduc, who excited a fourth philosophic sect among us, and had a
great many followers therein... (because the infection spread among the younger sort, who were zealous for it), brought the public to destruction.

[Antiquities book 18, Ch 1, Sec 6 (23)] But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy [the sect of the Zealots], Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord. ... And it was in Gessius Florus's time [66 CE] that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans.

From 6CE to 66CE we see Zealots for the Law mounting continuous attempts at overthrowing the corrupt Temple priesthood and kicking out the Roman overlords. Ananias and his clan, benefitting from the Roman patronage, play key roles in attempting to suppress the Zealots.

36 CE: Caiaphas is replaced by Vitellius with another member of the Ananias clan: Jonathan son of Ananias the Elder.

46 CE: Tiberius Alexander (then Roman procurator of Judea) captures the sons of Judas the Galilean (Yaakov and Simon) and executes them. [Josephus Antiquities book 20, ch 5, Sec 2 (102)].

56 CE: Zealot mercenaries (employed by Felix, Roman procurator of Judea, due to a power rivalry) murder high-priest Jonathan (probably Jonathan son of Ananias). These Zealot mercenaries are Sicarii (men wearing hidden daggers). That these revolutionaries were Messianic Zealots is made clear by Josephus: [Antiquities, Book 20, Ch 8, Sec 5-6 (164 - 168)] Certain of those robbers went up to the city, as if they were going to worship God, while they had daggers under their garments, and by thus mingling themselves among the multitude they slew Jonathan and as this murder was never avenged, the robbers went up with the greatest security at the festivals after this time; and having weapons concealed in like manner as before, and mingling themselves among the multitude, they slew certain of their own enemies, and were subservient to other men for money; and slew others, not only in remote parts of the city, but in the temple itself also; for they had the boldness to murder men there, without thinking of the impiety of which they were guilty. And this seems to me to have been the reason why God, out of his hatred of these men's wickedness, rejected our city; and as for the temple, he no longer esteemed it sufficiently pure for him to inhabit therein, but brought the Romans upon us, and threw a fire upon the city to purge it; and brought upon us, our wives, and children, slavery, as desirous to make us wiser by our calamities. These works, that were done by the robbers, filled the city with all sorts of impiety. And now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow...
them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God. And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishments of their folly; for Felix brought them back, and then punished them.

Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Ch 13, Sec 3-4 (254-260) ...There sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the day time, and in the midst of the city; this they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies; and when any fell down dead, the murderers became a part of those that had indignation against them; by which means they appeared persons of such reputation, that they could by no means be discovered. The first man who was slain by them was Jonathan the high priest, after whose death many were slain every day, while the fear men were in of being so served was more afflicting than the calamity itself; and while every body expected death every hour, as men do in war, so men were obliged to look before them, and to take notice of their enemies at a great distance; nor, if their friends were coming to them, durst they trust them any longer; but, in the midst of their suspicions and guarding of themselves, they were slain. Such was the celerity of the plotters against them, and so cunning was their contrivance. There was also another body of wicked men gotten together, not so impure in their actions, but more wicked in their intentions, which laid waste the happy state of the city no less than did these murderers. These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretense of Divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government; and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would there show them the signals of liberty. But Felix thought this procedure was to be the beginning of a revolt; so he sent some horsemen and footmen both armed, who destroyed a great number of them.

56 CE: The Ananias clan revolts against Agrippa II's nomination of a outsider high-priest:
Josephus, Antiquities, Book 20, Ch 8, sec 8 (179-181) About this time [56CE] king Agrippa II gac the high-priesthood to Ismael son of Fabi. And now arose a sedition between the high priests and the principal men of the multitude of Jerusalem; each of which got them a company of the boldest sort of men, and of those that loved innovations about them, and became leaders to them; and when they struggled together, they did it by casting reproachful words against one another, and by throwing stones also. And there was nobody to reprove them; but these disorders were done after a licentious manner in the city, as if it had no government over it. And such was the impudence and boldness that had seized on the high priests, that they had the hardiness to send their servants into the threshing-floors, to take away those tithes that were due to the priests, insomuch that it so fell out that the poorest sort of the priests died for want. To this degree did the violence of the seditious prevail over all right and justice.
63 CE: Ananias son of Ananias son of Seth is made High Priest by Agrippa II. Roman procurator Festus dies and before the new procurator arrives, Ananias has James the brother of Jesus stoned to death: [Josephus, Antiquities, Book 20, Ch 9, Sec 1 (197-203)] And now Caesar Nero, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. And the king [Agrippa II] deprived Joseph Cabi son of Simon of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa II], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrin without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa II took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus son of Damneus high priest.

