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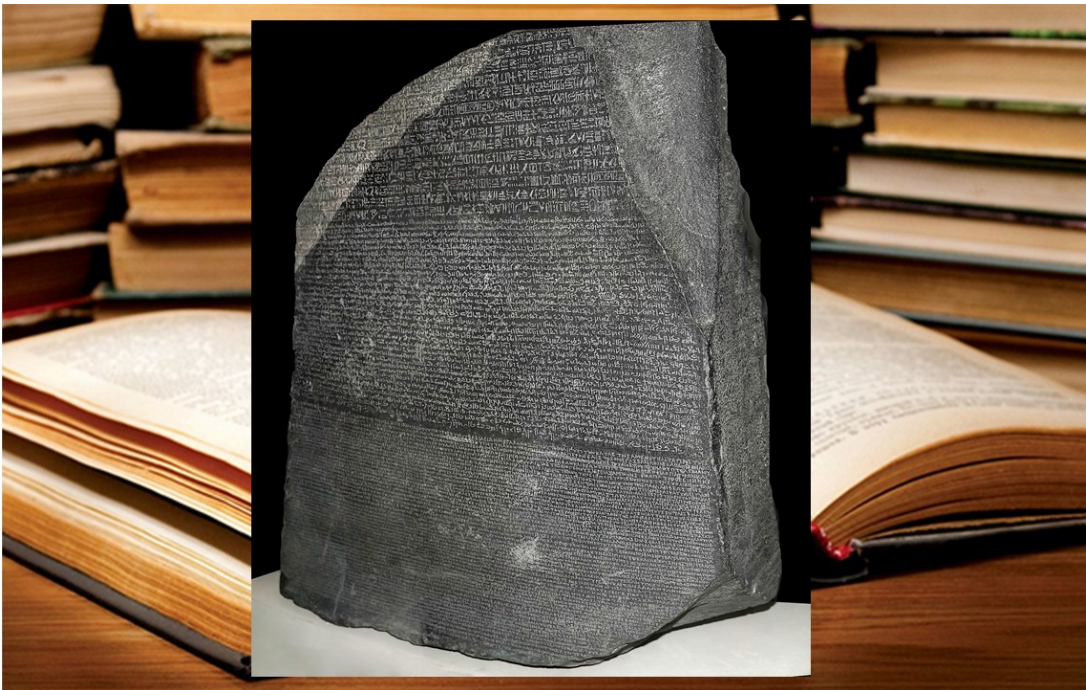


DR. JUSTIN B. CLEARSKY

THE SECOND ROSETTA STONE

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## *The Second Rosetta Stone*



**Dr. Justin B. Clearsky**

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## Acknowledgments

This work is dedicated to all those who have a sincere desire to find and know the truth about the Gospels and who have taken the time to share those findings with “we the people.”

Among this group, this author would like to single out Joseph Atwill, for finding and staking his reputation on a thesis and a book that is the subject of detailed analysis in this work, and for having the long-suffering patience and perseverance necessary to make the discovery.

This author would also like to thank the Israeli Bible scholar and historian, Israel Knohl, who wrote: *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, whose deeply respected findings and conclusions in that work have been a source of inspiration to this author.

And last, to Tamara, whose love and support makes all this author's lunatic-laden endeavors possible.

Dr. Justin B. Clearsky

June 10, 2021



## Preface

In 2005, Joseph Atwill published *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus*. The main thesis of *Caesar's Messiah* is that the Gospels were created by a group of Roman Caesars, the Flavians, and that the character of Jesus is a fictional, mythological character, like Hercules.

In the work, Atwill shows that the Gospels were created because Rome had been battling a decades-long battle against a Jewish Messianic movement and the Flavians (a family of Caesar's who assumed power in 69 CE) wanted to create an alternative pacifistic version of Judaism that would cooperate with the Roman Empire. In short, that the Gospels were created by Rome as a military psychological operation.

In 2012, this author stumbled across *Caesar's Messiah*, purchased the book and read it. After reading *Caesar's Messiah*, in 2014, this author was also introduced to Atwill's second work, *Shakespeare's Secret Messiah* and purchased and read that book.

Since that time, this author has re-read *Caesar's Messiah* and *Shakespeare's Secret Messiah* no less than twenty times, and watched all the documentaries that are available online and on YouTube about the book. During that time, this author has also followed and listened to most, if not all, of Atwill's podcasts and online interviews that have introduced, debated, discussed and reviewed both books.

Given the impact that Atwill's work has had confirming many previous suspicions that this author had about the Gospels before reading *Caesar's Messiah*, this author feels he owes it to Atwill and anyone who has read *Caesar's Messiah* or is thinking about reading it, to add some additional historical and other context (over and above what is included in *Caesar's Messiah*) to lend further support to the Atwill's main thesis.

The aim of this effort is to lend additional background information and context to the problem the Romans faced in Judea in the first century, *from their perspective*. A perspective that once fully understood, will hopefully help the reader better understand and appreciate not only the genius behind the Gospel's authorship, but also the method behind the madness of that authorship.

Regardless of how many souls read or end up taking anything away from this work, this author's motivation for sharing the contents and findings in this work is admittedly selfish. It is for the sake of self-satisfaction. As Reinhold Messner (the first climber to ascent all fourteen peaks over 8,000 meters and the first to summit Mt. Everest solo and without supplemental oxygen) said: "It is not what you have or accumulate in life, but what you do in

life that matters.”

