

New Testament Archaeology

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New Testament Archaeology

Even though the time period for the New Testament is appreciably shorter than for the Old Testament, archaeology has made important connections between the texts of the Bible and the first century excavation of material finds in the Mediterranean world. Here, we explore some of these important connections. The material can be divided into three broad categories, the archaeology of Palestine that connects directly or indirectly with the life of Jesus, the archaeology of the Roman world that connects with the history of the early church, and the early texts of the New Testament. Beginning with the architectural marvels of Herod the Great, the insights of archaeology can provide important background to the story of Jesus. With the expansion of Christianity into Syria, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome, much can be gleaned about the cities to which Paul traveled and the cultures he encountered there. Finally, the manuscripts of the New Testament itself were written, copied and dispersed throughout the early Christian world, and today well over 5000 Greek manuscripts relating to the text of the New Testament are known.

The biggest differential between the archaeology that connects with the New Testament and the archaeology that connects with the Old Testament is surely time. While most of the history in the Old Testament period covers a millennium and a half, in the New Testament the time is confined to not more than a century. While in the Old Testament one moves from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age to the Persian Period, the New Testament falls into a single sector, the Roman Period. At the same time, the fact that material evidence relating to the New Testament lies not as far back in antiquity is a benefit. In many excavations, archaeologists reach strata that date to the Roman Period long before they reach strata from Iron Age II, for instance. The excavation at Bethsaida, one of the villages where Jesus performed “most of his mighty works” (Mt. 11:20-21) is a golden example, since the mound was not resettled after the first Jewish revolt. Hence, the very first occupation level the excavation team encountered was from the 1st century AD!

Backgrounds to New Testament Archaeology

The Persian Period ended in the 4th century BC when Alexander III (the Great) conquered Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and Medo-Persia. After his premature death at

the age of thirty-three, Alexander's empire was left to his generals, who continued to carry out his vision of spreading Hellenistic culture throughout the Near Eastern world. Many Palestinian cities were won over to the Greek way of life, and the homeland of the Jews began to see the erection of forums, gymnasiums and amphitheaters, while the idols of Greek deities were paid homage in many places. The influence of Greek culture, and later, the similar influence of Roman culture is reflected in the appearance of the sun god Helios and the signs of the zodiac which were displayed in mosaics in a number of synagogues.¹ All these were threats to the faith and culture of Israel. When Antiochus IV Epiphanes attempted to abolish the Jewish religion altogether, a priest and his sons led the Maccabean revolt in 168-167 BC. They drove out the Syrian-Greek armies, and for about a century managed to perpetuate a state of independence. Then, in 63 BC Pompey conquered Palestine for Rome. From then until long after the time of the New Testament, the homeland of the Jews was under Roman occupation.

Technological Advances in the Hellenistic Period

In some ways, the Hellenistic Period was similar to the 20th century with respect to technological advancement. The addition of a foot disc on the potter's wheel, for instance, streamlined the entire industry (prior to this time, throwing pottery on a wheel required turning the wheel by hand). Another Hellenistic contribution was the bivalve mold with "keys" (small matching indentations enabling the craftsman to bring together the two halves perfectly). Artisans also learned how to cast glass and metal using the lost wax process, producing highly elaborate jewelry, icons and other household objects and tools. Glass-blowing was discovered about the middle of the 1st century BC, and floor mosaics made from cut stone cubes called "tesserae" became the pride of wealthy citizens who could afford such luxury. A geographically and seasonally adjusted sundial derived from an increased knowledge of astronomy enabling a more accurate measurement of time. The first surgical instruments found to date come from the 200s BC, and within a hundred years, large quantities of surgical instruments began to appear. The common horseshoe, also, comes from this period, which in turn enhanced the stamina of horses and affected the transportation industry and the movement of armies. Hence, the period shortly before the time of Jesus saw a veritable explosion of technological advances affecting life in Palestine and throughout the Mediterranean world.²

One of the most fascinating discoveries has been the extensive underground olive oil factory about 35 miles south of Jerusalem that produced olive oil for export.

¹ L. Roussin, "Helios in the Synagogue," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 2001), pp. 52-56.

² A Levy, "Small Inventions? They Changed How People Lived in the Hellenistic Age," *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1990), pp. 32-41.

Maresha, a site in the *shephelah* (foothills), contains a subterranean labyrinth of hundreds of caves. In addition to their use as burial tombs, these caves became the site of some twenty-two underground olive oil factories, with crushing basins (about 5' to 6' in diameter), presses, and stone weights (about 800 lbs. each). Residents in Maresha a century and more before the birth of Christ produced nearly 300 metric tons of olive oil annually, using olives from nearby orchards.³

The Architecture of Herod the Great

By the far, the most visually impressive advances during the early Roman occupation of Palestine came from the mind of Herod the Great, the king who attempted to kill Jesus when he was an infant. Herod, the son of an Idumean father, became governor of Galilee in 47 BC, and by the end of the next decade had become the provincial king of the Jews under Roman occupation, a position he held until his death in 4 BC. His reign was marked by splendor, and he constructed theaters, amphitheaters, hippodromes, fortresses and temples throughout Palestine.

Many of Herod's constructions clearly were gratuitous attempts to ingratiate himself to Caesar Augustus. At Omrit in northern Galilee, for instance, Herod built a Roman temple as part of the growing emperor cult in which Caesar was depicted as a god.⁴ He built similar temples at Caesarea Maritima on the seacoast and at Samaria-Sebaste in central Israel.⁵ Even more elaborate, Herod constructed palace-fortresses in various places, including Herodium, about eight miles south of Jerusalem,⁶ Jericho on the Jordan River, and Masada on the southwest coast of the Dead Sea. At Masada, built on a lofty escarpment with nearly sheer cliffs rising more than 1400' above the sea level, Herod built a casemate wall with some thirty towers to enclose the summit, a system of cisterns and aqueducts for water storage, and four palace complexes.⁷

In honor of Caesar Augustus, Herod also built Caesarea-Maritima, a coastal port with an artificial harbor that became the seat of Roman government in Palestine. Here, residents could attend performances at the theater, stroll along a colonnaded thoroughfare, the *Cardo Maximus*, some 54' wide and nearly a mile long, or sail for

³ A. Kloner, "Underground Metropolis: The Subterranean World of Maresha," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1997), pp. 24-35, 67.

⁴ J. Overman, J. Olive and M. Nelson, "Discovering Herod's Shrine to Augustus," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 2003), pp. 40-49, 67-68.

⁵ K. Holum, "The Temple Platform: Progress Report on the Excavations," in *Caesarea Papers II*, ed. K. Holum, A. Raban and J. Patrich, *Journal of Roman Archaeology (JRA)* Supplement Series 35 (Portsmouth, RI: JRA, 1999), pp. 13-40; J. Crowfoot, K. Kenyon and E. Sukenik, *Samaria-Sebaste I: The Buildings* (London: Palestinian Exploration Fund, 1942), pp. 123-132 and D. Barag, "King Herod's Royal Castle at Samaria-Sebaste," *Palestinian Exploration Quarterly* 125 (1993), pp. 4-8.

⁶ E. Netzer, "Searching for Herod's Tomb," *BAR* (May/Jun 1983), pp. 30-51.

⁷ G. Friend and S. Fine, "Masada," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.428-430.

other Mediterranean ports from between the two towers at the harbor entrance. On a rather inhospitable beach with no natural inlet, Herod constructed a huge, curved stone breakwater more than 200' wide. He built a smaller stone mole to the north of the breakwater, thus creating a safely enclosed area of about 3½ acres where previously there had been no possible harbor. Underwater archaeologists have explored the remains of the massive breakwaters, including the pouring of high quality concrete that hardened underwater into huge blocks weighing more than 50 tons each.⁸ The city itself Herod built on a lavish scale, and it included a palace, civic halls, an amphitheater, a hippodrome for sporting events, warehouse vaults, sea-flushed sewers, and a high defense wall.⁹ Water for this new metropolis was secured by an elaborately engineered system in which Herod constructed an aqueduct for some 6½ miles to the foot of Mt. Carmel, where it connect to a 6 mile tunnel cut through the limestone hills to a water source on the opposite side of the mountain.¹⁰

Herod's crowning architectural achievement, however, was his reconstruction of the temple mount in Jerusalem.¹¹ Archaeologists have uncovered enough of Herodian Jerusalem to justify the words of Pliny the Elder that it was "the most renowned city of the Orient".¹² A barrel-vaulted aqueduct carved from bedrock brought collected rainwater into the city. There were public latrines with flushing channels.¹³ On the temple mount, Herod exhibited his most elaborate reconstruction. He not only refurbished the temple along the lines of a Roman design and rebuilt the associated structures into the largest temple complex in classical antiquity,¹⁴ he reshaped the entire topography of the mountain, buttressing it with huge retaining walls so that its summit surface area was doubled. The flat, top surface of the temple mount now would occupy the space of five football fields! To do this, Herod quarried gigantic ashlar, some as large as 46' x 10' x 10' and weighing more than 400 tons—heavier, in fact, than the giant stones of either Stonehenge or the Pyramids! These stones were cut with a smooth finish, a slightly raised center boss, and flat margins, and they fit together so precisely that no mortar was needed. Moving such huge blocks of stone was an engineering feat in itself, since they were quarried more than half a mile away. One theory is that they were shaped first as round stones, easier for

⁸ R. Hohlfelder, "Caesarea Beneath the Sea," *BAR* (May/Jun 1982), pp. 42-47.

⁹ B. Burrell, K. Gleason and E. Netzer, "Uncovering Herod's Seaside Palace," *BAR* (May/Jun 1993), pp. 50-57, 76.

¹⁰ Actually, there are two aqueducts side-by-side, the earlier one probably built by Herod and the later one by the Emperor Hadrian, cf. R. Bull, "Caesarea Maritima: The Search for Herod's City," *BAR* (May/Jun 1982), pp. 29-30.

¹¹ J. Patrich, "Reconstructing the Magnificent Temple Herod Built," *BR* (Oct 1988), pp. 16-29.

¹² *Natural History*, V, XV, 70.

¹³ R. Reich and Y. Billig, "Triple Play: The Many Lives of Jerusalem's Building Blocks," and H. Shanks, "The Puzzling Channels in Ancient Latrines," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 2002), pp. 47-51, 70.

¹⁴ D. Jacobson, "Herod's Roman Temple," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 2002), pp. 18-27, 60-61.

rolling, and squared only after they were in place.¹⁵ Entrances into the temple complex were effected by a series of steps, gates and arched stairways. One of the most fascinating discoveries has been a large stone incised with the inscription, “To the place of trumpeting to []”. This stone once adorned the top of the Temple Mount walls above the southwest corner, a place where a priest stood to announce with a trumpet blast the beginning and end of Sabbath.¹⁶ Other important discovered features have included the posted notices barring gentiles from the Jewish inner courts of the temple and the “steps of the rabbis” on the south face where rabbis met to discuss the finer points of Torah (and, presumably, where Jesus may have posed questions to the rabbis when he was a 12-year old boy).¹⁷ *Miqva’ot* (baptismal pools) for ceremonial cleansing also have been excavated as well as an appendage on the southwest corner of what once belonged to a magnificent stairway leading from the Temple Mount into the southwest valley.

Excavations on the Temple Mount are complicated, to say the least, since the site is not only sacred for Jews but also for Muslims.¹⁸ In addition, debates between archaeologists over the exact location of the temple on the mount are ongoing.¹⁹

The World of Jesus’ Early Life

The Birth of Jesus

The gospel accounts of Jesus’ childhood are brief, detailing the events of his birth, his temporary removal to Egypt, his return to Nazareth in Galilee, and a trip to Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. Still, some relevant archaeological details can be gleaned from this period.

When Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph had traveled to Bethlehem in response to a census by Quirinius, the Syrian Governor (Lk. 2:2). From Josephus, we know of a Quirinius who conducted a census in AD 6,²⁰ but this date is too late for the one described by Luke, since Jesus was born before Herod died in 4 BC. This anomaly, in turn, has led to a criticism of Luke’s accuracy. However, a recently discovered

¹⁵ M. Stein, “How Herod Moved Gigantic Blocks to Construct Temple Mount,” *BAR* (May/Jun 1981), pp. 42-46.

¹⁶ K. and L. Ritmeyer, “Reconstructing Herod’s Temple Mount in Jerusalem,” *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1989), pp. 34. This “place of trumpeting” also is mentioned in Flavius Josephus, cf. *Wars of the Jews*, 4.9.12.

¹⁷ B. Mazar, “Excavations Near Temple Mount Reveal Splendors of Herodian Jerusalem,” *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1980), pp. 47, 49.

¹⁸ H. Shanks, “Excavating in the Shadow of the Temple Mount,” *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1986) pp. 20-38.

¹⁹ D. Jacobsen, “Sacred Geometry: Unlocking the Secret of the Temple Mount” *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1999), pp. 42-53, 62-63 and (Sep/Oct 1999), pp. 54-63, 74 and L. Ritmeyer, “Where Was the Temple? The Debate Goes On,” *BAR* (Mar/Apr 2000), pp. 52-59, 72.

²⁰ *Antiquities*, 18.2.1.

coin cites a Quirinius as proconsul of Syria and Cilicia from 11 BC until after the death of Herod, suggesting that there were two administrators by this same name (or else, one person with two administrative terms).²¹ Such coins are important in dating, since they often contain the date of minting, the impress of current or past administrators or other data that yield historical specificity.²² A recovered papyrus census form from AD 104 indicates that people living in the provinces had to return to their own homes for registration, a striking parallel to the trip made by Mary and Joseph.²³ In any case, Luke's historical accuracy can no longer be impugned on these grounds.

A cave under the present Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem long has been identified as the place of Jesus' birth—since before the time of Emperor Hadrian (early 2nd century). St. Jerome (5th century) speaks of a grove in honor of Tammuz (Adonis) planted at the cave, while Paulinus of Nola indicates the grove was planted by Hadrian in a deliberate effort to dishonor the Christian tradition of Jesus' birth.²⁴ Justin Martyr (early 2nd century) testifies to the cave as the place where Jesus was born.²⁵ The current double church built over the cave, a replacement of an earlier church destroyed in the Samaritan revolt of AD 529, dates to the Emperor Justinian (AD 527-565). One half is Roman Catholic and the other half Eastern Orthodox. The tradition of this cave as Jesus' birthplace is so early, the likelihood of it being authentic is strong.

After Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph visited the temple to offer the appropriate sacrifice, which for the poor was to be turtledoves or pigeons (Lk. 2:24; cf. Lv. 12:6-8). Uncovered by archaeologist Benjamin Mazar near the temple mount and dating to the 1st century is a stone vessel inscribed with the Hebrew letters קרבן (qorban = sacrifice), and incised on the vessel are two birds—doves or pigeons.²⁶

The Childhood of Jesus

According to the gospels, Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a small, insignificant village in southern Galilee. An ancient water source, a well popularly known as Mary's well, still exists and probably was a primary water source for Jesus' family.²⁷

²¹ J. McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p. 154.