Amazingly, in spite of the removal of his son as high-priest, the elder Ananias son of Seth maintains his role as "boss" of the High-Priesthood mafia, while the fight between the High-Priesthood and the Zealots intensifies, with casualties on both sides: [Josephus, Antiquities, Book 20, Ch 9, Sec 2-3 (204-210)] Now as soon as Albinus was come to the city of Jerusalem, he used all his endeavors and care that the country might be kept in peace, and this by destroying many of the Sicarii. But as for the high priest, Ananias [son of Seth] he increased in glory every day, and this to a great degree, and had obtained the favor and esteem of the citizens in a signal manner; for he was a great hoarder up of money: he therefore cultivated the friendship of Albinus, and of the high priest [Jesus bar Damneus], by making them presents; he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of the people, and went to
the thrashing-floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give these tithes to them. So the other high priests acted in the like manner, as did those his servants, without any one being able to prohibit them; so that [some of the] priests, that of old were wont to be supported with those tithes, died for want of food. But now the Sicarii went into the city by night, just before the festival, which was now at hand, and took the scribe belonging to the governor of the temple, whose name was Eleazar, who was the son of Ananias [son of Seth] the high priest, and bound him, and carried him away with them; after which they sent to Ananias, and said that they would send the scribe to him, if he would persuade Albinus to release ten of those prisoners which he had caught of their party; so Ananias was plainly forced to persuade [Roman procurator] Albinus, and gained his request of him. This was the beginning of greater calamities; for the robbers perpetually contrived to catch some of Ananias's servants; and when they had taken them alive, they would not let them go, till they thereby recovered some of their own Sicarii. And as they were again become no small number, they grew bold, and were a great affliction to the whole country.

64 CE: Gessius Florus succeeds Albinus as procurator of Judea. Florus is ten times as corrupt and evil as his predecessors (Albinus, Festus, Felix, etc). Florus finally ignites the full scale rebellion of the entire Jewish nation (Galilee and Judea) and the Galilean Zealots lead it. For a description of Florus evil acts which ignite the full scale War against Rome, see Josephus Antiquities Book 20, Ch 11 and Josephus Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Chs 14-15.

66 CE: the War begins (amazingly note that Eleazar son of Ananias actually has switched sides and is now on the side of the rebellion!!):
[Josephus Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Ch 17, Sec 2 (408-409)] And at this time it was that some of those that principally excited the people to go to war made an assault upon a certain fortress called Masada. They took it by treachery, and slew the Romans that were there, and put others of their own party to keep it. At the same time Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, a very bold youth, who was at that time governor of the temple, persuaded those that officiated in the Divine service to receive no gift or sacrifice for any foreigner. And this was the true beginning of our war with the Romans; for they rejected the sacrifice of Caesar on this account.

Shortly after this, Ananias the Elder sends his son Simon ben Ananias to procurator Florus, asking for Florus to intervene against the rebellion. Yet the rebellion proceeds and grows. The rebels burn the house of the Ananias the Elder and take over the Antonia Fortress on the Temple Mount.

66 CE: The third son of Judas the Galilean, named Menahem, takes the baton as leader of the revolution.
[Josephus Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Ch 17, Sec 8 (433-434)] In the mean time, one
Manahem, the son of Judas, that was called the Galilean, (who was a very cunning sophister, and had formerly reproached the Jews under Cyrenius, that after God they were subject to the Romans,) took some of the men of note with him, and retired to Masada, where he broke open king Herod's armory, and gave arms not only to his own people, but to other robbers also. These he made use of for a guard, and returned in the state of a king to Jerusalem; he became the leader of the sedition.

One of Menahem's first targets: the Ananias clan. He succeeds in killing the high-priest Ananias son of Ananias the Elder (recall that Ananias son of Ananias the Elder was the one who had James the brother of Jesus stoned). Perhaps this is too much for Eleazar son of Ananias the Elder to bear, and he turns against Menahem:

Josephus Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Ch 17, Sec 9] **But on the next day the high priest was caught where he had concealed himself in an aqueduct; he was slain, together with Hezekiah his brother, by the robbers: hereupon the seditious besieged the towers, and kept them guarded, lest any one of the soldiers should escape. Now the overthrow of the places of strength, and the death of the high priest Ananias, so puffed up Manahem, that he became barbarously cruel; and as he thought he had no antagonist to dispute the management of affairs with him, he was no better than an insupportable tyrant; but Eleazar and his party, when words had passed between them, how it was not proper when they revolted from the Romans, out of the desire of liberty, to betray that liberty to any of their own people, and to bear a lord, who, though he should be guilty of no violence, was yet meaner than themselves; as also, that in case they were obliged to set some one over their public affairs, it was fitter they should give that privilege to any one rather than to him; they made an assault upon him in the temple; for he went up thither to worship in a pompous manner, and adorned with royal garments, and had his followers with him in their armor. But Eleazar and his party fell violently upon him ... they took him alive, and drew him out before them all; they then tortured him with many sorts of torments, and after all slew him.**