This work, then, is this author’s best attempt to “do something,” as opposed to the much easier path of keeping this information to oneself and doing nothing. If for no other purpose, to show gratitude to Atwill for the impact that *Caesar’s Messiah* has had on this author’s life in helping to expose and explain how the “Oligarchy” works and has always worked. A disconcerting subject that “we the people” can no longer afford to remain ignorant about, or sweep under the carpet.

Therefore, as a self-satisfaction project, if only one person finds this work meaningful and beneficial in their own search for the truth, then the writing of this work will have been worth it, because shared truth, knowledge and wisdom is its own reward.

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June 10, 2021

## Introduction

As a western-educated man who was raised by devout Christian parents, who went to Sunday school in his formative years and attended a Christian College after high school, this author had studied the Gospels and was familiar with their contents.

Like most Christians, this author was taught the Gospels were the written accounts of four individual authors who had diligently tried their best to record actual historical events that had been passed down about the life of a Jewish philosopher and Messianic teacher named Jesus.

Like most of my fellow Christians, this author read and studied the Gospels as religious writings, and knew little if anything about the historian Josephus and *The Wars of the Jews*, or any of Josephus's other works.

Although this author had already moved away from the faith and was in his 50s when he first read *Caesar's Messiah*, its impact was profound. As mentioned in the Preface, from that time until now, this author has re-read the book no less than twenty times, watched most if not all of Atwill's online documentaries about the book, and have repeatedly listened to most if not all of Atwill's online podcast interviews.

Why the fascination and repeated readings? Because as a long-standing critical thinker, truth seeker and lover of music and the arts, this author was quick to realize that while reading *Caesar's Messiah*, this author had perhaps stumbled onto one of the most important literary works ever written, and as a result, this author desired to learn more.

Years earlier, another work of art had also left a deep and lasting impression on this author's mind and soul; the 1984 movie *Amadeus*. For those unfortunate souls who have not seen the film, *Amadeus* is about the life of Mozart and follows a fictional rivalry between Mozart and Italian composer Antonio Salieri at the court of Emperor Joseph II.

As the film unfolds, Salieri is shocked to discover that the transcendently talented Mozart is obscene and immature while Salieri, a devout Catholic, struggles to fathom why God would endow such a great gift to Mozart instead of him, and concludes that God is using Mozart's talent to mock Salieri's mediocrity. In the end, Salieri renounces God and vows to take revenge on Him by destroying Mozart.

The film is both a testament to the beauty and genius of the work of the artist or composer, and the mystique and "unfairness" about why some have a natural ability to produce masterpieces and works of great beauty, and others do not.

Sensing the significance of *Caesar's Messiah* and wanting to learn more about the

typological pattern that the work exposes, this author soon realized that *Caesar's Messiah* was, in fact, a second Rosetta Stone. A second Rosetta Stone that finally, after 2,000 years, unlocked the genre and the “code” of the Gospels, thus revealing not only the genius of the writer-composer Josephus and his literary team, but the masterpiece of literary composition, that are the Gospels and *The Wars of the Jews*.

Unfortunately for this author, the joy of this discovery was at the same time overshadowed by a sense of sorrow. A sense of heartfelt sorrow for all of this author's Christian ancestors, who, like those born before the discovery of The Rosetta Stone in 1799, had been denied knowledge and understanding of the glory of Egypt's written past. Likewise, this author felt a sense of sorrow for all the generations of ancestors who were also “fed” the narrative of the Gospels, without ever knowing its “code” or its genre.

Thanks to *Caesar's Messiah*, and Atwill's “deciphering” of the Gospels, this author could finally see and appreciate why, for nearly 2,000 years, the world has misread and misunderstood the Gospels. Their very genre of literature has been missed because, over time, readers were not given the *complete composition*. And to make matters worse, down through the ages, readers had no *Caesar's Messiah* “Rosetta Stone” with which to decipher the sections of the composition that were “released.”

Therefore, in this author's view, Atwill's discovery is arguably a more significant and valuable discovery than that of The Rosetta Stone, because for the first time in over 2,000 years, we finally have the “key” to unlock the genre of a masterpiece of literary composition that has played a crucial role in shaping Western Civilization as we know it. A misunderstood literary composition that, thanks to *Caesar's Messiah*, we can now see, created the feudal system, the Dark Ages, and the inquisition.

A literary composition that finally, thanks to *Caesar's Messiah*, we can examine and admire for what it really is, a masterpiece of satire, black humor, and comedy.

## *Chapter One*

### **The Rosetta Stone**

Since the main thesis of the work is to show readers that the discoveries that Joseph Atwill made and shared with the world in *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus* was a “second Rosetta Stone,” it is only fitting that we start this work with an introduction and overview of the “first” Rosetta Stone.

Readers who are already familiar with this archaeological find, and understand its significance, can skip this section.

### **The Rosetta Stone**

In July 1799, soldiers in Napoleon's army accidentally discovered an artifact while digging the foundations of an addition to a fort near the town of Rashid (Rosetta) in the Nile Delta. This find was to Egyptology and our understanding of the ancient world what Allen Turing's machine “the bombe” was to British code breakers at Bletchley Park during WWII.