²² J. Rousseau and R. Arav, *Jesus & His World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 55-68.

²³ British Museum Papyrus 904, cf. F. Kenyon and H. Bell, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1907), 3.125, plate 30.

²⁴ McRay, pp. 156, notes on 385.

²⁵ *Dialogue with Trypho* 78.

²⁶ M. Mulholland, Jr., "The Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke—of History, Theology and Literature," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1981), p.56.

²⁷ Rousseau and Arav, p. 214.

Joseph's trade (Mt. 13:55), and later Jesus' trade as well (Mk. 6:3), was that of a **τεκτων** (**tektōn** = carpenter, mason, builder). Nazareth by itself may not have been sufficiently large enough to provide business for the support of a family at this trade, but only four miles from Nazareth was the much larger city of Sepphoris, and it is not unlikely that Joseph and Jesus may have worked there. Whether Joseph and Jesus worked in wood, stone or both is unclear. Galilee in ancient times had an abundance of trees, and wood was used widely for buildings, furnishings, and various other household objects, including tools, implements, carts and boats. At the same time, the black basalt stone of the region also was widely used, along with bricks and cut stone. Hence, Joseph's and Jesus' occupation might more safely be described as that of construction workers.²⁸ In 1878 an engraved stone slab discovered in Nazareth warned against tomb-robbery, and it can be dated to the 1st century.²⁹ Perhaps Jesus worked on such monuments as well.

As a builder, Jesus would have worked outside at the sort of labor requiring muscular development. While there have been many depictions of Jesus' face by artists over the centuries, these have largely been "theological" portraits, that is, portraits portraying some theological ideal. Very recently, however, an attempt has been made by forensic scientists to reconstruct the face and head of an "average" 1st century Semitic, and hence, a face more closely approximating the face of Jesus. The assumption is that Jesus did not look substantially different than others of his race and era. Using skeletal remains from the time of Jesus and the advances of computer technology, "the real face of Jesus" has been reconstructed. Of course, such a label is highly optimistic and hopelessly overstated, since in any given era faces of the same race and era differ substantially. Nevertheless, the resulting visage with black hair, dark eyes, a middle-eastern skin tone is probably closer than the work of the many artists who have gone before.³⁰

The close proximity of Sepphoris meant that Jesus might have been exposed to a sophisticated society, largely Jewish, but with various Hellenistic characteristics as well.³¹ A century or more before Jesus' time, Sepphoris was the site of a Hellenistic fort taken over by Jewish freedom fighters in the Maccabean revolt. Excavated

²⁸ Rousseau and Arav, p. 340.

²⁹ Rousseau and Arav, p. 216.

³⁰ M. Fillon, "The Real Face of Jesus," *Popular Mechanics* (December 2002), pp. 68-71.

³¹ The Jewishness of the city was determined by examining thousands of fragments of animal bones, among which there were relatively few pig bones—an archaeological indication of Jewish *kosher* practices. Also, 114 fragments of stone vessels were recovered in the excavations, and stone vessels were important for Jews since they were not subject to ritual impurity. (Pottery, by contrast, had to be destroyed when ritually unclean.) The discovery of what are likely Jewish *mikva'ot* (ritual immersion baths) point toward a Jewish population. Finally, the near absence of pagan objects suggests a predominantly Jewish population, cf. M. Chancy and E. Meyers, "How Jewish Was Sepphoris in Jesus' Time?" *BAR* (Jul/Aug 2000), pp. 25-

stepped pools and baptismal baths (*mikva'ot*) date from this period. After the Roman occupation, Sepphoris gained prominence in that it was the only city allowed to have a Jewish council. Later, Herod used Sepphoris as his base of operations in the north, and when he died, a Jewish rebel name Judas ben Ezekias raided the fort, raising the ire of the Romans, who then burned the city to the ground, sold its citizens into slavery, and crucified many of the rebels on the public roads.³² The city quickly recovered, however, and remained the capital of Galilee until about AD 20, when Herod Antipas constructed Tiberias and moved his administration there.

The close proximity of Sepphoris raises the intriguing question as to whether or not Jesus visited there during his ministry. The gospels are silent on this count, but some interpreters speculate that he may have deliberately avoided the city, while others suggest that any record of such a visit might have been omitted or even suppressed.³³ Even if he did not visit Sepphoris, Jesus could hardly have been unaware of such an important site. A related question is whether or not Jesus spoke Greek in addition to his native Aramaic. Certainly in periods later than Jesus, Greek was used in Galilee, but the evidence as early as the 1st century is sparse.³⁴ Still, the possibility that someone could have written down and collected some of Jesus' sayings in Greek during his lifetime cannot be discounted. The archaeological evidence "suggests that many ordinary people knew how to read and probably also to write."³⁵

The only story preserved in the canonical gospels about Jesus' childhood is his visit to Jerusalem with his parents while still a boy (Lk. 2:41ff.). While no precise location is given in the gospels, it is possible that his dialogue with the rabbis occurred on the south steps leading to the temple mount. Here, the Talmud says that a group of rabbis, including Gamaliel, stood "at the top of stairs at the Temple Mount"

³² *Antiquities*, 17.10.9; *Wars*, 5.1; W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), p. 121.

³³ The debate about Jesus' relationship to Sepphoris has been going on for several decades. Early on, Sepphoris was assumed to have been a thoroughly Hellenistic city due to its standing as a seat of provincial government. As such, some interpreters speculated that Jesus' openness to gentiles might have stemmed from his contact with this non-Jewish culture. Jesus' use of the term *hypocrites*, theater jargon for a stage actor and idiomatically for a pretender or a deceiver, have led some to think that Jesus may have been familiar with the amphitheater in Sepphoris. One of Jesus' followers was none other than Joanna, the wife of Herod Antipas' finance minister (cf. Lk. 8:3). References in Jesus' teachings to royal courts (Mt. 11:8/Lk. 7:25) as well as to kings at war (Lk. 14:31-32) and kings calling their servants to account (Mt. 18:23ff.) have suggested that he may have had more than a passing acquaintance with life in Sepphoris, cf. R. Batey, "Sepphoris: An Urban Portrait of Jesus," *BAR* (May/Jun 1992), pp. 50-62. Other more avant-garde scholars like John Dominic Crossan have even urged that Jesus was deeply influenced by Greco-Roman cynic wisdom, which he picked up in Sepphoris. More recently, the notion that Sepphoris was largely Hellenistic has been overturned by the excavations, which demonstrate that it was largely populated by Jews. For a fuller treatment of the debate about Jesus' relationship to Sepphoris, see J. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Harrisburg, PN: Trinity Press, 2002), pp. 100-138.

³⁴ Chancy and Meyers, p. 33; J. Fitzmyer, "Did Jesus Speak Greek?" *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1992), p. 58.

³⁵ A. Millard, "Literacy in the Time of Jesus," *BAR* (Jul/Aug 2003), p. 42.

discussing the Torah.³⁶

Jewish Household Culture in the 1st Century

Since pottery and pottery fragments survive like nothing else, significant information about cooking, eating and storage is available from two millennia ago. The most common item, the cooking pot, had a more-or-less round body with two handles and a wide mouth. One method of boiling water was to use a ceramic jar with a lower compartment for coals underneath to heat the liquid in the upper bulbous body. Working “stoves” made from stone or clay, often with two or more apertures for pots, were fixed installations. A front lower opening allowed a fire to be built in order to heat a hollow compartment underneath the cooking area. Storage jars of clay and stone are frequent discoveries in 2nd temple excavations. Instructions for the household use of wine also have been discovered. The juice was allowed to ferment for three days in the press, then was transferred to pitch-coated jars sealed with a lid or stopper. The wine filled the jar up to a hole in the side, which sometimes was left unplugged so gases would not build up during fermentation. After fermentation, the hole was sealed. As a beverage, wine was diluted with water (2 parts water, 1 part wine), flavored with cinnamon, and heated in a cooking pot.³⁷

More wealthy citizens could afford stone jars, which were preferable since they were not susceptible to ritual uncleanness. In the excavations of Jerusalem, a wealthy Jewish family home, burned by the Romans in AD 70 when the city fell, has been excavated. It has yielded an array of pottery, stone vessels, glass bottles, coins, a spear, and “the skeletal arm of a young woman, her hand still outstretched, clutching a step” before she perished. The masonry in the “burnt house” was well-crafted with plaster finishes decorated with frescoes. The floors were enhanced with mosaics. (Roman homes might have sculpture, but Jewish homes, in deference to the 10 commandments, used only two dimensional decoration.) Plastered cisterns held water collected from the roofs, and homes had bathrooms with plastered bathtubs edged with mosaics and basins for washing feet.³⁸

All homes were lighted in the evening with oil lamps. In the previous centuries, such lamps evolved through various stages, and by the time of Jesus, almost all lamps were made from bivalve molds. The two halves were cast separately, and when partially cured, they were pressed together and the joint smoothed before firing the lamp in a kiln. While Roman lamps might be decorated with the images of gods, the emperor or scenes from daily life, Jewish lamps mostly

³⁶ Tosfeta, *Sanhedrin* 2:2 as quoted in L. and K. Ritmeyer, *Secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount* (Washington D.C.: BAS, 1998), p. 32.

³⁷ S. Zimmerman, “Housewares and Recipes from 2000 Years Ago,” *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1981), pp. 55-58.

³⁸ N. Rosovsky, “A Thousand Years of History in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter,” *BAR* (May/Jun 1992), pp. 22-40, 78.

were decorated with non-representational designs, or else, with a menorah or a *lulav* (cluster of tree branches as used to celebrate the feast of tabernacles). Because of a rabbinic prohibition on patterning decorations after the standard seven-branched menorah in the temple, any representations of the menorah were confined to “five, six or eight branches”.³⁹

Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee

The synoptic gospels indicate that the larger portion of Jesus’ ministry was conducted in Galilee, the mountainous province between the Galilean lake and the Mediterranean Sea. Here, Jesus “went throughout Galilee ...teaching...preaching...and healing” (Mt. 4:23; cf. Mk. 1:36-39). Meaning “the circle”, Galilee was bordered on the south by Samaria, on the east of the lake by Gaulanitis and the Decapolis, and on the north by Phoenicia. Under Roman jurisdiction, it was ruled by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, from 4 BC to AD 39. While most of our information about the world of Jesus’ public ministry comes directly from the texts of the gospels,⁴⁰ archaeology helps fill some gaps.

The Villages of Galilee

Since Jesus’ ministry was conducted in the Galilean villages, the excavation of several such villages has yielded considerable material for filling out the picture of village life. Chorazin, one of the towns Jesus condemned because they did not repent (Mt. 11:21ff.), lay in the foothills above the northeastern shore of the lake. The town followed the topography of the hill, which was typical of the dozens of towns in the area. While thus far the major artifacts from Chorazin only go back to the 3rd century, it is to be assumed that at least some of the finds reflect aspects of village life a century or two earlier. A main north-south road follows the hill, and a network of streets branch away from this primary thoroughfare. Two domestic complexes, a public building and a synagogue, have been excavated, and all were constructed from black, basalt native rock. Walls between rooms were sometimes built as arches so that stone beams could be laid across the parallel walls for roofing. A *mikveh* (ritual baptismal bath) was found in the public building. Portions of the synagogue were reconstructed from the debris in preparation for the dedication of the site as a national

³⁹ V. Sussman, “Lighting the Way Through History: The Evolution of Ancient Oil Lamps,” *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1985), pp. 42-56.

⁴⁰ Of course, Jesus also is mentioned in a handful of secular texts, such as, the writings of Flavius Josephus. While some of these references might have been embellished later, most scholars agree that there is a core of authenticity, cf. J. Meier, “The Testimonium: Evidence for Jesus Outside the Bible,” *BR* (June 1991), pp. 20-25, 45. For other secular references, see M. Harris, *3 Crucial Questions About Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 13-29.

monument.⁴¹ Of special importance was the discovery of a marble chair in the synagogue, a seat of honor that may correspond to what Jesus called “Moses seat” (Mt. 23:2). This was possibly a chair from which the Torah was expounded.⁴²

Bethsaida another village Jesus frequented, was also the home town of Peter, Andrew and Philip (Jn. 1:44; cf. 12:21) and possibly of James and John as well.⁴³ Here, Jesus cured a blind man (Mk. 8:22-26), and near here he fed the 5000 (Lk. 9:10-17) and walked on the surface of the lake (Mk. 6:45-52). For a long time, scholars were puzzled over the exact location of Bethsaida, since it disappeared after the 1st Jewish revolt in the late 60s AD. Early Christian pilgrims were unable to locate it, and in more recent times, at least three different sites were proposed. The village, whose names means “house of fish”, had always been assumed to be on the lakeshore. When it was actually identified with certainty in the late 1980s, it lay more than a mile north of the present shoreline. However, further geological investigation demonstrated that in ancient times the fishing village lay right on the ancient shore, and during the past two millennia, the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, exacerbated by a major earthquake and landslide, had moved southward.⁴⁴ In the excavations, various fishing implements, such as, net lead weights, line sinkers, stone anchors and a fisher’s seal, were recovered. The seal depicts two fishermen casting a throw net from the prow of a flat bottomed boat. Coins from Bethsaida, minted in AD 29-30, bear the impress of Herod Philip. Various pottery fragments as well as a few whole vessels have also been discovered.⁴⁵

Capernaum, a town on the shoreline in which Peter owned a home (Mk. 1:21, 29), became the center of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Mt. 4:13). Excavations at Capernaum have exposed an ancient synagogue lying beneath a 4th century synagogue, the older one dating to the time of Jesus. Both synagogues have nearly the same floor plan, but the lower one was constructed from the familiar black, basalt stone found also at Chorazin and Bethsaida. These hammer-dressed boulders were laid without mortar into walls nearly four feet thick. Pottery sherds and coins helped date the earlier structure, the site where Jesus preached and performed an exorcism (Mk. 1:21-25).⁴⁶ Capernaum, according to Luke, also was home to a Roman military

⁴¹ Z. Yeivin, “Ancient Chorazin Comes Back to Life,” *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1987), pp. 22-36.

⁴² Rousseau and Arav, pp. 203-206.

⁴³ Theodotius, a pilgrim who visited Bethsaida in about AD 530, designated Bethsaida as the home town of Zebedee, the father of James and John, cf. Rousseau and Arav, p. 22.

⁴⁴ R. Arav, R. Freund and J. Shroder, Jr., “Bethsaida Rediscovered,” *BAR* (Jan/Feb 2000), pp. 46.