Now Eleazar takes the leadership of the rebellion. Foolishly, the new Zealots (under the leadership of Eleazar) entrust the leadership of the Jerusalem defense against the Romans to Eleazar's father: Ananias the Elder. Eleazar son of Ananias assumes role of General defending Idumea (south of Judea). (see Josephus Wars, Book 20, Ch 3 sec 563 & Ch 4 sec 566).

But Ananias the Elder is betrays his true colors and again seeks to disuade the rebels. Ultimately this costs him his life: [Josephus Wars, Book 4 Ch 11 & 12] **Ananus encouraged the multitude to go against the zealots, although he knew how difficult it would be to disperse them, because of their multitude, and their youth, and the courage of their souls; but chiefly because of their consciousness of what they had done, since they would not yield, as not so much as hoping for pardon at the last for those their enormities. However, Ananus resolved to undergo whatever sufferings might come upon him, rather than overlook things, now they were in such great confusion. So the multitude**
cried out to him, to lead them on against those whom he had described in his exhortation to them, and every one of them was most readily disposed to run any hazard whatsoever on that account. Now while Ananus was choosing out his men, and putting those that were proper for his purpose in array for fighting, the zealots got information of his undertaking, (for there were some who went to them, and told them all that the people were doing,) and were irritated at it, and leaping out of the temple in crowds, and by parties, spared none whom they met with. Upon this Ananus got the populace together on the sudden, who were more numerous indeed than the zealots, but inferior to them in arms, because they had not been regularly put into array for fighting; but the alacrity that every body showed supplied all their defects on both sides, the citizens taking up so great a passion as was stronger than arms, and deriving a degree of courage from the temple more forcible than any multitude whatsoever; and indeed these citizens thought it was not possible for them to dwell in the city, unless they could cut off the robbers that were in it. The zealots also thought that unless they prevailed, there would be no punishment so bad but it would be inflicted on them. So their conflicts were conducted by their passions;

The end: The Zealots, with reinforcements from Idumean fighters, take over Jerusalem and assassinate the entire high-priesthood associated with Ananias the Elder: But the rage of the Idumeans was not satiated by these slaughters; but they now betook themselves to the city, and plundered every house, and slew every one they met; and for the other multitude, they esteemed it needless to go on with killing them, but they sought for the high priests, and the generality went with the greatest zeal against them; and as soon as they caught them they slew them, and then standing upon their dead bodies, in way of jest, upbraided Ananus with his kindness to the people, and Jesus with his speech made to them from the wall. Nay, they proceeded to that degree of impiety, as to cast away their dead bodies without burial, although the Jews used to take so much care of the burial of men, that they took down those that were condemned and crucified, and buried them before the going down of the sun. I should not mistake if I said that the death of Ananus was the beginning of the destruction of the city.

And so ended the Ananias bar Seth clan, at the hands of the Zealot revolutionaries.
APPENDIX II:
WHEN DID JESUS LIVE?

What evidence is there regarding the time of Jesus' life and ministry?

(1) The letters of Saul of Tarsus (also known as Paul) [we only look at those letters which are widely accepted by scholars as authentic, i.e. written by Saul of Tarsus and not by latter authors writing in his name. Those authentic letters are: Galatians, written circa late 49CE-early 50CE; First Thessalonians, written circa 50-51CE; First Corinthians, written circa 54-57CE; Romans, written circa 55-57CE; Second Corinthians, written circa 55-57CE; Philippians, written circa 60-61CE; Philemon, written circa 60-61CE; Philippians, written circa 61CE].

Even though we do not subscribe to Saul of Tarsus' teachings, there is certainly historical data that can be derived from the letters that he wrote.

(1a) In his letter to Galatians it is clear that Saul of Tarsus is writing as a contemporary of Jesus' brother James: (Galatians 1:18-19) *Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Kephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother.*

From the events described and the type of Greek used, we know that Saul wrote Galatians around 49 CE. The referenced meeting with James would have occurred one to fifteen years earlier (i.e. between 34CE and 48CE). We know also that Jesus was already dead by the time of this meeting.