In short, Turing's device and the work of his fellow code breakers helped Britain and its allies decipher messages sent out by German commanders typed on the German Enigma machine.

The Encyclopedia Britannica describes *The Rosetta Stone* as follows:

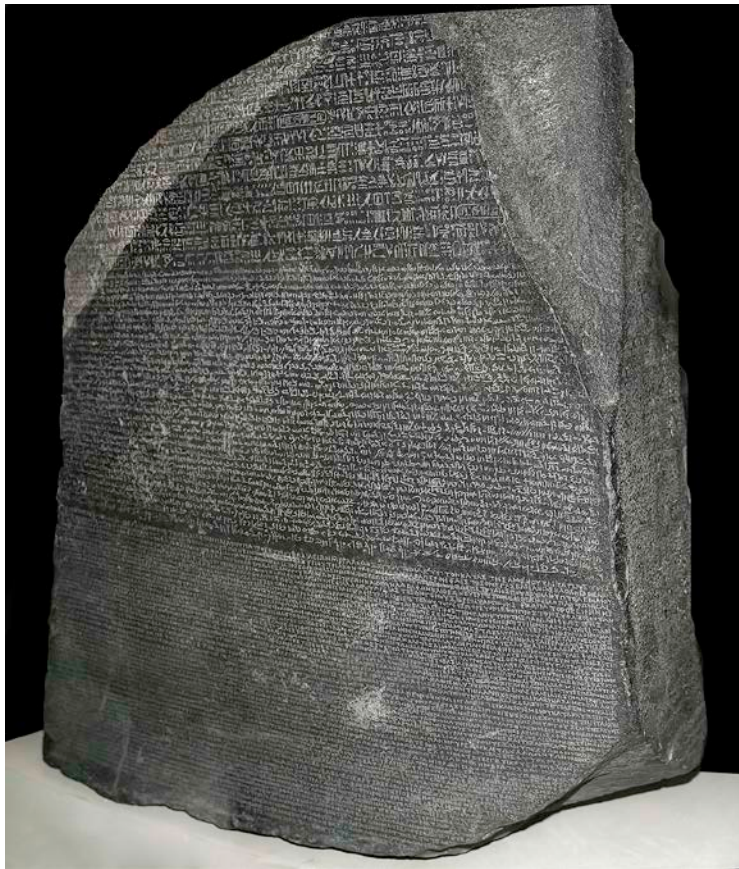
The Rosetta Stone, an ancient Egyptian stone bearing inscriptions in several languages and scripts; their decipherment led to the understanding of hieroglyphic writing. An irregularly shaped stone of black granite 3 feet nine inches (114 cm) long and two feet 4.5 inches (72 cm) wide, and broken in antiquity, it was found near the town of Rosetta (Rashid), about thirty-five miles (56 km) northeast of Alexandria. It was discovered by a Frenchman named Bouchard or Boussard in August 1799. After the French surrender of Egypt in 1801, it passed into British hands and is now in the British Museum in London.

The inscriptions, apparently composed by the priests of Memphis, summarize benefactions conferred by Ptolemy V Epiphanes (205–180 BCE) and were

written in the ninth year of his reign in commemoration of his accession to the throne. Inscribed in two languages, Egyptian and Greek, and three writing systems, hieroglyphics, Demotic script (a cursive form of Egyptian hieroglyphics), and the Greek alphabet, it provided a key to the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing.

The decipherment was largely the work of Thomas Young of England and Jean-François Champollion of France. The hieroglyphic text on The Rosetta Stone contains six identical cartouches (oval figures enclosing hieroglyphs). Young deciphered the cartouche as the name of Ptolemy and proved a long-held assumption that the cartouches found in other inscriptions were the names of royalty. By examining the direction in which the bird and animal characters faced, Young also discovered the way in which hieroglyphic signs were to be read.

In 1821–22 Champollion, starting where Young left off, began to publish papers on the decipherment of hieratic and hieroglyphic writing based on study of The Rosetta Stone and eventually established an entire list of signs with their Greek equivalents. He was the first Egyptologist to realize that some of the signs were alphabetic, some syllabic, and some determinative, standing for the whole idea or object previously expressed. He also established that the hieroglyphic text of The Rosetta Stone was a translation from the Greek, not, as had been thought, the reverse. The work of these two men established the basis for the translation of all future Egyptian hieroglyphic texts.<sup>1</sup>



The Rosetta Stone

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Attribution: © Hans Hillewaert

Since The Rosetta Stone is now kept in the British Museum in London, let us also read what the British Museum has to say about the artifact, as outlined on the Museum's blog site:

<https://blog.britishmuseum.org/everything-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-the-rosetta-stone/>

Everything you ever wanted to know about The Rosetta Stone

What is The Rosetta Stone?

The Rosetta Stone is one of the most famous objects in the British Museum.

Dr. Justin B. Clearsky

But what is it? The Stone is a broken part of a bigger stone slab. It has a message carved into it, written in three types of writing (called scripts). It was an important clue that helped experts learn to read Egyptian hieroglyphs (a writing system that used pictures as signs).

### Why is it Important?

The writing on the Stone is an official message, called a decree, about the King (Ptolemy V, r. 204–181 BC). The decree was copied on to large stone slabs called stelae, which were put in every temple in Egypt. It says that the priests of a temple in Memphis (in Egypt) supported the King. The Rosetta Stone is one of these copies, so not particularly important in its own right.