⁴⁵ In 1995, Rami Arav gave this author several shards from Bethsaida, one of which was the handle of a terra cotta cooking pot. A first volume of the excavation finds has recently been published, cf. R. Arav and R. Freund, *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ J. Strange and H. Shanks, “Synagogue Where Jesus Preached Found at Capernaum,” *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1983), pp.

officer (Lk. 7:1-10). Evidence of Roman occupation has been verified by the discovery of a 1st century bathhouse lying beneath the ruins of a 2nd or 3rd century bathhouse. Such a public building tends to confirm the existence of a Roman officer and garrisoned soldiers.⁴⁷ Also, a stone stairway was uncovered that once led to the roof, recalling the event in the gospels when a man was let down through a roof in Capernaum in order to gain access to Jesus (Mk. 2:1-5).

Even more fascinating has been the discovery of three superimposed structures, all of them Christian. The upper structure was an octagonal church dating to the 5th century. Beneath it was yet another church structure dating to the 4th century, and the graffiti on the walls left by pilgrims in Greek, Syriac, Aramaic, Hebrew and Latin are clearly Christian (i.e., “Lord Jesus Christ help your servant”, “Christ have mercy”, various symbols of the cross, etc.). The central hall of this church, in turn, had originally been a residence dating no later than the 1st century (the date was established by Herodian coins and lamps). This 1st century house had been improved by plastered walls, a feature that is relatively rare, suggesting that this room had come to public use. In the Christian graffiti on the walls, the name of Peter appears twice. Is this *the* Peter, or some other Christian by that name? There is no way to know for sure. However, that this house church may once have been the domicile of Simon Peter is not unlikely. The recovery of fish hooks suggest that the residents were connected to the fishing industry. As early as the 4th century, pilgrims were identifying this structure with the description, “the house of the chief of the apostles has been turned into a church.”⁴⁸

In addition to Galilean villages, a number of the cities in the Decapolis have been excavated, including Beth Shean, Gerasa, and Gadara. Gergesa (Kursi), on the east side of the lake, is the site of a 5th century Byzantine style basilica church built to commemorate the swine miracle (Mt. 8:28/Mk. 5:1/Lk. 8:26). Not only early Christians traditions give credence to this identity, but also the fact that this is the only site on the entire eastern side of the sea where there is a steep bank from which the swine could have leaped.⁴⁹

The Lake and Its Culture

The water level of the Sea of Galilee has fluctuated through the centuries, and today it is higher than in the time of Jesus. Hence, all remains of the ancient harbors

24-31.

⁴⁷ J. Laughlin, “Capernaum from Jesus’ Time and After,” *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1993), pp. 56-58.

⁴⁸ J. Strange and H. Shanks, “Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?” *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1982), pp. 26-37; Rousseau and Arav, p. 40.

⁴⁹ V. Tzaferis, “A Pilgrimage to the Site of the Swine Miracle,” *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1989), pp. 44-51; McCray, pp. 166-168.

used by Galilean fishermen have been submerged. In 1989-1991, however, during a drought-caused recession of the lake level, the remains of various ancient harbors were exposed, including breakwaters, piers, holding tanks, anchors, mooring stones and net sinkers. In Magdala,⁵⁰ the city most famous because it was the home town of Mary, the earliest witness to Jesus' resurrection, archaeologists discovered a 1st century mosaic depicting a boat with a mast for sailing and oars for rowing.⁵¹ Fishing was a vocational staple of the lake villages, and of course, several of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. They used seine nets (dragnets) made of netting sometimes as long as 1000' as well as casting nets of about 20' to 25' in diameter. They also used trammel nets, a device consisting of three layers of netting held together by rope, a feature reflected in the plural use of the term "nets" (Lk. 5:6). This latter is used primarily at night, when fish cannot easily see the netting.⁵²

Not far from Magdala during a severe drought in 1985-1986, an ancient boat was discovered buried in the mud of the shore. Pottery types and Herod Philip coins provided initial dating, and later, this dating was confirmed by radio-carbon techniques to the period from the late 1st century BC to the mid-1st century AD. This boat, 26.5' long, 7.5' wide and 4.5' deep had a round stern, decks in both the fore and aft sections, and a mast. Hence, the boat could be sailed or rowed. The decks recall the storm when Jesus was asleep, probably under the stern platform, using a ballast pillow (sandbag) for his head (Mk. 4:38).⁵³

Jesus' Passion in Jerusalem

During his great Galilean ministry, Jesus repeatedly told his closest disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, where he would die (Mt. 16:21; 20:18). Of course, this visit was not Jesus' first to the south, even apart from going there as a boy. John's gospel, especially, tracks Jesus' contacts with Jerusalem. Between Galilee and Jerusalem lay Samaria, but most pilgrims avoided this shorter route on grounds of ritual purity as well as the dangers arising from racial tensions. They forded the Jordan River in the north, traveled southward down the eastern side of the river, and crossed again at Jericho before reaching Jerusalem. Jesus did this, also. Nevertheless, on at least two occasions, Jesus deliberately passed through Samaria (Jn. 4:4ff; Lk. 9:52).

⁵⁰ The Greek name of Magdala was Tarichea, a name meaning "the place where fish were salted."

⁵¹ M. Nun, "Ports of Galilee," *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1999), pp. 18-31, 64.

⁵² M. Nun, "Cast Your Net Upon the Waters: Fish and Fishermen in Jesus' Time," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1993), pp. 46-56, 70.

⁵³ S. Wachsmann, "The Galilee Boat: 2000 Year-Old Hull Recovered Intact," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1988), pp. 18-33; Rousseau and Arav, pp. 27-29.

Going to Jerusalem

The only sites with reasonable identity in Samaria relating to Jesus' visits are the ancient well, which now lies in the eastern part of modern Nablus, and Mt. Gerizim, the former site of the Samaritan temple, which had been razed by the Jews a century and a half earlier. In his conversation with the Samaritan woman, only the mountain itself is mentioned as sacred. Then, as today, only the foundation ruins of the Samaritan temple were visible. A well near Sychar, called Jacob's well in John's Gospel, has early Christian testimony (early 4th century), and its location is the only such one agreed upon by Jews, Samaritans, Muslims and Christians. On property now belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church, the well is about 7.5' in diameter and about 100' deep. In addition to an underground water source, rainwater seeps in along the sides. Because it lies at the intersection of two main roads, the well was a natural stopping place for ancient travelers.⁵⁴

Jericho, the site of the southern ford of the Jordan, was one of the most ancient cities of the world. About six miles north of the Dead Sea, it was an oasis blessed with several springs. Here, Herod the Great built palaces, gardens and swimming pools, many of which are now excavated, and the city took on a Roman character, since Herod employed Roman architects and workers to build his grandiose edifices. Here, also, Jesus met Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector (Lk. 19:1-8), and here he healed the Son of Timaeus (Mk. 10:46-52).⁵⁵ In Jericho, the disparity between the opulent wealthy and the poverty of the common people was immediately apparent. Blind Bartimaeus probably was one of many beggars who pleaded for relief near the bastions of Roman power and affluence.

In Jerusalem

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem just before his passion was from the Mount of Olives on the eastern side of the city (Mt. 21:1). The Golden Gate, one of eight entries to the Old City, is the oldest of them all and likely the place where Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. The modern gate has been walled in for several centuries, and in fact, a Muslim cemetery covers the slope outside the gate.⁵⁶ Quite by accident, an earlier gate was discovered beneath the present Golden Gate. Since this gate has

⁵⁴ McRay, pp. 179-183; Rousseau and Arav, pp. 131.

⁵⁵ The Roman tax system included a sales tax, a crop tax (tax on the ground), as well as a personal tax (on furniture, slaves, money).. Also, there was a poll tax on each individual, a tax on transportation of goods (for the use of roads, markets and ports), an inheritance tax, and a business licensing fee. Tax collection was farmed out to local collectors, who like Zacchaeus, often lived in thriving commercial centers like Jericho. That there were abuses is apparent, and the total tax burden per individual may have been as high as 49%, cf. Rousseau and Arav, pp. 275-279.

⁵⁶ The Muslim Koran connects this gate with Allah's final judgment, hence, the desire of Muslims to be buried near it.

not been fully excavated, the best evidence for its date comes from the masonry of the walls near it, evidence that is particularly difficult because of a straight joint where two types of masonry abut. One is definitely Herodian, the other probably earlier. How much earlier is debated with advocates ranging from the Hellenistic Period to the Persian Period all the way back to Iron Age II. Nevertheless, regardless of the date of the earlier gate, the area of the Golden Gate is probably the place where Jesus entered Jerusalem on his final trip.⁵⁷

Of the various places in Jerusalem mentioned in the gospels in connection with Jesus' ministry, the two pools in John's Gospel, Siloam and Bethesda, can be located with reasonable certainty.⁵⁸ Siloam is the ancient pool that lies at the end of Hezekiah's tunnel. This tunnel brought water from the Gihon Spring on the eastern side of the City of David to the western side of the hill by a bore through solid rock for nearly a third of a mile. At Siloam, Jesus healed a man born blind (Jn. 9:1ff.). Bethesda, a pool where sheep were washed (Jn. 5:2ff.), was probably one of the two excavated pools about 100 yards north of the Temple Mount. Together, the pools may have yielded as much as 5000 square yards of water surface, and the fragments of column bases, capitals and other evidences of porticos, remnants of the five porches, have been excavated here.⁵⁹

Of course, Jesus visited the temple precincts, and from the Court of the Nations he drove out the money exchangers. The evenings during that last week he probably spent outside the city walls, and one place, Gethsemane, was on the Mt. of Olives. The word Gethsemane means oil press, and since John's Gospel calls it a *κηπος* (*kēpos* = garden, cf. Jn. 18:1), the popular expression "garden of Gethsemane" was coined (though the phrase, as such, is not found in the New Testament). As early as AD 330 the Christian historian Eusebius identified the site as at the foot of the Mt. of Olives, and since that time, the place has been revered as the place of Jesus' travail on the night of his arrest. A modern church built over the foundations of an ancient church mark the site. Still, the precise location cannot be fixed other than by Christian tradition. Further, the popular idea that the olive trees on the Mt. of Olives date all the way back to Jesus' era⁶⁰ is almost certainly mistaken. The trees can only be verified back to the 7th century, and furthermore, Josephus indicated that all trees in the environs of Jerusalem were cut down by the Romans during the siege in AD 70.⁶¹ A more likely candidate for the site of Jesus' prayer and

⁵⁷ J. Fleming, "The Undiscovered Gate Beneath Jerusalem's Golden Gate," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 1983), pp. 24-37.

⁵⁸ There is some debate about the precise location of Siloam, due to some confusing remarks by Flavius Josephus, but on the whole, the general location is not in doubt, cf. McCray, pp. 188-192.

⁵⁹ McCray, pp. 186-188.

⁶⁰ This "fact" is so stated in *Holy Land Travel Guide* (Educational Travel Agency, Inc.), 16.

⁶¹ E. Blaiklock, *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), p.

arrest is a sizeable cave in which excavations indicate it was used for pressing olives. Today, this cave is set up as a small chapel.⁶²

Other tourist sites are questionable. The home of Caiaphas, according to Josephus, was somewhere to the west of the old City of David, but it was burned during the 1st Jewish Revolt. Beneath the present 1931 St. Peter of the Cockcrow Church (St. Peter in Gallicantu), a rock-hewn chamber was excavated that features rings and stone handles on the walls that could have served to restrain prisoners. Some have suggested that this room was where Jesus was detained when brought before Caiaphas. However, Christian tradition, which can only be traced to about 500 years after the fact, shrouds this suggestion with ambiguity. The most that can be said is that the excavated ancient steps leading down the slope toward the ancient City of David might have been used by Jesus and the others on the night of his arrest.⁶³ The same is true of the upper room, the site of the Last Supper. The site of Holy Zion Church has been believed to be the place of the Last Supper since the 4th century, and in fact, when the church was damaged in the mid-20th century, some excavations were performed leading to the discovery of a Roman Period structure, possibly a Christian-Jewish synagogue, beneath the ruins of a Byzantine Church on the site.⁶⁴ Again, however, nothing discovered so far offers any certainty.

Jesus' Death and Burial

Jesus' death, as stated in the Apostles' Creed, was by crucifixion "under Pontius Pilate." Pilate, the Roman governor, is known to us not only from the gospels, but also from Josephus, Philo and Tacitus as well as by an excavated inscription from Caesarea Maritima bearing his name and various coins minted under his jurisdiction. As governor, he was responsible for all Roman administration in Judea. His normal activities as governor were carried out in Caesarea, and he would only have traveled to Jerusalem on special occasions, such as, the Jewish Passover. In Caesarea, a stone bearing his name was excavated in the Roman theater. Though some of the lines are partially obliterated, what remains is readable:

[]S TIBERIUM
[PON]TIUS PILATUS
[PRAEF]ECTUS IUDA[EA]E
[]

212.

⁶² J. Taylor, "The Garden of Gethsemane NOT the Place of Jesus' Arrest," *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1995), pp. 26-35, 62.

⁶³ McCray, pp. 199-202.

⁶⁴ McCray, pp. 202-203.

In short, though we do not have the full inscription, the meaning seems to be that Pilate was involved in the dedication of a building called a Tiberium, possibly a temple dedicated to the emperor Tiberius.⁶⁵

Locating the various sites connected with the trial of Jesus are complicated not only by the distance of two millennia, but also by the fact that Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 by Titus and again in AD 135 by Hadrian. John's Gospel places Jesus' hearing before Pilate at the *Gabbatha-Lithostroton* (= stone pavement), probably somewhere in either the Praetorium of Herod or the Antonia Fortress (Jn. 19:13). Until recently, the most likely site for this event had been the excavated stone pavement beneath the Convent of the Flagellation, the Convent of Our Lady of Sion, and the Greek Orthodox Convent.⁶⁶ However, archaeologists have now determined that this pavement was part of Hadrian's reconstruction of the city, and so, it is a century too late to be the one in the gospels.⁶⁷ If this pavement was constructed after the time of Jesus, the etched Basilikos ("king") game in the pavement, once thought to play a role in the soldier's mockery of Jesus, is later as well.

One artifact connected with a figure in the trial of Jesus has a much stronger case for authenticity, and it is the ossuary inscribed with the name *Yehosef bar Qayafa* (Joseph, son of Caiaphas). In 1990, a burial cave from the late second temple period was excavated, and it yielded several 1st century ossuaries. Among them, two were especially significant, one inscribed with the name *Qafa*, an Aramaic form of the family name Caiaphas, and the other inscribed as indicated above. Josephus refers to "Joseph who was called Caiaphas of the high priesthood", thus tying together the ossuary inscription and the gospel narrative about this leader of the Sanhedrin who figured so prominently in the trial of Jesus. In this particular ossuary were the bones of some six members of the Caiaphas family, one of them a man about the age of 60. The probability is high that these are the remains of the high priest who first condemned Jesus to death (cf. Jn. 11:49-53; Mt. 26:57ff.).⁶⁸

Finding the site of the crucifixion and the place of Jesus' burial, like many other locations in second temple Jerusalem, has been elusive. (These two sites must

⁶⁵ D. Schwartz, *ABD* (1992), 5.395-401; McRay, pp. 203-204.