So his death could not have occurred later than 48CE.

But how early could it have occurred? Let's do the math: IF James was 50 yrs old at this meeting with Paul (he could not have been older because we know from historian Josephus that James was still active in 62CE when he was killed by high priest Ananias Bar Ananias), and IF Jesus was 10 years older than James, then Jesus (if alive) would have been 60 at the time when the meeting between James and Paul. IF Jesus died as young as age 20, that would place Jesus' death at 40 years before this meeting, i.e. 40 years before 34CE to 48CE. All other possibilities (e.g if James was younger, or Jesus was younger) yield a date that is later in time for Jesus' death.

So from the above, Jesus' death could not have occurred before 6 BCE.
(1b) In his 1st letter to Corinthians (written between 54 and 57CE) Paul articulates the tradition that he has received. It is clear that he understands Jesus' resurrection appearances to have occurred recently (i.e. within less than one normal life-span): (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) *For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Kephas [Kefa], then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

From this, we can surmise that:

- Jesus death could have occurred no later than 57CE.

- If the adults to whom Paul claims Jesus appeared were about age 70 at the time of Paul's 1st Corinthians letter, and they were as young as 20 when they received the appearances, that would place Jesus' death no earlier than 50 years before 54CE, i.e. no earlier than 4CE. All other possibilities yield a date that is later.

In summary, looking at 1a and 1b above, the letters of Paul place Jesus's death no earlier than 4CE and no later than 48 CE.

Now, Paul's letters are one independent evidence. But it is necessary to have several independent sources.

2) The author of the Gospel of Mark.

The author of Mark (the oldest Gospel, written around 75CE) describes Jesus' ministry coming AFTER John the Baptist. And we know from historian Josephus that John the Baptist did his movement during the reign of Herod Antipas (around 30CE). Hence from this data we can say that: Jesus' death would have occurred no earlier than 30CE.

In fact the author of Mark places Jesus' death as approved by Pontius Pilate. Pontius Pilate governed Judea from 26 to 36CE. Thus according to the author of Mark, Jesus' death would have occurred no later than 36CE.
Appendix II: When did Jesus Live?

But is the Author of Mark a independent source? Not necessarily. It is certainly possible that the author of Mark could have had access to Paul's letters, and derived his narrative with date assumptions coming from those letters.

We know that the authors of what we know today as "Gospel of Matthew" and "Gospel of Luke" had access to Mark and probably to Paul's letters. Therefore, we will not list those gospels as sources providing original (i.e. independent) information.

The sayings gospel Q would be original information, however, it does not provide any data regarding dates.

3) Historian Flavius Josephus (born ca37 - died ca 100CE): "Antiquities of the Jews" and "The Wars of the Jews" written approximately between 80 and 90 CE.

Although Josephus' writings were maintained by Christians, and it is believed that some adulteration of his references to Jesus were made, it is fairly certain that he DID make references to Jesus and people in Jesus' life. In particular, Josephus makes extensive reference to Jesus' brother James, and records his death in 62CE at the hands of High Priest Ananias bar Ananias.

And now [Nero] Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus [Governor of Judea] , sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. Now [at this time also,] the king [Herod Agrippa] decided to deprive Joseph [also called Cabi, son of Simon (also former High Priest himself)] of the highpriesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus [called Anas in NT. Anas was a former high priest and father in law of Joseph bar Caiaphas who was high priest during Jesus' time]. This son of Ananus was also called Ananus. Now the report goes, that this elder Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons [and a son in law, Joseph bar Caiaphas, who instigated and collaborated with Pilate to put Jesus to death] who had all performed the office of high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened with any other of our high priests. But the younger Ananus ... was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent. He was also of the sect of the Saducees [Zadukim in Hebrew], who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews... . When therefore Ananus was of this disposition, he thought that he now had a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority] . Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he [Ananus bar Ananus] assembled the sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was Iakobos [Iakobos is Greek for Jacob, which is James in English] and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned. But those who seemed the most equitabile of the citizens [of Jerusalem] , since they were most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done [by Ananus] and sent to the king [Herod Agrippa] requesting him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for what he had already done was not to be justified. More so, some of them went also to meet Albinus [Nero's newly

430
appointed Governor of Judea], as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a Sanhedrin without his consent; whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus and threatened that we would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him when he had ruled as high priest only three months, and put in place Jesus bar Damneus as high priest.

What can we derive from the above data, regarding the time of Jesus' ministry and death? If James died in 62CE (that's when Albinus became procurator of Judea), Jesus would have died no later than 62CE. If James was active at this time (let's say he was no older than 65) and if Jesus was as older than James by as much as 10 years and was crucified as young as age 20, then Jesus' death could have occurred no earlier than 55 years before 62CE, i.e. no earlier than 7CE.