The important thing for us is that the decree is inscribed three times, in hieroglyphs (suitable for a priestly decree), Demotic (the native Egyptian script used for daily purposes, meaning ‘language of the people’), and ancient Greek (the language of the administration – the rulers of Egypt at this point were Greco-Macedonian after Alexander the Great’s conquest).

The Rosetta Stone was found broken and incomplete. It features fourteen lines of hieroglyphic script: 32 lines in Demotic: and fifty-three lines of ancient Greek.

### When was it Found?

Napoleon Bonaparte campaigned in Egypt from 1798 to 1801, with the intention of dominating the East Mediterranean and threatening the British hold on India. Although accounts of the Stone’s discovery in July 1799 are now rather vague, the story most generally accepted is that it was found by accident by soldiers in Napoleon’s army. They discovered The Rosetta Stone on 15 July 1799 while digging the foundations of an addition to a fort near the town of Rashid (Rosetta) in the Nile Delta. It had apparently been built into a very old wall. The officer in charge, Pierre-François Bouchard (1771–1822), realized the importance of the discovery.

On Napoleon’s defeat, the stone became the property of the British under the

terms of the Treaty of Alexandria (1801) along with other antiquities that the French had found. The stone was shipped to England and arrived in Portsmouth in February 1802.

### Who Cracked the Code?

Soon after the end of the fourth century AD, when hieroglyphs had gone out of use, the knowledge of how to read and write them disappeared. In the early years of the nineteenth century, scholars were able to use the Greek inscription on this stone as the key to decipher them. Thomas Young (1773–1829), an English physicist, was the first to show that some of the hieroglyphs on The Rosetta Stone wrote the sounds of a royal name, that of Ptolemy.

The French scholar Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) then realized that hieroglyphs recorded the sound of the Egyptian language. This laid the foundations of our knowledge of ancient Egyptian language and culture. Champollion made a crucial step in understanding ancient Egyptian writing when he pieced together the hieroglyphs that were used to write the names of non-Egyptian rulers. He announced his discovery, which had been based on analysis of The Rosetta Stone and other texts, in a paper at the Academie des inscriptions et Belles Lettres at Paris on Friday 27 September 1822. The audience included his English rival Thomas Young, who was also trying to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Champollion inscribed this copy of the published paper with alphabetic hieroglyphs meaning ‘à mon ami Dubois’ (‘to my friend Dubois’). Champollion made a second crucial breakthrough in 1824, realizing that the alphabetic signs were used not only for foreign names, but also for the Egyptian language and names. Together with his knowledge of the Coptic language, which derived from ancient Egyptian, this allowed him to begin reading hieroglyphic inscriptions fully.

## What Does the Inscription Actually Say?

The inscription on The Rosetta Stone is a decree passed by a council of priests. It is one of a series that affirm the royal cult of the 13-year-old Ptolemy V on the first anniversary of his coronation (in 196 BC). You can read the full translation [here](#).

According to the inscription on the Stone, an identical copy of the declaration was to be placed in every sizable temple across Egypt. Whether this happened is unknown, but copies of the same bilingual, three-script decree have now been found and can be seen in other museums. The Rosetta Stone is thus one of many mass-produced stelae designed to widely disseminate an agreement issued by a council of priests in 196 BC. In fact, the text on the Stone is a copy of a prototype that was composed about a century earlier in the third century BC. Only the date and the names were changed!

## Where is it Now?

After the Stone was shipped to England in February 1802, it was presented to the British Museum by George III in July of that year. The Rosetta Stone and other sculptures were placed in temporary structures in the Museum grounds because the floors were not strong enough to bear their weight! After a plea to Parliament for funds, the Trustees began building a new gallery to house these acquisitions.

The Rosetta Stone has been on display in the British Museum since 1802, with only one break. Toward the end of the First World War, in 1917, when the Museum was concerned about heavy bombing in London, they moved it to safety along with other, portable, ‘important’ objects. The iconic object spent the next two years in a station on the Postal Tube Railway fifty feet below the ground at Holborn.

Today, you can see The Rosetta Stone in room four (the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery), and remotely visit it on Google Street View. You can touch a replica of it in room one (the Enlightenment Gallery). You can even explore it in 3D with

this scan:<sup>2</sup>

## Summary

For many archaeologists, The Rosetta Stone is one of the most significant archaeological discoveries alongside those of Pompeii, the Terracotta Army, Tutankhamun's tomb, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, to name but a few. The reason (as cited above) is that it features the same phrases written three different ways, in three different "languages."

As shown above, in the early 1800s, the valuable information garnered from The Rosetta Stone was used to decipher other texts and inscriptions from Ancient Egypt. Until that time, hieroglyphics had been out of use for about 1,400 years, and had only been used by a tiny segment of the Egyptian population, even during its heyday. Given that the language disappeared completely around 391 BCE, until the discovery of The Rosetta Stone, there was no surviving information on how to interpret this rare and mysterious text.

Therefore, as shown in the two references above, Egyptologists and scholars could use the identical Greek and Demotic texts as a point of reference to interpret the ancient hieroglyphic language. However, this was challenging because pieces of stone were missing, and none of the three texts were fully complete.<sup>3</sup>

Now that The Rosetta Stone and its significance in unlocking our understanding of hieroglyphics and Egyptian history have been explained, we can now turn our attention to *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus*.