⁶⁶ W. Mare, *New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, ed. Blaiklock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), pp. 200-201.

⁶⁷ This pavement is now known to lie above the Struthion Pool, a huge cistern which lies beneath. According to Josephus, this cistern was open at the Roman siege of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the Romans moved their siege machines "through the pools". Hence, the pavement cannot have been built until later, cf. J. McRay, *ABD* (1992) 2.862. Furthermore, additional excavation has shown that the pavement and the gateway arches were built at the same time, and the arches are almost certainly Hadrianic, cf. D. Cole, D. Bahat and H. Shanks, *Jerusalem Archaeology Slide Set* (Washington D.C.: BAS, 1983), pp. 23, 28-29.

⁶⁸ S. Fine, "Why Bone Boxes?" *BAR* (Sep/Oct 2001), pp. 42-43.

be treated together, cf. Jn. 19:41.) Called Golgotha (= skull), the primary identifying mark is that it was outside the city wall (Jn. 19:20; He. 13:12-13). Two primary sites have been defended, Gordon's Calvary and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. General Gordon, the British military hero, found a hill shaped somewhat like a skull and decided it must be the place. (He also, in the same report, believed he found the original Garden of Eden on an island in the Indian Ocean.) Today, "Gordon's Calvary" and the nearby "Garden Tomb", believed to be the place of Jesus' burial, are some of the most well-known tourists sites. Aesthetically they are pleasing, and visually they well match the way most people picture the event. Unfortunately, Gordon's identification has not held up well to archaeological research. The Garden Tomb cave is probably an Iron Age II tomb.⁶⁹ As to the grassy knoll above the so-called Grotto of Jeremiah,⁷⁰ the geological features of the hill resembling a human skull with eyeholes are not old enough. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built over an ancient quarry, has a better claim, but here, too, the evidence is far from compelling.⁷¹ In the end, the precise place of Jesus' crucifixion and burial remain unanswered.

What does seem sufficiently clear is that the death and burial of Jesus was especially brutal and shameful. Cicero called crucifixion "the most cruel and disgusting penalty," while Josephus described it as "the most wretched of deaths." Roman citizens generally were exempt, no matter what their crimes, but foreigners and people of the lower classes, especially slaves, typically were crucified for serious offenses.⁷² Still, of all the thousands of people crucified by the Romans, only one, to date, has yielded clear skeletal remains.⁷³ This individual's remains, the bones of a certain Jew named Yehohanan (his name and his father's name were scratched on the outside of the ossuary), were discovered in a 1st century ossuary from Giv'at ha-Mivtar,. In this case, his death by crucifixion was apparent in that the nail penetrated his heel bones hit a knot in the wood, and the end of the nail bent and curled. The executioners could not extract it. Hence, they amputated the feet, still attached to the nail and piece of wood, and all were still connected when interred in the ossuary. Also in this case, the nail had penetrated both heel bones from the side, and bone masses from both heels were still attached to the spike.⁷⁴ Though there is some debate about the actual posture of a crucified victim, it is clear that nailing was inherent in

⁶⁹ G. Barkay, "The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?" *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1986), pp. 40-57.

⁷⁰ Tradition has it that Jeremiah composed the poems in Lamentations here after Jerusalem's fall in 586 BC.

⁷¹ D. Bahat, "Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?" *BAR* (May/Jun 1986), pp. 26-45; Rousseau and Arav, pp. 112-117.

⁷² G. O'Collins, *ABD* (1992) 1.1207-1208.

⁷³ This, in itself, is not too surprising, since crucifixion does not require the puncturing of the skeletal structure, but rather, the fleshy parts of the hands and feet, which later decompose.

⁷⁴ V. Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—the Archaeological Evidence," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 1985), pp. 44-53.

the execution.⁷⁵

The most widely accepted cause of death by crucifixion is that the victim eventually expired of asphyxiation. This verdict is most completely summarized in an article by a theologian and two physicians from the Mayo clinic.⁷⁶ More recently, this conclusion has been challenged by actual experiments in simulated crucifixions, however, and an alternate cause of death suggested—shock. Also challenged was the claim that nails could not hold a body unless they were driven through the two bones in the wrist at the base of the hand.⁷⁷

The burial of Jesus was shameful as well. Normal Jewish burial was in a family tomb, and the death of a loved one was reverently mourned. Condemned criminals, however, often were denied customary rites of burial and mourning. Jesus was not buried in a family tomb but given a dishonorable burial in a tomb “in which no one had ever been laid” (Jn. 19:41). The very newness of Jesus’ tomb was in itself shameful. Further, there was no traditional procession to the tomb, no public expressions of condolence to family and friends, no one to sit *shiv’ah*, the custom of intense grieving for the seven days following death. Such customs of honorable burial were typical of Jewish culture during the Roman period. Of all this Jesus was deprived.⁷⁸

Considerable excitement has attended the claim that Jesus’ death shroud has survived. A fine linen cloth some 14’ by nearly 4’, woven of three-to-one herringbone twill in hand-spun thread, contains the faint image of the front and back of a human body believed by some to be an image of the corpse of Jesus. The body images have wounds in places appropriate for a crucifixion and the sort of brutality Jesus suffered during his trial. While the history of the shroud can only be traced for the past six centuries, and it has resided in Turin, Italy only since the 17th century, the display of the shroud in 1978 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of its arrival at Turin stimulated much speculation and over 3 million visitors. Out of this was born the Shroud of Turin Research Project involving physicists, chemists, computer specialists, biophysicists, spectrologists and experts in photomicroscopy, and among them, both Christians and agnostics. The upshot of their examination was not a consensus but a deeply polarized group, some urging the shroud’s authenticity and others disclaiming it as a forgery.⁷⁹ Not until 1986 was permission granted to test the

⁷⁵ For some comments on the debate, see McRay, pp. 204-206.

⁷⁶ W. Edwards, W. Gabel and F. Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus,” *JAMA* (Mar 21, 1986), pp. 1455-1463.

⁷⁷ F. Zugibe, “Two Questions About Crucifixion,” *BR* (April 1989), pp. 34-43.

⁷⁸ B. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone: Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press Intl., 2003), pp. 89-108.

⁷⁹ R. Wild, “The Shroud of Turin,” *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1984), pp. 30-46 and J. Kohlbeck and E. Nitowski, “New Evidence May Explain Image on Shroud of Turin,” *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1986), pp. 18-29.

shroud using the Carbon 14 dating method, and when it was tested by three independent laboratories (Oxford, England; Zurich, Switzerland; University of Arizona, USA), the results dated the shroud to about the 14th century with a 95% certainty to between 1260 and 1390.⁸⁰ While still there remain advocates of the authenticity of the shroud and while other tests may be forthcoming, for the present the evidence seems against it being the shroud of Jesus.⁸¹

The placement of Jesus in the tomb seems to have followed the 1st century pattern (cf. Jn. 19:38-42). Jewish death ritual in the early Roman Period of Palestine typically included the closing of the eyes, the washing of the corpse with perfumes or ointments, and the binding of the body in strips of cloth with the hands fixed along the sides and the feet tied together. A procession from the home to the place of interment followed, the body being placed in a burial cave with niches (*loculi*) carved out of the rock to hold the corpses of family members. After a year of mourning, the ritual came to its conclusion with a second burial of the bones in an ossuary (stone box). Many such Jewish burial caves with their distinctive *loculi* and ossuaries have been excavated from the second temple period.⁸² Rolling stones were used in many such burial caves, but blocking stones were much more common. Hence, the stones that sealed tombs came in two shapes, round and square. Which type sealed the tomb of Jesus? The answer depends upon the translation of the verb **κυλίω** (**kyliō** = to roll, to move) and its cognate **ἀποκυλίω** (= roll away, dislodge), as used in the Synoptic Gospels, and **ἀίρω** (**airō** = move) as used in John. In John, the English rendering is usually “moved” (Jn. 20:1). In most versions of the Synoptics, these terms are translated “rolled back” or something comparable (cf. Mt. 28:2; Mk. 16:3; Lk. 23:53; 24:2). Hence, the usual idea is that Jesus’ tomb was sealed with a rolling stone, and it may well have been so sealed. However, rolling stones are rolled in a stone track to keep them upright, and it would be difficult to sit on such a stone, as the gospels describe for the angel (Mt. 28:2). Hence, some argue that the square blocking stone, which is much more common than the rolling stone, is more likely.⁸³

The Cities of St. Paul

The followers of Jesus did not immediately reach out beyond the boundaries of Palestine. Not until the persecution connected with the death of Stephen did they actually leave Jerusalem (Ac. 8:1), and when they did they still restricted their

⁸⁰ S. Singer, “Has the Shroud of Turin Been Dated—Finally?” *BR* (April 1989), pp. 38-39 and McRay, pp. 218-220.

⁸¹ G. Vikan, “Debunking the Shroud: Made by Human Hands,” *BAR* ((Nov/Dec 1998), pp. 27-29 and V. Bryant, Jr., “Does Pollen Prove the Shroud Authentic?” *BAR* (Nov/Dec 2000), pp. 36-44, 75.

⁸² McCane, pp. 27-60.

⁸³ A. Kloner, “Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus’ Tomb?” *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1999), pp. 22-29, 76.

evangelistic efforts to the Jewish circle (Ac. 11:19). Two events, however, served to change this restriction. One was Peter's divinely-guided encounter with a Roman military officer at Caesarea Maritima (Ac. 10). The other was when Jewish Christians native to Cypress and Cyrene began sharing the message of Christ with Greeks in Antioch, Syria (Ac. 11:20-22). The multi-ethnic church at Antioch consequently became the vanguard for missionary efforts in Asia Minor and Greece, and the missionary leader in this endeavor was Paul of Tarsus, Cilicia (Ac. 13:1-3). He, along with others who accompanied him, made three missions tours using Antioch, Syria as his home base (Ac. 14:26-28; 15:36-41; 18:22-23).

One historical marker, especially, helps fix the general chronology of Paul's travels—the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius Caesar (Ac. 18:1-2). This expulsion, known to us from other ancient writers, puts Paul in Corinth not long after AD 49, probably in AD 50, and he remained there for a year and a half (Ac. 18:11).⁸⁴

In general, Paul's travels were by foot and by sea. All other things being equal, the average daily distance for a foot traveler to cover was about 20 miles, but to this must be factored in the reality that most travelers went from inn to inn, and further, rough country made the going much slower. In AD 333 the traveler known to scholars as the Bordeaux pilgrim followed Paul's itinerary in reverse from Galatia to Tarsus. His distances were as follows:⁸⁵

Tarsus to the Inn at Mascurinae (12 Roman miles)
 Inn at Mascurinae to Post at Pilas (14 Roman miles)
 Post at Pilas to Inn at Podanos (12 Roman miles)
 Inn at Podanos to Post at Caena (12 miles)
 Post at Caena to City at Faustinopolis (12 Roman miles)

Paul's distances were quite remarkable, the terrain frequently difficult, and the sea unpredictable, as he himself describes it (2 Co. 11:25-27). Mountain passes could be blocked with snow, rivers could be swollen with spring rains, travelers could be compelled by Roman soldiers to repair equipment or carry military gear, and bandits were a perennial threat. By sea, one would have to secure passage on grain ships or other commercial vessels traveling from port to port. The distance for only one of his missions tours, his second one, has been calculated at over 3000 miles, nearly 1800 miles by land and nearly 1300 miles by sea.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 25.4.

⁸⁵ Twenty-five Roman miles is approximately equivalent to twenty-two modern miles.

⁸⁶ J. Murphy-O'Connor, "On the Road and on the Sea with St. Paul," *BR* (Summer 1985), p. 41.

The Cities in Syria and Eastern Asia Minor

Antioch, Syria on the Orontes River was excavated by Princeton University between 1932-39. From the time of the successors of Alexander, the city grew rapidly, and after the Romans annexed Syria, the city's great road was flanked by broad walkways and a colonnade. It became the third largest city of the empire, enjoyed its own Olympic style games, had a large Jewish population and a reputation for immorality. As a commercial center, it maintained trade connections all over the world. Geographically, it was the meeting place between the Hellenistic and Oriental civilizations. Religiously, it included adherents to the traditional Greco-Roman pantheons as well as to the Syrian worship of Baal and the Mother Goddess. The mystery cults, with their ideas of death, regeneration and the afterlife, also were part of the religious mix. The city was generally affluent and characterized by religious inquiry.⁸⁷

The initial converts to Christianity in Antioch probably were from a category of folk called "God-fearers", a term that Luke uses to describe non-Jews who were favorable to the Jewish understanding of God but who had not themselves become proselytes.⁸⁸ While the existence of God-fearers is debated,⁸⁹ there is considerable literary and inscriptional evidence for at least some group of people sympathetic to the Jewish faith who had not taken the step to become full Jews.⁹⁰

The excavations in Antioch have not offered much with respect to earliest Christianity there. The Chalice of Antioch, a piece of Christian art reputedly recovered from Antioch in 1910, was believed by some to have been the cup used by Jesus at the last supper. However, most experts date the cup to later than the 1st century AD.⁹¹

Damascus, Syria, the city near which Paul was converted, has two remaining features of Christian interest from the Roman Period. One is the *cardo maximus*, a colonnaded, east-west street that is probably the same as the one Luke described as "Straight Street" (Ac. 9:11). This street was the city's primary artery in the Roman Period.⁹² The other is a Roman Period gate, marked by tradition (but with no

⁸⁷ G. Tate, "Antioch on Orontes," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. E. Meyers (Oxford: Oxford University, 1997), pp. 1.144-145.

⁸⁸ The term "God-fearer" refers to those described by several Greek terms, such as, φοβούμενος (= fearing ones), σεβόμενος (worshipping ones), θεοσεβείς (= God worshippers) and μετευντες (= those who fear).

⁸⁹ For scholars who doubt the existence of God-fearers, see R. MacLennan and A. Kraabel, "The God-Fearers—A Literary and Theological Invention," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1986), pp. 46-53.

⁹⁰ L. Feldman, "The Omnipresence of the God-Fearers," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1986), pp. 58-63 and R. Tannenbaum, "Jews and God-Fearers in the Holy City of Aphrodite," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1986), pp. 54-57.

⁹¹ McRay, p. 232.

⁹² W. Pitard, "Damascus," *OEANE* (1997), 2.104.

verification) as the place from which Paul escaped by a basket (cf. 2 Co. 11:33).

Paul's home city of Tarsus, a significant military, commercial and intellectual center in the Roman Period, lies buried beneath the modern city. Though some excavations have been conducted, not much has been forthcoming other than the remains of the so-called Cleopatra Gate, which recalls the famous meeting of Cleopatra and Mark Anthony in 41 BC.