4) A further reference to Jesus comes from Cornelius Tacitus, generally considered the greatest Roman historian. In his Annals, written in 116CE, Tacitus describes the events surrounding emperor Nero and his use of Roman Christians as scapegoats to the great fire of 64CE, that ruined the city. In clarifying who these "Christians" were for his audience, Tacitus makes the following reference: The founder of the name "Christians" was a so called "Christ", executed in the reign of Tiberius by Procurator Pontius Pilate. Suppressed for a time, the deadly superstition erupted again, not only in Judea, the origin of this evil, but also in the city [Rome], where all things horrible and shameful from everywhere come together and become popular.

Certainly Tacitus is not fond of Jesus or the Christians in Rome, therefore he would have no reason to perpetuate any inaccuracies that could have been claimed by Paul or the author of Mark. It is probable that his reference is independent, and obtained from the Roman imperial archives.

Tacitus' evidence would place Jesus' death no earlier than 26CE and no later than 36CE.

5) Mandaean scriptures.

The Mandaeans (literally "Mandaean" means "Gnostic" in Aramaic) are a group living in Iraq, who accept John the Baptist as a last prophet. They have been recently persecuted by Islam and are increasingly in a diaspora today.

They regard Jesus as a follower of John the Baptist, but as one who strayed from the right path and deceived Israel. In their "Book of John" ("Sedra D'Yahia") they mention Jesus' baptism at the hands of John:

... Yeshu Messiah, son of Miryam ... went to the shore of the Jordan and said [unto Yahyā]: "Yahyā, baptize me with thy baptizing and utter o'er me also the
Name thy wont is to utter. If I show myself as thy pupil, I will remember thee then in my writing. I attest not myself as thy pupil, then wipe out my name from thy page."

Thereon Yahyā answered Yeshu Messiah in Jerusalem: "Thou hast lied to the Jews and deceived the priests. Thou hast cut off their seed from the men and from the women bearing and being pregnant. The sabbath, which Moses made binding, hast thou relaxed in Jerusalem. Thou hast lied unto them with horns and spread abroad disgrace with the shofar."  [The Book of John / Sedra d'Yahia, Chapter 30: JOHN AND THE BAPTISM OF JESUS. Translation by G.R.S. Mead.]

Although the Mandaeans have a low regard for Jesus, we nevertheless have a tradition here which is probably independent from our other sources (Paul, Mark, Josephus, Tacitus and Islam). Although Mandaean texts have been modified over time (especially as the Tigris-Euphrates area came under Islam), it is still highly unlikely that their negative relationship with Islam would have driven the Mandaeans to falsely insert Jesus as a person living in John the Baptist's time. Therefore we believe that the Mandaean texts constitute a additional independent source of data linking the timing of Jesus to the timing of Yohannan (who we know from Eusebius perished around 30CE), hence we can surmise that Jesus' ministry and death would have been no earlier than the start of Yohannan's ministry, i.e. around 25CE.

6) Absence of evidence prior to Saul of Tarsus' letters.

No document written before 49CE exists which talks about Jesus. If Jesus ministry had taken place much earlier than 49CE then one could not explain why all the written mentions of Jesus start only in 49CE.

There are documents such as Jewish polemical references, which refer to a Yeshu Ha Notri (Jesus the Nazorean) living in the time of the Maccabees (60 BCE), however those documents are written many centuries into the common era.

**Conclusion:** Our five sources (Paul's Galatians and 1Corinthians, Mark, Josephus' Antiquities, Tacitus's Annals, and the Mandaean Book of John) are likely independent from each other and do not contradict each other regarding the dates when Jesus could have ministered and died. Even if some of these five sources are mutually dependent (e.g. if "Mark" derived its data from Paul), it is still highly unlikely that ALL of these are mutually dependent. Hence, from a probability standpoint, it is likely that the information that they convey regarding timing of Jesus' ministry and death is in fact historically reliable information. When we look at all five sources, they collectively tells us that:

Jesus's death could have occurred no earlier than 30CE and no later than 36CE.
History of the Original Jesus Movement

QED
Quod Erat Demonstrandum
References


—. *The Books of the Laws of Countries*. Translated by Cureton in Spicilegium Syriacum. 1855.


Migne, J.P. *Patrologia Graeca.* n.d.


Pixner, Bargill. *Paths of the Messiah and sites of the early church from Galilee to Jerusalem.* n.d.