As with our understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphics before The Rosetta Stone was discovered, our understanding and ability to interpret the real meaning of the Gospels was limited. Before Atwill published his work, we had been reading and studying the Gospels without "the key." We have been reading them without the "Rosetta Stone."

Thanks to Atwill's discovery, it is now possible for us to not only fully understand the genre of literature that the Gospels are, which is a mockery of Hebraic literature's use of typology, we can also see that the Gospels were actually part of a larger literary composition that also included Josephus's *The Wars of the Jews*, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, and *Against Apion*, and *The Life of Flavius Josephus*. Therefore, unless one sees and reads the Gospels and Wars of the Jews (and Josephus's other works) as a single and unified literary composition, one is reading them piecemeal, "in the dark."

Without the "Rosetta Stone," what humankind has been doing is analogous to someone far in the future stumbling across the typed manuscripts for all episodes of the popular 70s American television show *All in the Family*, but not finding the video recordings that show the

live performances and the audience's laughter after every line. Then concluding from only the written manuscripts (which would be a reasonable conclusion) that the main character of the show, Archie Bunker, was a real, living and breathing historical person. Then, from that assumption, using those manuscripts to form a society to espouse, practice and promulgate Archie Bunker's views and philosophy of life, not knowing that the show was a satire designed to use humor to make fun of Archie Bunker. A show that used humor to make a fool out of Archie Bunker, exposing the irrational absurdity that lies at the heart of racism and bigotry.

With the Gospels, the aim was not to make a fool of the main character (Jesus), but to use his character and the Gospels to make fun of and mock the idea of prophecy, and specifically Hebraic Messianic typology, which the Romans saw as an irrational absurdity. And in the process, use the new Roman-created Messianic literature to fool the unsuspecting into worshipping Caesar without them knowing it.

We can also use the analogy of music to illustrate the tragedy of "misinterpretation." Imagine someone in some future age (after the world and its records were destroyed) stumbling across only the tenor and bass cleft scores of Handel's *Messiah*. And from those two scores, concluding (which would also be a reasonable conclusion) that the work was written by a talented music teacher for instructional purposes, perhaps as part of a teaching syllabus on music theory. All the while not knowing that the work is actually a masterpiece of "oratorio" comprising, besides the tenor and bass parts, a complete and complex orchestral score, harmonized perfectly with the chorus, soprano and alto parts.

As with any great "puzzle" or discovery, without the "key" or the "Rosetta Stone," we see through a glass darkly. Especially when the designer of the puzzle deliberately made it difficult to unlock and solve. It is here that Atwill's discovery and its significance are worthy of our admiration and praise. As with many human inventions and discoveries, it often takes a fresh set of eyes not saddled by conventional schools of learning and indoctrination to see something that no one else can see. Of course, once one has been given "the key" and has the "Rosetta Stone" in hand, we then want to kick ourselves for not seeing the solution to the puzzle sooner.

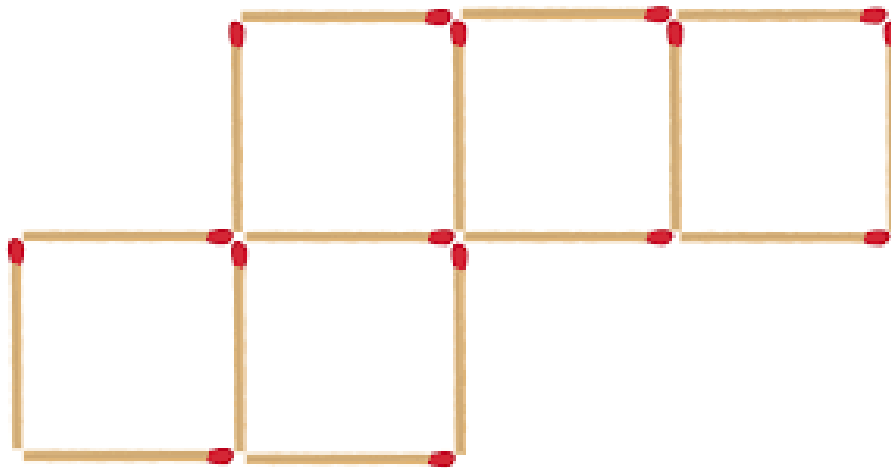
To illustrate this phenomenon, the author has included the picture puzzle below. The puzzle has been around for a while and consists of sixteen matchsticks. Over the years, this author has shown the puzzle to many a friend, but amazingly, very few ever solve it.

The object of the puzzle is simple. Move (reposition) two matchsticks and create four equal-sized squares. It is not a trick puzzle and can indeed be solved by moving (repositioning), just two matchsticks.

In case the reader has not seen or does not yet know how to solve the puzzle, the reader may take comfort knowing it also took this author several days to solve it. If the reader can solve the puzzle in less time than that, then the reader may also take comfort knowing that the reader is smarter than this author.

In this author's view, if the Gospels are the matchstick puzzle below, then *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus* is someone telling you how to move the two matchsticks without you having to work it out on your own. Once the moves (or "key") are seen and understood, the cleverness of the puzzle is revealed, and one wants to kick oneself for not seeing it sooner.

### The Two Matchsticks, Four Equal Squares Puzzle



To illustrate how some puzzles are difficult (or easy) to solve without a new perspective, see if you can create four squares of equal size, by repositioning only two matchsticks.