Moving further westward and northward, Paul visited the cities of Antioch (Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Pisidia and Lycaonia), and Perga (Pamphylia). Part of the Antioch ruins from the Roman Period have been excavated, and they are replete with several temples demonstrating the proliferation of emperor worship as well as pagan superstition.⁹³ Iconium, Lystra and Derbe have not been excavated, though various small finds have surfaced. At Perga, on the other hand, excavations have recently begun, and a Roman market, remnants of the city walls and towers, and a gate shaped like a horseshoe have been exposed, all of which were there in the time of Paul's visit.⁹⁴

Gods, Goddesses and the Worship of the Emperor

Religion in the Roman Period was extremely diverse. Paul describes it as the worship of "many gods" and "many lords" (1 Co. 8:5). At Lystra he and his colleagues were reckoned to be gods themselves—an acclamation that Paul did not at first even understand, since it was voiced in a language he did not know (Ac. 14:11-13). These multiple pagan religions coexisted side-by-side, since Greco-Roman paganism was nonexclusive. The worship of one deity or form of religion did not preclude the recognition of others. Further, there often was a blending of deities so that, for instance, the Greek goddess Artemis became identified with the Roman goddess Diana, Zeus with Jupiter, Hermes with Mercury, and so forth. Hence, syncretism was the order of the day. Some cities might have a central god or goddess without eliminating the worship of the other deities. Artemis, especially, was venerated in Ephesus, while Poseidon was prominent in Corinth due to the biennial Isthmian games dedicated to him. In virtually every city, temples in honor of these deities occupied prominent locations. Because of the proliferation of pagan religion, some of the most common structures to be exposed by archaeologists have been such temples and/or statues of the gods and goddesses.

In addition to the traditional pantheon, what are known as "mystery religions" also flourished in the time of St. Paul. The mystery cults believed that they could commune with the gods by secret ceremonies. Some of these religions had their

⁹³ McRay, pp. 238-239.

⁹⁴ McRay, p. 240.

origins in Egypt (based on the myth of Isis and Osiris), others developed around traditional Greco-Roman deities, such as, Dionysus (god of wine) or Demeter (god of grain). Still others were more local. The general pattern was a belief that humans contained a divine spark, which had become obscured by earthly life. In sacred rituals, humans could purge away the accretions of earthly existence and rekindle the divine spark. In the worship of Dionysus, for instance, the ceremony included night-long drinking bouts after which the imbibing person, while in a state of ecstasy, allegedly would see the appearance of the god.⁹⁵ Some of the cults, like the religion of Asklepios, were healing cults. Here, the sufferer spent the night in the god's temple, was ministered to by healing snakes, and awoke to relief. The temple of Asklepios excavated in Corinth, for instance, yielded a whole range of terra-cotta models of human body parts—arms, hands, feet, etcetera—all of which were supposed testimonies to divine healing.⁹⁶ One of the most widespread of all cults was Mithraism, which arose at about the same time as Christianity. Mithraism confessed a god whose powers transcended the cosmos, and its major adherents were Roman soldiers.⁹⁷ Mithraic temples have been discovered throughout the Roman Empire from England to Caesarea Maritima.

Finally, the deification of the emperors was used as a tool for political unity. Given the syncretism of the culture, it was no threat to any pagan religion to hail the emperor as a god. Roma, the goddess who personified the Roman State, was venerated in Greece and Asia Minor even before the time of Christ. Julius Caesar was deified after his death, Augustus declared himself to be *divi filius* (= a divine son), and subsequent emperors, to greater or lesser degrees, accepted the honors of deification. Roman cities, as a gesture of loyalty to the state, began erecting temples to the emperors. While in general the emperors did not always demand worship during their lifetimes (Caligula was an exception, who ordered all in the empire to acknowledge him as “Lord and God”), the Roman Senate generally deified the emperors posthumously and added them to the imperial cult.⁹⁸

Everywhere the Christian missionaries traveled, they encountered the temples and statuary of the traditional gods and goddesses, the rites of the secret societies arising around the mystery religions, and the official sanction of the emperors as divine persons. To proclaim “Jesus as Lord” (Ro. 10:9) and to confess that there was but “one God, the Father”, and “one Lord, Jesus Christ” (1 Co. 8:6), cut directly

⁹⁵ H. Kee, F. Young and K. Froehlich, *Understanding the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 33-36; H. Vos, *ISBE* (1988), 4.107-116; E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 132-253.

⁹⁶ V. Furnish, “Corinth in Paul’s Time: What Archaeology Tells Us,” *BAR* (May/Jun 1988), pp. 25-26.

⁹⁷ D. Ulansey, “Solving the Mithraic Mysteries,” *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1994), pp. 40-53.

⁹⁸ Vos, p. 113; Ferguson, pp. 153-165.

across the religious milieu of every province in the Empire.

The Cities in Western Asia Minor and Greece

Though Paul visited many cities in the ancient world during his missions tours, he spent over a third of his missions time in only two of them, Corinth and Ephesus. At Corinth, he initially spent 18 months (Ac. 18:11), and he visited afterward as well. At Ephesus on his 3rd tour, after stopping there briefly on his 2nd tour (Ac. 18:19-21), he spent over two years (Ac. 19:8, 10). The total time for Paul's three missions tours was probably not more than ten years, from about AD 47 or 48 to about AD 57.⁹⁹

Before reaching the Grecian peninsula, Paul first ministered in the Province of Macedonia. Philippi and Thessalonica lay on the Via Egnatia—the Roman road built in about 130 BC connecting Apollonia (on the Aegean coast) to Kypsela (on the Adriatic). The archaeological excavation of Philippi began in 1914 with the French, though the more recent work has been done by the Greeks. The Via Egnatia bisected the city. Ancient Roman milestones indicate that the total distance was 535 Roman miles (493 English miles). The population of Philippi largely consisted of Romans and Greeks. The Jewish community appears to have been quite small, and given that Jewish women were meeting for prayer outside the city, presumably there was no synagogue. (Ten men were required for a formal synagogue.) So far, not much bears directly upon the record of the New Testament, though remains of the city both before and after the time of Paul still exist. The ancient Krenides Gate near a stream of water may well be the site of the women's prayer group. Also dating to the Roman Period is a crypt with traditions as old as the 5th century that it is the place Paul and Silas were imprisoned. As in most Greco-Roman cities, there is abundant evidence of pagan worship, including devotion to the cult of Hercules.

Thessalonica, unlike Philippi, Amphipolis and Apollonia, had a synagogue (Ac. 17:1), and excavation in the city has provided an important inscription verifying Luke's use of the term *πολιταρχης* (= polytarch, civil magistrate, cf. Ac. 17:6). This inscription on the Vardar Gate lists six politarchs, and it, along with several other inscriptions using the same term, verify the institution long before the time of Paul.¹⁰⁰

At Athens, Paul encountered the most well-known city of ancient Greece—and one of the most excavated! The city was dominated by the Acropolis with its classical temple, the Parthenon, accessible by the marble stairway constructed by Claudius in AD 42. Excavators have uncovered temples to Rome and Augustus,

⁹⁹ Attempts to establish the chronology of Paul's life and journeys are somewhat tentative, but most scholars would generally agree with these times, cf. F. Bruce, *ISBE* (1986) 3.709.

¹⁰⁰ McCray, p. 295.

Zeus, Athena and Ares, among others, in addition to the Greek agora and the Roman forum. Originally, the agora was kept clear for the democratic assemblies for which Athens is famous. As a conquered city, however, the agora soon became filled with buildings and monuments. The eastern market, another agora, was used for commercial purposes, and by the time of Paul it was filled with various altars, statues and temples. The Roman satirist, Juvenal, remarked that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens! Several ancient writers have remarked about altars to “unknown gods”, and one spoke about an altar to “the god whom it may concern.” The eastern market of Athens had become more-or-less a religious museum. Other excavated features of 1st century Athens included a 66 seat public latrine, the Odeion (music hall), the theater of Dionysus and Mars Hill (lit., “the hill of Ares”), the meeting place of the Areopagus, the Athenian council of 500 who dominated Athenian government.¹⁰¹

Corinth

Paul’s lengthy stay in Corinth marked a shift in his missionary strategy. For the most part, his stays in various cities had been not more than a few months at each place, and sometimes considerably shorter. Here, however, Paul stayed a year and a half, and the fact that Corinth was such a strategic commercial center with a burgeoning flow of traffic from virtually all the provinces meant that he had access to a wide range of people from various parts of the world.¹⁰²

Excavations in Corinth have been extensive. Across the isthmus, an ancient roadway about 3 ½ miles long was uncovered called the *diolkos*. Grooves about 5’ apart served as tracks for wooden platforms on wheels that transported cargo from the Saronic Gulf to the Gulf of Corinth, thus eliminating the long sea voyage around the Peloponnesus.

Near Corinth at Isthmia was one of the permanent sites for the biennial Isthmian Games for athletes and artists. Paul’s year and half stay in Corinth meant that he was there in AD 51, when the games were held, and his references to athletic and artistic elements, such as, boxing, racing, victory wreaths and musical instruments may well have been drawn from his knowledge of the festival (cf. 1 Co. 9:24-27; 14:7-8).

Like Athens, Corinth was home to many shrines and temples. Statues of Athena and Apollo along with several temples and sacred precincts have been excavated. These include a temple to Tyche, goddess of good fortune, a temple to

¹⁰¹ McCray, pp. 298-310.

¹⁰² D. Cole, “Corinth & Ephesus: Why Did Paul Spend Half His Journeys in These Cities?” *BR* (Dec 1988), pp. 20-30.

Hera, wife of Zeus, another temple dedicated to the whole pantheon of Greco-Roman deities, a fountain shrine dedicated to Poseidon, the god in whose honor the Isthmian games were held, and a shrine to Aphrodite, goddess of love and fertility. Aphrodite also had a temple on the Acrocorinth, the rugged hill rising some 1500' above the city. Temples to Demeter and Kore also have been excavated on the Acrocorinth. The city featured the *Asclepion*, a medical complex dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing, and it had quarters for bathing, dining, exercise and sleeping. (The god's instructions for cures were believed to come in dreams.) Many terra-cotta models of body parts were excavated here, symbols of cures.

In addition to the religious shrines, Corinth had extensive commercial structures. These included a Roman forum, a theater, a market, public baths, two matching basilicas, extensive shops along the Lechaum Road, a gymnasium, a *bema* (judgment seat) and many other civic buildings. Paul was himself arraigned before this very *bema* during the proconsulship of Gallio (Ac. 18:12ff.). Gallio's office, in turn, has been verified by an inscription from Delphi that put his tenure in the 26th acclamation of Claudius as *imperator*, a date that can be cross-referenced with other Roman sources.¹⁰³ Two excavated artifacts, even though possibly from a bit later in time than Paul's visit, testify to the Jewish community in Corinth, a stone lintel with the inscription "Synagogue of the Hebrews", and a marble arch post decorated with menorahs. A remarkable independent verification of Erastus, the city director of public works who was one of Paul's converts, was excavated in a pavement inscription between the market and the theater. Originally bronze letters filled the depressions in the pavement, and although the bronze is no longer there, the depressed letters can be clearly read: "Erastus in return for his aedileship¹⁰⁴ laid [the pavement] at his own expense" (Ro. 16:23).¹⁰⁵

Other recoveries, in addition to providing general background concerning Corinth, may help us understand some of Paul's comments in his Corinthian correspondence. For instance, the inscriptions in honor of Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, the citizen in charge of the grain supply for famine relief, demonstrates how severe was the food shortage in the city. It may well be that this food shortage is what Paul refers to as "the present crisis" (1 Co. 7:26).¹⁰⁶ Paul's title for Phoebe as a patroness of the Cenchreaean¹⁰⁷ church (Ro. 16:2) is reflected in a Corinthian inscription honoring Iunia Theodora as a federal and civic patroness, a woman who

¹⁰³ F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 253.

¹⁰⁴ An aedile was a magistrate in charge of streets, markets, games and public buildings.

¹⁰⁵ V. Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time: What Can Archaeology Tell Us?", *BAR* (May/Jun 1988), pp. 14-27.

¹⁰⁶ B. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 216-225.

¹⁰⁷ Cenchreae was the Corinthian seaport on the Saronic Gulf and about 7 miles to the east.

served the citizens of the city, just as Phoebe served the Christians in her church.¹⁰⁸ Paul's comments about head coverings and prayer are illuminated by the statuary of Corinth. Roman men covered their heads with their togas in pagan prayer; Paul instructs Christians not to follow suit (1 Co. 11:4, 7). Wives in Corinth traditionally covered their heads as a sign of marriage (more or less similar to the wearing of a modern wedding ring), but married women sometimes threw off this traditional covering in order to express their "liberated" status. Paul instructs Christian women to remain covered (1 Co. 11:5-6, 13).¹⁰⁹ The irony of Paul's escape over the wall (2 Co. 11:30-33), where Paul speaks of boasting about his "weaknesses", contrasts sharply with the *corona muralis* bust from Corinth, the crown bestowed by the emperor on the first soldier able to successfully scale the wall of an enemy city. This crown in the shape of a city wall was an exultation of heroism for a soldier going over the wall. Paul, by contrast, also "went over the wall," but in order to escape!¹¹⁰

Ephesus

On his third missions tour, Paul spent considerable time in Ephesus, a port city of the Roman Province of Asia that lay upstream from where the Cayster River entered the Aegean Sea. In the time of Paul, it was the chief commercial center for western Asia Minor, and in addition to its sea access, it lay at the intersection of two major overland routes, the coastal road running north toward Smyrna and Pergamum and the interior route to Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. Like other Greco-Roman cities, Ephesus featured an agora, various temples (of which the most important was the shrine to Artemis, the patron deity of the city), public baths and latrines, fountains, a gymnasium, a library, a stadium and a theater. The main street, the Arkadiane, was a marble thoroughfare running from the theater to the harbor and flanked by colonnades.

In addition to the more sophisticated features of the city, Ephesus also boasted an arena for gladiatorial contests and animal baiting. Perhaps Paul alludes to this when he says he "fought with beasts at Ephesus" (cf. 1 Co. 15:32), though as a Roman citizen, his language was metaphorical only. (Citizens, even if convicted of crimes, were exempt from animal baiting.)

Paul's use of the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus might have been possible because of his connections to people in positions of influence (Ac. 19:10). That Paul was friends with some of the wealthy and privileged is demonstrated by Luke's use of the term *Asiarchs* in describing people of position who warned Paul not to enter

¹⁰⁸ Winter, pp. 199-203.

¹⁰⁹ Winter, pp. 121-133.

¹¹⁰ Furnish, pp. 20-21.

the theater during the Artemis riot (Ac. 19:31). Inscriptions indicate that *Asiarchs* were the foremost men of the province, chosen from among the wealthy and aristocrats.¹¹¹ Of course, Paul's time in Ephesus came to an abrupt halt when the supporters of the goddess Artemis rioted (Ac. 19:23ff.), and he was compelled to leave abruptly after narrowly escaping a lynching (Ac. 20:1).