Image credit: Prime Puzzle

(<https://www.puzzleprime.com/puzzles/brain-teasers/insight/2-matchsticks-4-squares/>)



## *Chapter Two*

### **First Century Judea: A Clash of Cultures**

To show the political environment and the Messianic movement that confronted the Flavians (Vespasian and Titus) when they arrived in Judea, Atwill provides an excellent, yet brief, historical and political overview of the region.

Atwill's overview starts from the time it was conquered by Alexander the Great in 333 BCE, to the time it was later controlled by decedents of Alexander's generals, Ptolemy, and Seleucus, up to 167 BCE when Judea was controlled by the Jewish family, the Maccabees.

To give the reader some historical context for the Messianic movement that Vespasian faced in 66 CE, Atwill takes the reader back to the time of the Maccabees and shows how, in 65 BCE, a civil war broke out between two Maccabean rivals which eventually resulted in the Herodian family (by 40 BCE) taking control of Judea as Rome's surrogate, with Roman support.<sup>4</sup>

Atwill also shows how Judea's nightmare actually started in 169 BCE, when Antiochus IV became ruler. Antiochus IV was a Seleucid leader who ascended to the throne of Greco-Syria and, as did many rulers, appended the title Epiphanes ("God Manifest") to his name. However, many people referred to him instead as Antiochus Epimanes ("The Madman").<sup>5</sup>

As Atwill writes:

Antiochus was openly contemptuous of Judaism and wanted to modernize Jewish religion and culture. He installed high priests who were supportive of his policies. When a rebellion against Hellenization broke out, in 168 BCE, ordered his army to attack Jerusalem. Second Maccabees records the number of Jews slain in the battle as 40,000, with another 40,000 taken captive and enslaved.

Antiochus emptied the temple of its treasury, violated the Holy of Holies, and intensified the policy of Hellenization. He ordered the observances of the Hebrew cult be replaced with Hellenistic worship. He banned circumcision and sacrifice, instituted a monthly observance of his birthday, and placed a statue of Zeus on the Temple Mount."<sup>6</sup>

Although the historical overview in Atwill's Introduction and throughout *Caesar's Messiah* is thorough and accurate, this author would like to offer some additional context. This author's aim in doing so is not to negate or contradict the historical or political perspective given in *Caesar's Messiah*, but to provide readers with additional background context with which to understand the depth of this "clash of cultures," and the violence and suffering that this clash brought to those living in Judea during that era.

In this author's view, it is not possible to understand or appreciate the genius of the Gospels or understand why they were written unless one totally understands the depth and intensity of this clash and the number of recurring insurrections, revolts and violence that this clash fomented from the time of Antiochus to the time of Titus when the Gospels were written, from Roman eyes.

### **Hellenism (Polytheism) vs. Judaism (Monotheism)**

In short, it was a clash of philosophy and ideas between two cultures that, at their cores, were incompatible. One espoused polytheism and religious inclusiveness, and one espoused monotheism and was exclusive. Such divergent views made it difficult for both cultures to co-exist. Although the Greco-Roman world had managed (by force) to take over and absorb the peoples and the gods of those they conquered, the Greeks and Romans found in Judaism a stubborn religion that could not be extricated from its past, its laws, its literature, or its prophecies.

Compared to other colonized peoples of the Greco-Roman world, the Jews were unique in their repeated military resistance to Greco-Roman domination. This exceptional fact was caused by the combination of swells of zealotry, and Judaism's intolerance of other gods and cults.<sup>7</sup>

When we look back, we see that the historical and sociological landscape of the Jewish people from the time of the end of the Babylonian Exile to the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 CE is one of extreme hardship. A period where Jewish identity, culture, and religion teetered on the verge of extinction, then entered a brief period of renewal and independence as a sovereign nation (Maccabean / Hasmonean rule), then once again teetered on the brink of losing its identity and religion as a distinct nation.

To better understand the source of the threat to Jewish identity and culture, we also need to understand where this threat was coming from and how it had come about. From the time Alexander the Great conquered Judea in 332 BCE, to the era of Seleucid control of Judea, Hellenism had become the dominating culture of the eastern world. A culture that itself was

the product of a thousand years of civilization and the tradition of the Athens city-state.<sup>8</sup>

As LTC William T. Sorrells, US Army School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, writes in his Monograph: *Insurgency in Ancient Times: The Jewish Revolts Against the Seleucid and Roman Empires, 166 BC - 73 AD*:

Hellenistic culture was marked by superiority in art, music, science and philosophy, but also a sense of world society. Hellenism sought to bring about a society of recognized differences but where a common culture nonetheless acted as a common bond. The non-Greek residing in one of the Hellenistic Empires considered it essential to have some aspects of Greek culture. The protracted exposure to the Ptolemaic and Seleucid administrative system and the advanced state of Hellenistic civilization in agriculture, town planning, and finance all created changes in Judea. The Jewish population in Judea and other parts of the Hellenistic world was surrounded by a large Gentile population of differing ethnicities and religions that was mostly hostile toward Jews.

The Jews had maintained their distinct cultural identity and had resisted effects of Hellenism at a much stronger rate than the other numerous Gentile populations. However, by 200 BC, Hellenism had successfully created a distinct Greek-Syrian culture that now threatened Jewish distinctness. The leadership and upper classes of Jewish society, mainly consisting of priests, slowly began to change their ways of thinking to the corresponding classes of the non-Jewish sections of the empire. The Oniad family had for many generations held the office of high priest and they were precisely the class of Jewish society most influenced by Hellenism. Many Jews lived in towns where the majority of the population was Hellenized and many Jewish families adopted Greek names.

Jewish culture, although threatened, was still only moderately Hellenized. The vast majority of the Jews clung to the teachings of the Tora and the common man: craftsman, laborers, peasants in the countryside, and the lower priests, still looked upon Hellenism with great suspicion. Abstract Greek philosophy was in stark contrast to Jewish ways of thinking while the Jews based everything on one fundamental principle: the relationship between God and his people.

Many of these Jews formed a party in opposition to the Hellenists Jews called

the Hasidim. The Hasidim despised the Hellenists and their brand of synthesized Judaism. To the Hassidim, the Hellenists represented a threat to Jewish culture and violated the laws of Moses.<sup>9</sup>

This clash of cultures, and the insurgencies, revolts and the number of dead that were left in its wake, are all too often not fully understood or appreciated by those who read and study the Gospels or follow the faith. Although Josephus's monumental works *The Wars of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews* covers the Jewish revolts against the Seleucid and Roman Empire (166 BCE to 73 CE), there are no comparable works of the same length, or that provide the same level of detail (as Josephus does) for two Jewish revolts that followed, the Kitos War (115-117 BCE) or the bar Kokhba revolt (132-136 BCE).

This is noteworthy because the latter two revolts caused more deaths for Jews and Romans than the entire time period covered by Josephus in his works. Because of this, we can surmise that the Kitos War and bar Kokhba revolts were probably not chronicled by the Romans as they had done when they created *The Wars of the Jews* and the Gospels in 73 CE, because at the time they probably viewed the efforts made with Josephus's chronicles years earlier to be a total propaganda failure. A failure in the sense that Josephus's writings had obviously not changed the thinking of the Jews, or stopped them from mounting yet another costly insurrection inspired by the same Hebraic Messianic literature and oral traditions.

Therefore, when reading Josephus's two works, *The Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Wars of the Jews*, it is easy to get lost in the extensive narrative and lose track of the total number of revolts and casualties suffered during this period. Once again, although Atwill's description above states that Judea's nightmare started in 169 BCE when Antiochus IV became ruler is totally accurate, as mentioned above, it does not provide the reader with all the many nuances (over and above the religious ones) that further exacerbated this clash of cultures, as that aspect is not the focus of *Caesar's Messiah*.

In the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucids and Antiochus IV, the trigger was religious outrage. The event is also summarized by Sorrells, in *Insurgency in Ancient Times: The Jewish Revolts Against the Seleucid and Roman Empires, 166 BC - 73 AD*:

As he knocked over the defiled alter, Mattathias, an elderly priest and father of Judas Maccabaeus, shouted these words to his family and fellow Jews in the village of Modiim, about sixteen miles northwest of Jerusalem. The year was 166 BC and the land of Judea was in the heart of the Seleucid Empire. Mattathias and his sons had only moments before slain by the sword, Apelles, a

general in the Seleucid Army and his accompanying entourage. Apelles had attempted to enforce the Seleucid anti-Jewish decrees by having a pig sacrificed to Zeus on a Jewish altar. This sudden and violent act undertaken by traditionally peaceful priests sparked the Maccabean Revolt, a successful insurgency against a powerful Hellenistic empire.<sup>10</sup>

Not only had Antiochus IV forbade the practice of Jewish religion in Judea under threat of death, in 168 BCE, his crowing act of desecration took place when Antiochus had a statue of Zeus placed in the Temple and ordered a pig (an animal deemed unclean by the Jews) to be sacrificed on the altar. A few years earlier, Antiochus had built a gymnasium designed to replace the Temple as the center of life in Jerusalem, and in 171 BCE, on his return from a trip from Ptolemaic-controlled Egypt, plundered the Temple treasures.<sup>11</sup>

In the 66 CE revolt against Rome, although the religious trigger (i.e., the lack of respect shown toward the Jewish religion) was similar in scope to that of the period of the Maccabees, there was also a growing resentment over taxation and the heavy-handed and often brutal policies of corrupt procurators sent from Rome. As Robert Eisenberg writes in his treatise: *Divided We Fall: The Roots of the Great Jewish Revolt Against Rome*:

As oppressive as the Roman Empire was in later years, originally, it granted the Jews significant religious freedom. The *Edict of Augustus on Jewish Rights* (1 BCE) states that “the Jews shall use their own customs in accordance with their ancestral law...and their sacred offerings shall be inviolable and shall be sent to Jerusalem.”

This attitude of religious tolerance was repeated in the *Edict of Claudius on Jewish Rights* (41 CE), whereby it was stated that “it is right that also the Jews, who are in all the world under us, shall maintain their ancestral customs without hindrance and to them I now also command...to observe their own laws.” The liberal attitude shown by Rome toward the Jews went a long way toward ensuring Judean compliance and loyalty during early Roman rule. However, these affirmations of Jewish rights were not representative of the period immediately preceding the Great Revolt (66-73 CE).