The James Ossuary

Rarely does a matter with biblical import make the front page of *The New York Times*, but the discovery in Jerusalem of an ossuary bearing the name of "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus" did just that in late October 2002 and was reprinted in newspapers across the United States. A much more complete description appeared in the November/December 2002 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

1st Century Ossuaries

Of first importance is the fact that for a relatively short period of time ancient Jews practiced second burial, first depositing the corpses of their loved ones in tombs for a year until the decomposition of the flesh was complete, and then gathering the bones into bone boxes called ossuaries. The practice of Ossilegium (the scholarly name for second burial) was carried out primarily in Jerusalem during the 1st century prior to the second temple's destruction by the Romans in AD 70. Jerusalem ossuaries, small chests with removable lids usually made from limestone, are typically about 2' (length) x 1' (width) x 1.5' (height). Though most are unadorned, some ossuaries have design motifs (rosettes and/or geometric patterns) and/or inscriptions (indicating lineage or sometimes profession). By the mid-1990s, nearly 900 ossuaries had been discovered "officially", but many more reside in private collections.¹¹² Ossilegium began abruptly around the turn of the millennium and ended just as abruptly after the 1st Jewish Revolt. One hypothesis is that the practice was driven by belief in resurrection (a firm theological conviction of the Pharisees, cf. Ac. 23:8). A more practical reason was that ossuaries depended upon a burgeoning stone mason industry aided by a growing prosperity among Jerusalem's

¹¹¹ McCray, p. 255.

¹¹² Jerusalem residents sometimes excavate on their own property. One such couple excavating beneath their own home have discovered artifacts from the 1st temple period and created their own museum for display, cf. L. Aarons and G. Feinsilver, "Jerusalem Couple Excavates Under Newly Built Home in Search of Their Roots," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1982), pp. 44-49. Professional archaeologists are sometimes outraged by this practice, cf. D. Owen, "To the Editor," *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1982), p. 16. Of course, many artifacts turning up in the antiquities market have been excavated illegally. [It is illegal to excavate in Israel, but if one owns a license from the Department of Antiquities, it is not illegal to sell antiquities, cf. D. Ilan, U. Dahari and G. Avni, "Plundered: the Rampant Rape of Israel's Archaeological Sites," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1989), pp. 38-42.].

elite.¹¹³

The James Ossuary

The James ossuary resides in the private collection of Oded Golan in Israel. It probably was found in Jerusalem or nearby, but its precise provenance is unknown, since its owner purchased it from an antiquities dealer. Andre Lemaire, a French scholar from the Sorbonne and one of the world's foremost epigraphers, was invited to examine it in the summer of 2002. Immediately, he recognized its significance and began procedures for ascertaining its authenticity. Unfortunately, the ossuary was empty, which is typical of ossuaries sold in the antiquities market.¹¹⁴ What set this ossuary apart, of course, was its inscription of twenty Aramaic letters on one of the long sides of the box:

יעקוב בר יוסף אחוי דישוע

Ya'akov bar Yosef akhui diYeshua

James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus

There are several tests used by experts to determine the authenticity of such an artifact. One is the discipline of epigraphy (the study of ancient inscriptions). On the James ossuary, the lettering is quite legible and contains peculiarities of typography typical of 1st century Aramaic. (In fact, a forger would have to have known 1st century Aramaic extremely well to concoct such an inscription.)¹¹⁵ The inscription here fits with other 1st century inscriptions. After initial microscopic examination, the inscription showed no obvious signs of modern tooling or modern edges. The patina (thin veneer on the surface caused by age) showed no signs of being produced artificially.

A second kind of test is a laboratory examination using an Electron Microscope with Electron Spectroscopy capacity.¹¹⁶ Six samples of the soft

¹¹³ S. Fine, "Why Bone Boxes?" *BAR* (Sep/Oct 2001), pp. 38-44, 57.

¹¹⁴ Contact with bones has raised tremendous opposition from the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, and no one really wants to be found in possession of bones, cf. D. Shiloh, "Battle Over Bones," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1997), pp. 52-57, 77.

¹¹⁵ H. Shanks, "The Ultimate Test of Authenticity," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 2002), p. 33. The shape of letters changed over the centuries, and the ossuary displays letter forms that are classical 1st century types.

¹¹⁶ This technique subjects the object to a strong magnetic field. The energy absorbed by the object as the strength of the field is varied provides a spectrum from which a trapped electron population can be measured, and this in turn permits an assessment of radioactive decay and/or the identification of subatomic chemical structures, cf. C. Renfrew and P. Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), pp. 121, 131, 280.

limestone chalk from the ossuary, six samples of the patina, and two samples of the attached soil were examined by The Ministry of National Infrastructures Geological Survey of the State of Israel. Their experts determined that the patina contained no modern elements (i.e., pigments), and the patina's adherence to the stone was consonant with an object of antiquity, not an object artificially produced to resemble antiquity. The soil on the ossuary, which can be carefully identified by trace elements, is the same as that of Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. In short, "No evidence that might detract from the authenticity of the patina and inscription was found."¹¹⁷

Proof of antiquity, of course, does not in itself require a connection between the ossuary and the James of the Bible. Certainly the New Testament speaks of a James who was the brother of Jesus (Mt. 13:55/Mk. 6:3; cf. Mt. 12:46). Paul mentions that after Easter the Lord privileged this same James with a personal post-resurrection appearance (1 Co. 15:7). Paul calls him "the Lord's brother" (Ga. 1:19) and recognized him as a "pillar" in the Jerusalem church (Ga. 2:9; cf. Ac. 12:17; 21:18).¹¹⁸ This same James was almost certainly the leader of the Jerusalem council who gave the final address about the thorny question over Gentile circumcision (Ac. 15:13). Outside the Bible, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus describes the martyrdom of this same James. "James, the brother of Jesus" was brought up on charges of Torah-violation and sentenced to be stoned.¹¹⁹ Eusebius, the 4th century church historian, also testifies to James' martyrdom based on earlier accounts in which, after refusing to renounce Christ, James was thrown from the temple's retaining walls, stoned and beaten to death with a club (c. AD 62). He was buried, and a monument was erected to mark the place of his burial.¹²⁰ Most New Testament scholars attribute the New Testament Book of James to him. So, is this James the same as the James whose name is inscribed on the recently discovered ossuary?

It must be conceded that the names James, Joseph and Jesus were rather common in the 1st century. (For modern purposes of identification, it would have been less ambiguous had the name been inscribed as "James the Just" (as Eusebius calls him) or if Jesus' name had been qualified as "Jesus of Nazareth," but one cannot have everything!) Based on estimated population totals and the frequency of name usage, statistically there may have been as many as twenty persons in 1st century Jerusalem who could be called "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." However, while it was common to mention a father's name in a pedigree, it was uncommon to

¹¹⁷ A. Lemaire, "Epigraphy--and the Lab--Say It's Genuine," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 2002), pp. 28-29.

¹¹⁸ This James should not be confused with James the brother of John, who was martyred early in the history of the Jerusalem church (cf. Ac. 12:2), or James the son of Alphaeus, another of the original twelve apostles (cf. Mt. 10:3/Mk. 3:18/Lk. 6:15).

¹¹⁹ *Antiquities*, 20.9.1.

¹²⁰ *Ecclesiastical History*, II.xxiii.1-25.

mention a sibling's name. To date, only one other example of a sibling's name exists from the period. The mention of Jesus as James' brother probably means that Jesus was considered to be a person well-known and/or that James had an important relationship with him. All this evidence converged toward a conclusion that the James ossuary was very likely the burial box of the James from the New Testament who was the leader of the Jerusalem church. When a scholar of the stature of Lemaire concludes, "It seems very probable that this is the ossuary of the James in the New Testament," the find must be regarded as significant.¹²¹ Since then, the Jewish editor of the foremost biblical archaeological publication and a Christian theologian combined forces to produce a scholarly work supporting the authenticity of the find.¹²²

Hardly had the initial publications in support of the ossuary's authenticity been issued when a firestorm of controversy emerged raising doubt. Some suggested it was "too good to be true", and others complained that since the ossuary was found in the antiquities market rather than in a professional dig, its lack of provenance rendered it too suspicious. Still others began to doubt the authenticity of the inscription itself. A tragedy by any definition occurred when the James ossuary was damaged en route to its first public exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. Upon unpacking the ossuary, museum curators discovered several significant new cracks, one directly through the inscription.¹²³ These were repaired by experts at the ROM, and the ossuary is now more structurally sound than previously. The senior curator at the ROM published yet a further support for the ossuary's authenticity based on additional testing in Canada.¹²⁴ However, the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), which was held in Toronto at the same time the ossuary was exhibited there, officially ignored the controversial ossuary due to its official policy of banning all scholarly research and publication on any artifacts that surface in the antiquities market.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the Israel Antiquities Authority consequently made a claim on the ossuary if it was purchased after 1978. Any artifact purchased after 1978 must have been purchased from a licensed antiquities dealer, who in turn must maintain a record of its origin and provenance. Lacking a receipt for such a transaction, artifacts can be confiscated by the IAA. (There is a certain level of irony if not hypocrisy in such a claim, since

¹²¹ A. Lemaire, "Burial Box of James the Brother of Jesus," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 2002), pp. 24-33, 70.

¹²² B. Witherington III and H. Shanks, *The Brother of Jesus: The Dramatic Story of the First Archaeological Link to Jesus & His Family* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003).

¹²³ H. Shanks, "Cracks in James Bone Box Repaired," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 2003), pp. 20-25.

¹²⁴ E. Keall, "New Tests Bolster Case for Authenticity," *BAR* (Jul/Aug 2003), pp. 52-55, 70.

¹²⁵ H. Shanks, "Hypocrisy, Thy Name is Asor," and "The 2002 Annual Meeting: Horsing Around in Toronto," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 2003), pp. 6, 8, 50-59.

artifacts that are worth very little generally are ignored. The rule of thumb seems to be, "If it's worthless, you get to keep it; if it's valuable, we get to take it.")

Even more sensational, in spite of the initial positive conclusion by several world experts, the Israel Antiquities Authority determined to do its own tests. On June 18, 2003, they issued their summary report in a news conference that the inscription on the ossuary was likely to be a forgery. Their conclusion, in turn, was driven by their experts' impressions of the patina, which they believed was modern and produced by artificial means (exactly the opposite conclusion reached by the experts of The Ministry of National Infrastructures Geological Survey of the State of Israel).¹²⁶ The owner of the ossuary, Oded Golan was arrested by the Israeli police upon recommendation of the IAA. His home was searched, his papers and computers confiscated, and his other artifacts confiscated. After five days in jail, he was released though not charged. By the end of 2003, however, other scholars were publishing rebuttals of the IAA's accusation of forgery, urging that the IAA's methods were flawed and their experts not nearly expert enough.¹²⁷ By early 2004, scholars were questioning the geo-chemical procedures used by the IAA, which in turn was the primarily evidence used by them to make the charge of forgery.¹²⁸ As of this writing, the jury is still out.

The Larger Significance

Committed Christians do not need a bone box with a name on it to assure them of the historical reality of either James or Jesus. For them, the testimony of the New Testament is sufficient. Nevertheless, some critics have questioned the actual existence of Jesus, since the primary references that speak of him all were composed by believing Christians, and as they are quick to point out, Christians are not exactly an unbiased group. To be sure, there have been other literary sources that mentioned Jesus.¹²⁹ However, the James ossuary, if authentic, would be the first epigraphic mention of Jesus and certainly the oldest one currently existing. None of our full copies of the gospels can be dated much earlier than about AD 200, and the earliest papyrus fragment of a gospel, the John Rylands manuscript (a small section of John

¹²⁶ H. Shanks, "The Storm Over the Bone Box," and "Observations on the IAA's Summary Report" and "Is Oded Golan a Forger?", *BAR* (Sep/Oct 2003), pp. 26-38.

¹²⁷ A. Lemaire, "Israel Antiquity Authority's Report on the James Ossuary Deeply Flawed," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 2003), pp. 50-59, 67-70.

¹²⁸ J. Harrell, "Final Blow to IAA Report: Flawed Geochemistry Used to Condemn James Inscription," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 2004), pp. 38-41.

¹²⁹ The most well-known of these is from Tacitus, the Roman historian (b. AD 56), who says that Christians "got their name from Christ, who had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius," *Annals*, 15:44. Other literary references can be traced in M. Harris, *3 Crucial Questions About Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 13-29.

18), dates only to about AD 125. The James ossuary, by contrast, dates to the early 60s AD.

Furthermore, the James ossuary bears upon an old question relating to the precise relationship between Jesus and James, which in turn bears upon the question of Mary's virginity. Three primary points of view have come down to us from the early period of the church. On the face of it, the New Testament references to James as the brother of Jesus presuppose that Jesus' four brothers and his sisters were born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus' birth, since Joseph and Mary had no sexual relations prior to Jesus' birth (cf. Mt. 1:25).¹³⁰ Most Protestants accept this view.

With a growing concern in the post-apostolic church about preserving the belief that Mary was always a virgin, even after her marriage to Joseph, two other theories also developed. The earlier one is that the brothers and sisters were children born to Joseph by a previous marriage, and all of them were older than Jesus.¹³¹ This is the view accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church. Still another is that the purportedly "brothers" of Jesus were in fact only his cousins, based on a somewhat fluid Aramaic term for blood relationship plus the fact that the gospels do not specifically say that these "brothers" and "sisters" were children of Mary and Joseph. This viewpoint holds that the James and Joseph of the four brothers were children of "the other Mary" (Mt. 27:56, 61; Jn. 19:25). This is the standard teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.¹³² The James ossuary, if authentic, strengthens the first view and weakens both the other two.

The First Jewish Revolt and Its Aftermath

The First Jewish Revolt,¹³³ while it was not a Christian event *per se*, nevertheless had significant repercussions for Christians. Until the revolt, the general perception of Christianity, at least by the Romans, was that it was a sect of Judaism. This was the force of Gallio's ruling in Corinth, when synagogue members brought charges against Paul that he was usurping the Torah (Ac. 18:12-13). Gallio, the Roman proconsul, threw the case out of court, since, as he put it, "it involved questions about words and names and your own law" (Ac. 18:14-16). Gallio's ruling may be taken as representative of the general Roman opinion.

¹³⁰ This so-called Helvidian theory, because it was advocated by Helvidius (4th century), was also the view of Tertullian (AD 150-222), cf. H. Jacobs, *ISBE* (1979) I.551.

¹³¹ This view, called the Epiphonian theory because it was advocated strongly by Epiphanius, also was held by Origen, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa and Ambrose, cf. Jacobs, *ISBE* (1979) I. 551.

¹³² This view, called the Hieronymian Theory (after the Latin name of Jerome, who developed it), contains the most difficulties, cf. Jacobs, *ISBE* (1979) I.551-552.

¹³³ There were two major Jewish revolts, one in the late 60s AD and one in the 130s AD.

The Roman perception that Christianity was a sect of Judaism had huge implications, since Judaism was a legal religion. It meant that Christians would be free to meet, worship and express their faith under the shelter of Roman law. Roman law forbade corporate meetings more than once per month out of concern for any tendency toward sedition. The benefit of being viewed as a legal Jewish sect was important, since Jews, under Roman law, were allowed to meet weekly. Christians, therefore, were allowed to meet weekly as well.¹³⁴

The Jewish revolt in the 60s AD changed this picture radically. The Jewish Christians did not join their fellow zealots in the rebellion against Rome. In fact, when the Jewish revolt broke out in AD 67, the Christians from Jerusalem abandoned the city and escaped to Pella in the Decapolis, thus signaling their lack of sympathy for the patriotic uprising.¹³⁵ Afterwards, Christianity could no longer be considered simply a Jewish sect. Without this consideration, however, Christians also were exempt from the privileges afforded by official recognition, and this in turn paved the way for the imperial persecutions to come later.

The Fall of Jerusalem

The memory of the successful Maccabean revolt against the Syrian Greeks in the 160s BC inspired the Jewish community under Roman occupation to hope for a similar successful uprising in their own time. Between the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC and the 60s AD, various small uprisings occurred, all of them put down by the Roman army.¹³⁶ However, in AD 66 the Jewish nation in Palestine successfully revolted against Rome, and while some moderates among the Jews attempted to forestall such a rebellion, the defeat of the Roman army of Gallus, the governor of Syria, plunged the Jewish nation into irrevocable conflict. As a symbol of their new freedom, the Jews struck new silver coins during the second year of the revolt bearing the inscriptions “Shekel of Israel,” “Jerusalem the Holy” and “Year Two” (i.e., AD 68).¹³⁷ In response, Caesar Nero appointed Vespasian to oversee the campaign against the Jews.¹³⁸ From the Roman perspective, if the Jews were allowed to revolt, no province in the whole empire was safe.

The Roman campaign began with the mobilization of the legions in Syria. The Jews, for their part, began to strengthen Galilee, where the brunt of the attack was

¹³⁴ Winter, pp. 133-134.

¹³⁵ R. Smith, *ABD* (1992) 5.220; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.5.3.

¹³⁶ For a listing of these revolts, see N. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 170-181.

¹³⁷ S. Brenner, “Spending Your Way Through Jewish History: Ancient Judean Coins Tell Their Story,” *BAR* (May/Jun 2003), p. 50.

¹³⁸ For details of the war, see L. Levine, “Jewish War (66-73 C.E.),” *ABD* (1992) 3.839-845.

expected. Gamla, the fortress to the east of the Sea of Galilee, they placed under the leadership of a young officer named Flavius Josephus. Against Gamla, Vespasian brought three full legions plus auxiliaries—more than 30,000 troops! On October 20, AD 67, Gamla fell. Gamla has been excavated over multiple seasons since the late 1970s. The archaeological finds correlate well with the descriptions of the battle recorded by Josephus after he gave up his military career and began writing Jewish history.¹³⁹

By AD 68, all of Galilee, Perea and Judea was once more under Roman control, but with the death of Caesar Nero, the campaign against Jerusalem could not be immediately completed, since Vespasian had to await orders from a new emperor. By December AD 69, after considerable confusion as to who would be Nero's successor, Vespasian himself was acknowledged as the new emperor, and the campaign against Jerusalem was renewed the next spring under Titus, Vespasian's son. With four Legions, Titus put Jerusalem to siege. After breaching the walls, the Roman army destroyed the temple and burned the city, a direct fulfillment to the predictions of Jesus some 40 years earlier (Mt. 24:1-2//Mk. 13:1-2//Lk. 21:5-6, 20-24; 19:41-44). Near the bottom of the southwest corner of the temple mount, archaeologists have discovered stones toppled from the temple complex nearly two millennia ago, and they have allowed them to remain just as they fell in AD 70. In the excavations of second temple Jerusalem, archaeologists discovered a burned house, buried and undisturbed, a mute reminder of the fury of the Romans. In the house they found the skeletal remains of a young woman, her arm reaching toward a doorway step when she died, a wrenching testimony to Jesus' words of warning (Lk. 23:27-31).¹⁴⁰ The Romans destroyed not only the temple, but also the city's fortifications, public buildings and large residential homes. In the end, not a single important building remained standing. Those Jews who had not succumbed earlier in the siege were crucified, exiled or sold as slaves.¹⁴¹

The fall of Jerusalem was extremely important to the Romans. To celebrate their victory, a triumphal column was erected by the occupying Tenth Roman Legion bearing the inscription: *Imp[erator] Caesar Vespasianus Aug[ustus]*... In addition, thousands of coins were struck in gold, silver and bronze, depicting Judea as a shackled, weeping figure. The number of these *Judaea Capta* coins was larger than any other series minted by the Romans to celebrate military victories. In Rome's forum near the coliseum, a monumental arch celebrating Titus' victory was erected, and one of the relief panels shows the soldiers carrying away loot from the temple,

¹³⁹ D. Syon, "Gamla, Portrait of a Rebellion," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 1992), pp. 20-37.

¹⁴⁰ N. Avigad, "The Burnt House Captures a Moment in Time," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1983), pp. 66-72.

¹⁴¹ H. Geva, "Searching for Roman Jerusalem," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1997), pp. 34-45, 72.

including the menorah, the golden table and musical instruments.¹⁴²

The Fall of Masada

Even after the fall of Jerusalem, the Jewish freedom fighters continued to hold the fortresses of Herodium, Machaerus and Masada. The first two of these fell quickly, but Masada lasted until AD 73-4. The sheer cliffs of Masada, a nearly impregnable escarpment in the Judean wilderness near the Dead Sea, rose more than 800' on the east and 600' on the west above the surrounding terrain. It may have been used as a hiding place early as the time of David (1 Sa. 22:4; 24:22).¹⁴³ The Hasmoneans, after the Maccabean Revolt in the 160s BC, began building structures on the top. Later, Herod the Great improved all its facilities. He carved twelve cisterns to retain rain water, built a palace on the north face, constructed storage rooms on top, and built various other structures, including a casemate wall around the perimeter.

When the zealots of the First Jewish Revolt fortified themselves at Masada, they managed to hold out until the Romans had constructed a huge ramp in order to bring their battering rams near the perimeter wall.¹⁴⁴ Though the zealots reinforced their wall line against the battering rams with wooden beams scavenged from the buildings on the summit, the Romans set fire to the wood, and eventually, were able to breach the wall.¹⁴⁵ Josephus recorded a lengthy account of the fall of Masada, and according to his description, when the Romans finally entered the fortress, they discovered the entire company of defenders—960 of them—had committed mass suicide.¹⁴⁶ Ostensibly, the story was preserved by a half dozen people who slipped out of Masada just before its fall, and these refugees repeated it to Josephus. This intriguing account has been examined and re-examined, both from a literary standpoint as well as from the evidences of archaeology. While ostraca with (presumably) the names of the executioners have been found at Masada, the skeletal remains of the 960 have not been found. Various discrepancies and obscurities exist

¹⁴² D. Hoenig, "The Other Side of the Coin," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1981), p. 44 and D. Cole, D. Bahat and H. Shanks, *Jerusalem Archaeology Slide Set* (Washington D.C.: BAS, 1983), pp. 26-27.

¹⁴³ The Hebrew term **מצודה** (*matsudah* = stronghold) could refer to a number of places, but since David was in the desert of En Gedi just before he "went up to the stronghold" (2 Sa. 24:1), and since En Gedi is a short distance north of Masada, it is not unreasonable to assume that this escarpment was the site of David's wilderness hideout.

¹⁴⁴ For details on the excavation of the Roman ramp, which probably was built upon a natural spur of rock, see D. Gill, "It's a Natural: Masada Ramp Was Not a Roman Engineering Miracle," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 2001), pp. 22-31, 56.

¹⁴⁵ E. Netzer, "The Last Days and Hours at Masada," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1991), pp. 20-32; J. Magness, "Masada: Arms and the Man," *BAR* (Jul/Aug 1992), pp. 58-67; H. Shanks, "Masada," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 1997), pp. 58-63; Z. Meshel, "Governments in Exile," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1998), pp. 46-53, 68.

¹⁴⁶ *Jewish War*, 7.8.6-7; also, N. Ben-Yehuda, "Where Masada's Defenders Fell," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1998), pp. 33-39.

in Josephus' account. Hence, the accuracy of his history is disputed.¹⁴⁷ Debates about Josephus' accuracy notwithstanding, with the fall of Masada, the last vestige of Jewish resistance had been extinguished.

The Rise of Persecution

If the First Jewish Revolt made clear that Christians were not simply a sect of Judaism, the bitterness of the Jewish community against Christians reinforced that conclusion. Sometime in about the mid-80s, an addition to the Jewish synagogue liturgy called the *birkat ha-minim* (= cursing of the deviants), recited each service among the traditional eighteen benedictions, forced Christians out of the synagogue. This curse seemed particularly to have had Jewish Christians in view.¹⁴⁸

Persecution toward Christians from Roman authorities began during the time of Claudius. Luke mentions that he expelled the Jews from Rome (Ac. 18:2), and Suetonius verifies this event and says that the expulsion was because of riots at the "instigation of Chrestus".¹⁴⁹ There are compelling reasons for believing that *Chrestus* is an allusion to Christ, and the disturbances were disputes between Christians and Jews, probably over the claim that Jesus was the Jewish messiah. While at this time the Romans lumped both Christian and non-Christian Jews together under Judaism, the expulsion of the Jews from Rome certainly affected Jewish Christians.¹⁵⁰

More serious opposition began under Caesar Nero. Rome's great fire in AD 64 was blamed upon the Christians, according to Tacitus, since such calamities usually were perceived to be due to the wrath of the gods. Upon the Christians was exacted "the most exquisite punishments".¹⁵¹ These included crucifixion, public burning, and animal baiting, in which Christians were covered with skins and torn apart by dogs. Tacitus himself implies that the Christians were innocent but became scapegoats for Nero. Nero also was responsible for the execution of St. Paul, though the exact year of this execution is debated.¹⁵² When the present Church of St. Paul Outside the Walls was being built over the site of an ancient church in Rome, a marble slab was uncovered under the altar bearing the inscription: *PAULO APOSTOLO*

¹⁴⁷ J. Zias, "Whose Bones?" *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1998), pp. 40-45, 64-66.

¹⁴⁸ R. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 22, 173-174; E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 391, 460. The content of this curse is as follows: *For apostates let there be no hope, and the dominion of arrogance [i.e., Rome] do Thou speedily root out in our days; and let the Nazarenes [Christians] and the heretics perish as in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of the living and let them not be written with the righteous. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant.*

¹⁴⁹ Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 5.25.4.

¹⁵⁰ M. Harris, *3 Crucial Questions About Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 21-24.

¹⁵¹ S. Angus and A. Renwick, *ISBE* (1986) 3.522.

¹⁵² It would have been either in AD 64, Nero's first persecution, or in AD 68, just before his suicide.

MART[YRI].¹⁵³ This may well have been the place of Paul's burial.

By the late 1st century, the persecutions against Christians were becoming more pronounced. Tacitus reflects on the public image of Christians in the empire, and he describes them as "a class hated for their abominations," "a deadly superstition," people convicted of "hatred of the human race," and "criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment."¹⁵⁴ Anti-Christian graffiti began to appear, such as the one excavated on the Palatine Hill in Rome, where a Christian named Alexamenos is mocked in a depiction of him praying to a crucified God with the head of an ass and the inscription, *Alexamenos sebete theon* (= Alexamenos prays to (his) God." By the early 2nd century, Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, was writing to Emperor Trajan to ask how he should prosecute Christians in his realm. Eventually, all citizens would be required to sacrifice to the emperor and/or the pagan deities as a sign of political loyalty, and any who did not were liable to punishment or imprisonment. Emperor Decius (AD 249-251) vigorously pursued the imperial verdict, and a certificate or *Libellus* verifying such sacrifices was issued to citizens who complied. An example of such a certificate from about AD 250 exists in the University of Michigan Special Collections Library.¹⁵⁵

By the time of the writing of Revelation, the effect of persecution manifested itself in the apocalyptic visions depicting Rome as a commercial prostitute responsible for the martyrdoms of God's saints (Rv. 17:6, 9, 18).¹⁵⁶ The seven churches in Asia to whom this book was addressed lay along a route of Roman roads running up the coast from Ephesus to Smyrna and Pergamum, and from there through the valleys to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. The cities to which the book was addressed appear in just this order (Rv. 2-3). While Philadelphia and Laodicea have never been excavated, the other five cities have had varying degrees of excavation. Enough has been uncovered to verify that these cities, like most others in the Roman world, were filled with the temples and monuments of the pagan pantheons and the worship of the emperors.¹⁵⁷

The Early Text of the New Testament

Not all artifacts from the ancient past consist of architecture, pottery and

¹⁵³ McRay, p. 349.

¹⁵⁴ K. Curtis and C. Thiede, eds., *The Trial and Testimony of the Early Church* (Worcester, PN: Christian History Institute, 1991), p. 52.

¹⁵⁵ H. Butz et al., *From Papyri to King James* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1999), p. 4.

¹⁵⁶ The description of Rome as the city on seven hills is familiar from various Roman writers, including Vergil (*Aen* vi.782), Martial (iv.64) and Cicero (*Att.* vi.5), cf. R. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 314.

¹⁵⁷ McCray, pp. 244-247, 250-274.

buried objects. Ancient manuscript texts, also, are part of the past, and for Christians, the text of the New Testament is the most important of all. The original documents of the New Testament all were composed within about half a century (ca. 40s through the 90s AD). None of the original writings (autographs) actually penned by the New Testament writers have survived, but we have very early copies that form the manuscript base for our modern translations of the New Testament.

Prior to Gutenberg's invention of movable type (1456), all reproduction of writing was by hand. Naturally, this made lengthy works, such as the New Testament, a laborious and expensive process. It also resulted in minor variations within texts. Today, more than 5000 manuscripts have survived of hand-copied Greek New Testament texts (either entire or portions).

Of course, it is not only texts of the New Testament that have survived from the ancient world. Many other texts, also, have surfaced. Some of these are religious texts, some are domestic texts, some are legal texts, and some are Christian non-canonical texts. Before their discovery, there were theories that the Greek New Testament was composed of some sort of special Greek. Clearly, it was significantly different than the works of classical Greek from a few centuries earlier. In fact, as late as the late 1800s some scholars were still advocating that the New Testament was written in a form of Greek that stood alone, a peculiar and unique form, and some even advocated that it was especially formulated by the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost Greek!). To the contrary, the more recent discovery of the wide array of early Greek manuscripts has demonstrated that the New Testament was written in a common dialect to be found in all of them. It was not a "spiritual" language, or for that matter, even a unique form. It was common Greek as widely spoken and written throughout the 1st century Greco-Roman world.

The Papyri

The documents of the New Testament circulated at first as individual books and letters before they were collected into a single volume (cf. Col. 4:16). While Jews and pagans wrote their documents on scrolls, either papyrus or leather, Christians began writing their documents as codices (i.e., pages bound on one side so that both sides could be used).¹⁵⁸ The oldest of these were written on papyrus sheets, a product not unlike paper, which was created by pressing together and drying the reedy papyrus plants from the Nile valley. Relatively few (less than 100) of these manuscripts have survived, and they come from Egypt, where the hot, arid climate made deterioration much slower. Though some were known prior to the 20th century,

¹⁵⁸ Of the more than 80 known papyri of the New Testament, only four are written on scrolls. All the rest are codices, cf. K. and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, trans. E. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 101-102.

their value was largely unrecognized, and they were unavailable for earlier translations of the English Bible.

Of the New Testament papyri, the Chester Beatty and the Bodmer collections rank as most important, because they are relatively more complete and in better states of preservation than the others. Beatty and Bodmer were important collectors, and their manuscript collections were transferred to libraries and universities beginning in the 1930s. Today, the Chester Beatty Papyri reside in Dublin, Ireland and at the University of Michigan. The Chester Beatty collection includes \mathcal{P}^{45} (portions of the four Gospels and Acts; dated to the late 200s AD), \mathcal{P}^{46} (Paul's letters, except those to Timothy and Titus, plus the Book of Hebrews; dated to about 200 AD)¹⁵⁹ and \mathcal{P}^{47} (portions of Revelation; dated to the late 200s AD). The Bodmer collection, which resides in Geneva at the Bodmer Library, includes \mathcal{P}^{66} (Gospel of John; dated to about 200 AD), \mathcal{P}^{72} (1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and various Christian apocryphal works), \mathcal{P}^{74} (portions of Acts, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude; dated to the 7th century) and \mathcal{P}^{75} (portions of John and Luke; dated to the 3rd century).

The earliest single papyrus discovered so far is \mathcal{P}^{52} , a small portion of John's Gospel (18:31-33 and 37-38), and it dates to about 125 AD (with many scholars holding this to be the later limit and suggesting it might even be as early as the turn of the 1st century).¹⁶⁰ It must have been copied not long after the Gospel of John was composed. It is housed in the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester, England.

The Uncials

Early texts of the New Testament written on parchment (leather from cattle, sheep, goats, antelope) proved to be much more stable than those written on papyri. By the 300s AD, parchment had surpassed papyri as the preferred writing surface, even though it was more expensive to produce. The style of writing, called uncial, was in all upper case letters. There was no punctuation nor even divisions between words, such as we are accustomed to in the modern world. Nevertheless, the uncials, especially because of their durability, are very important. Nearly 300 uncials have been discovered, and their dates range from the 300s to the 800s AD. Of them, four are probably the most important, since they are either early, largely complete, or both.

Codex Vaticanus (coded B 03), dating to the 4th century, resides in the Vatican

¹⁵⁹ At least one scholar dates \mathcal{P}^{46} to the late 100s AD on paleographical grounds (i.e., study of ancient handwriting), cf. Y. Kim, "Palaeographical Dating of \mathcal{P}^{46} to the Later First Century," *Biblica* 69:2 (1988), pp. 248-257. Most scholars, however, put it a century later.

¹⁶⁰ Aland and Aland, p. 85.

library in Rome. It contains the Septuagint Old Testament and most of the New Testament (the text breaks off at Hebrews 9:14, and the remainder of Hebrews, along with 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Revelation, are missing).¹⁶¹ Codex Sinaiticus (coded \aleph 01), also dating to the 4th century, resides in the British Museum. Codex Sinaiticus contains most of the Septuagint Old Testament, all of the New Testament, and two other early Christians writings that were considered canonical by some early Christians (the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas). It was preserved by the monks at St. Catherine's monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai, who did not apparently realize the worth of such manuscripts, since a German visitor, Dr. Tischendorf, discovered some 43 leaves of a 4th century codex in a waste basket (and according to one monk, two similar basketfuls already had been burned). Returning to St. Catherine's, Tischendorf discovered Codex Sinaiticus, and in 1859 it was presented by the monastery to the Russian Tsar. The British Government bought it from the Soviet Union on Christmas Day, 1933 for a hundred thousand pounds. More than a century later, when repairs to the monastery were conducted in 1975, eight more pages of Sinaiticus were discovered (pages that were missing from the Book of Genesis).¹⁶² Codex Alexandrinus (coded A 02), dating from the 5th century, also contains both the Old and New Testaments. Residing in the Patriarchal Library of Alexandria, Egypt until it was presented to Charles I of England in 1628, this manuscript now rests in the British Library. The general assessment is that it is somewhat "inferior in the gospels, good in the rest of the New Testament, but best in Revelation."¹⁶³ Finally, there is Codex Bezae (coded D 05), so named because it once belonged to John Calvin's son-in-law, Theodore Beza. This Greek-Latin diglot is not a complete text, but it includes the four gospels, Acts, and a small fragment of John 3.

The Minuscules

The third category of Greek manuscripts after the papyri and the uncials are the minuscules. By the 9th century, the uncial style was replaced by the form of a running script. The earliest example dates to AD 835 (minuscule 461, Public Library, St. Petersburg, Russia). While uncials are similar to our upper case letters, the minuscules are similar to our lower case cursive letters. The minuscules outnumber the uncials by about 10 to 1, and some 2795 have survived since the 9th century. Though not as old as the manuscripts in the previous categories, some were copied from very ancient texts and so preserve an ancient form. Codex 33, for instance,

¹⁶¹ D. Hanneh, "Glossary: New Testament Manuscripts," *BR* (Feb. 1990), p. 8.

¹⁶² McCray, pp. 352-353; F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, rev. ed. (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1963), p. 183.

¹⁶³ Aland and Aland, p. 107.

which includes the entire New Testament (except Revelation), is very similar to the codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, even though it was not produced until the 9th century. Codex 1739 contains an excellent text of Acts and the epistles, and while it was not copied until the 10th century, it preserves the text of the 4th century manuscript from which it was copied. In the margins are many quotations from some of the early church fathers, all of whom lived before the close of the 4th century.¹⁶⁴

The Lexionaries

Lexionaries are church compilations of selected readings from Scripture arranged according to the Christian calendar. Traditionally, the church appointed scriptural lessons to be read for Saturday and Sunday services as well as for the daily office on other days of the week. About 2200 such lexionaries using Greek portions of the New Testament have survived. The Saturday-Sunday sequence of lessons may be as old as the mid-2nd century, while the weekday system may be as old as Constantine in the 4th century, though many if not most scholars suggest that prior to the 4th century, given the fragmentary nature of the New Testament canon, the dating of lexionary material is difficult, and it might not have been developed until as late as the 7th or 8th centuries.¹⁶⁵

Quotations by the Early Fathers

Quotations abound in the patristic writers of the first several centuries of the Christian church. However, these are generally of lesser value than the previous manuscripts, since sometimes it is difficult to ascertain whether a passage is a pure quotation or an allusion or a paraphrase. The church fathers may have quoted from memory (which, admittedly, can be faulty), and they may have copied from existing biblical texts as well.¹⁶⁶

Early Translations

Beginning in about AD 180, the New Testament documents began being translated into other languages in the Roman world. The ones that are most valuable, of course, are those that were translated directly from Greek texts of the Bible. The most important early versions are: Old Latin (late 2nd century), Vulgate (4th century), Syriac (there are several Syriac Versions from the 4th century and later), Coptic (3rd or 4th century), Gothic (4th century), Armenian (5th century), Ethiopic (6th century and

¹⁶⁴ Hannah, p. 8; Aland and Aland, pp. 128-129.

¹⁶⁵ Aland and Aland, pp. 160-166.

¹⁶⁶ Aland and Aland, pp. 166-180.

later), and Georgian (5th century and later).¹⁶⁷

The Palimpsests

The value of parchment can hardly be appreciated by modern people, who have access to paper unlimited. In the ancient world, however, parchments were extremely valuable, often scarce, and sometimes reused. The original writing was scraped (*palim-psest* = to scrape again), and new texts were written over the old one. Altogether, some 55 uncial palimpsests have survived, and with the use of chemicals and ultraviolet lamps, their original texts can often be deciphered. Codex C (the Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus), for instance, contained a 5th century copy of Scripture, was rescraped in the 12th century and rewritten with sermons. (Someone quipped that this was not the last time the Word of God was obscured by sermons.)¹⁶⁸

Textual Families

The autographs of the New Testament were penned by Paul and others or dictated in shorthand to an amanuensis, who then put the document in its final form (cf. Ro. 16:22; 1 Pe. 5:12; 1 Co. 16:21; Ga. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Th. 3:17). Before distribution, the original author would likely review, edit and then sign off on the official edition in his own handwriting. He may even have kept a copy in a special letter book for reference when composing subsequent correspondence (possibly alluded to in 2 Ti. 4:13).¹⁶⁹

The reproduction of biblical texts was gradual. Soon after they were composed, Christians began making copies of the texts owned by neighboring churches (cf. Col. 4:16). The only New Testament documents that possibly were composed in multiple copies from the beginning were Ephesians (1:1mg)¹⁷⁰ and Revelation (Rv. 1:11). Some of the early papyri demonstrate that various New Testament books were collected in groups, such as, the Gospels and Acts, Paul's letters, and the non-Pauline letters.¹⁷¹

Since the early copies generally do not seem to have been made by

¹⁶⁷ Aland and Aland, pp. 181-217.

¹⁶⁸ Hannah, pp. 8-9.

¹⁶⁹ B. Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), pp. 215-217.

¹⁷⁰ The earliest copy of Ephesians (46) as well as the Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus do not contain the address "in Ephesus", and many scholars have taken this to mean that the letter was composed as an encyclical and sent to various churches, Ephesus being only one of them, cf. R. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), pp. 626-627.

¹⁷¹ P. Comfort, *Early Manuscripts and Modern Translations of the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1990), p. 5.

professional scribes,¹⁷² they exhibit a fair number of variations. The critical analysis of the earliest texts (prior to the 4th century) has produced categories like *strict* (few variants), *normal* (greater degree of variation), and *free* (very free rendition).¹⁷³ Still, these categories are far from precise, and they are debated.¹⁷⁴

Yet a further development is that the texts of the New Testament were copied and recopied in various geographical locations. Many of these copies were produced during the four decades of relative peace from the middle of the 3rd century until AD 303, when severe persecutions began in the reign of Diocletian. The persecution under Diocletian saw the destruction of many churches and the public burning of Christian manuscripts. After the conversion of Constantine in AD 312, more and more copies were needed due to the shortage. Hence, with the new Christian freedoms provided by Constantine, bishops were able to organize copying houses (scriptoriums) where an exemplar (the prototype text available) was used to produce large quantities of copies. Any errors in the exemplar (whether real or imagined) were corrected, and all the copies bore the characteristics of the model text being used.

Many copies of biblical texts in various parts of the world came to share the same characteristics as other texts from the same geographical region. By the 5th century, for instance, Jerome was speaking of “text types” with respect to the Old Testament. In theory, the same may be true for the New Testament. Today, textual scholars speak of at least two major possible text types in the New Testament: the *Alexandrian* (preserved in Egypt) and the *Byzantine* (preserved by the churches in the eastern part of the empire). In addition, some scholars see a *Western* text type preserved in the Western part of the Empire (chiefly Rome), and others argue for even other text types, such as, the *Caesarean* (produced in Palestine).¹⁷⁵ However, while the Alexandrian and Byzantine text types are widely recognized, all theories of text types are debated.¹⁷⁶

Early Uses of the Divine Name in Manuscripts

In the production of Old Testament texts, special treatments of the divine name

¹⁷² Professional scribes usually used a corrector to proofread the manuscript and write in the corrections, and μ 66 may well have been produced in this way. It contains nearly 500 corrections. However, μ 66 is a notable exception in this regard, cf. Comfort, p. 6.

¹⁷³ Aland and Aland, pp. 56-64.

¹⁷⁴ McCray, pp. 368-369.

¹⁷⁵ J. Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 86-91.

¹⁷⁶ Aland and Aland, pp. 66-67; Comfort, pp. 9-16.

began to appear in the intertestamental period.¹⁷⁷ Scribes washed their hands both before and after each recording of the divine name (and the tetragrammaton יהוה occurs more than 6000 times). In the texts from Qumran, the divine name sometimes appears in paleo-Hebrew even though the rest of the text is in a later form. Also, from the 2nd temple period, the divine name was not pronounced (*Adonai* was substituted for *Yahweh* in the synagogue readings). The same reverence carried over into the production of Christian texts as well. Abbreviations were used for the names God, Lord, Father, Jesus, Spirit and Son. Normally, such abbreviations consisted of the first and last letter, but sometimes it was the first and second letter, sometimes even three letters.

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| ΘΕΟΣ (= God) | = | ΘΣ |
| ΚΥΡΙΟΣ (= Lord) | = | ΚΣ |
| ΠΑΤΗΡ (= Father) | = | ΠΡ |
| ΙΗΣΟΥΣ (= Jesus) | = | ΗΙΣ |
| ΠΝΕΥΜΑ (= Spirit) | = | ΠΝΑ |
| ΥΙΟΣ (= Son) | = | ΥΣ |

A horizontal line over the abbreviations indicated that the word was a contraction of the divine name.¹⁷⁸

A further connection between Old Testament manuscripts and Christian ideas comes in the form of “the mark” derived from Ezekiel 9:4-6. The last letter in the Hebrew alphabet, the Hebrew *taw* (formed in ancient Hebrew as either an X or +), was used by Jewish scribes as a mark to identify messianic passages in Old Testament texts. For instance, in the Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (1QIsa^a), “X” marks the passages in 32:1; 42:6; 49:7; 55:4; 56:1 and 66:5, all of which are messianic. Later Christians understood such marks to refer to the Messiah directly, and because this mark in its two forms also is the equivalent of a cross (T) and the Greek *chi* (X), the first letter in the Greek work for Christ (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ), Christians came to understand the passage in Ezekiel as referring to the cross of Christ. Origen (3rd century) describes his inquiry of Jews in this regard, and at least one of them, a Christian Jew, indicated that the mark predicted the same image to be inscribed on the foreheads of Christians. This same mark is to be found on various ossuaries excavated in Palestine as well as in the Christian catacombs in Rome. It is one of the earliest symbols of the Christian faith.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ McCray, pp. 369-370.

¹⁷⁸ McCray, pp. 369-372.

¹⁷⁹ J. Finegan, “Crosses in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1979), pp. 40-49.