After the failure of the ethnarch, Herod Archelaus, to properly govern the land, Emperor Augustus made Judea a Roman province in 6 CE and instituted a series

of procurators. In fact, it was precisely these procurators who aggravated the situation between the Romans and Jews in Judea. These procurators often had low status in Rome and showed a lack of respect toward Jewish religious practices and even met Jewish disturbances with excessive brutal force.

The Roman historian Tacitus provides a vivid example of how Jews were perceived at this time, when he exclaimed, “Jewish ritual is preposterous and morbid.” The procurators were tasked with maintaining order in their province, and more importantly, collecting taxes. They were obligated to collect a fixed sum for Rome, and any money collected above that figure they were allowed to keep.

This led many procurators to extract heavier taxes from the populace in order to enrich themselves. Moreover, procurators did not generally undertake public projects, yet when they did, they often embezzled public money. An example of such extraction can be found in the case of the procurator Pontius Pilate. During his governance (26 - 36 CE), there arose concern over Jerusalem’s water supply. Pilate decided to build an aqueduct to supply the city, and in order to finance his project, he confiscated funds from the Temple treasury. The result was a protest that resulted in the slaughter of the defiant Jews. As abhorrent as Pilate’s actions were to the Jews, they only resulted in minor disturbances. The final string that pushed the Judeans to war was the appointment of Gaius Florus as procurator of Judea.<sup>12</sup>

Now that we have taken a deeper look at this long-standing “clash of cultures,” and some of the root causes of the violence that ensued as a result, we can now focus our attention on the sheer number of revolts that took place from the time of Antiochus and the Maccabean Revolt, to the revolt of 66-73 CE

Although it takes little effort to scan through a list of revolts and casualty numbers on a page, to understand the Gospels and why they were written, we once again need to put ourselves in Roman shoes and try to imagine the time, the cost, the toll and the lost revenues, that each revolt cost them. This is important, because even with the aid of the “Rosetta Stone” that Atwill has provided, one cannot fully appreciate or understand the Gospels unless one understands the historical and political overview, from Rome’s point of view.

One cannot fully appreciate or understand the purpose of the Gospels, unless one

understands the political headaches that the Jewish religion and Messianic expectations were to the Seleucid's, and later, to the Romans. Once this deeper historical and political understanding of the era is understood, then (thanks to the "Rosetta Stone"), the Gospels can be read and appreciated for what they really are.

And what they are is a new form of Roman post-war propaganda, surely blessed by Titus and as posited by Atwill, likely "contracted out" to two influential families, the Herod family and the Alexander family, with backing and help from the Roman Imperial Cult.

A propaganda operation designed to do three things:

- 1). Chronical the war for the Roman Senate in order to petition Vespasian's deification, thus providing legitimacy to the new dynasty.
- 2). Replace Jewish Messianic scriptures with new ones, designed to show that the "First Covenant" between God and the Jews was no more, and that God's providence and favor had (starting with Vespasian) gone over to the Romans, and show that the Jews own prophets and scriptures had forewarned and foretold the fact.
- 3). Carry out missions one and two in a manner that mimicked and mocked Jewish Messianic literature to be understood and enjoyed by the Roman Patrician-class, as a work of Roman satire and comedy.

### **The Violent Cycle of Jewish Revolts**

To put this "clash of cultures" and the number of insurrections that this "clash" created into proper perspective, let us now identify the more renowned revolts, provide a brief summary of them, and show what is recorded of the casualty figures (on both sides).

By doing this, and seeing the number of insurgencies that plagued the Greco-Roman world from the time of Judah Maccabee until the razing of the Jewish temple in 70 BCE, will help us better understand why the Flavian dynasty concluded they needed to address the root of the problem. What problem? Judaism's obsession with its Messianic literature.

We start our list where Atwill starts, with the Maccabean (Hasmonean) revolt.

## **Revolts During the Seleucid (Greek) Period**

- 1). Battle of Wadi Haramia (167 BCE) - Maccabean victory.

The Samaritan Commander Apollonius is killed. Although no numbers are given, according to Josephus, more Samaritans were wounded than were killed.<sup>13</sup>

- 2). Battle of Beth-Horon (166 BCE) - Maccabean victory.

The Syrian Commander Seron, and 800 Syrians are killed.<sup>14</sup>

- 3). Battle of Emmaus (166 BCE) - Maccabean victory.

Judah Maccabee attacks the Seleucid's base camp sent by Commander Gorgias and kills 3,000.<sup>15</sup>

- 4). Battle of Beth-Zur (164 BCE) - Maccabean victory.

Judah Maccabee attacks the Seleucid vanguard and the Seleucid Viceroy, Lysias, is defeated and 5000 of his troops killed. Judah takes control, cleanses the temple and relights the Menorah (candlestick), thus starting the tradition of the Jewish celebration of "Lights," called Hanukkah.<sup>16</sup>

- 5). Battle of Beth-Zechariah (162 BCE) - Maccabean military defeat.

Lysias returns with an army of 50,000 infantry and thirty war elephants along with cavalry and chariots. Lysias approached Jerusalem from the south and besieged Beth-Zur, eighteen miles from the city, then marched his army south to Beth-Zechariah. After Jewish forces broke and fled, Lysias marched north to Jerusalem and laid siege to the rebel forces there. However, before he could restore total Seleucid control of the city, he was called back to Antioch to engage his enemy, Philip, for control of the empire. Before Lysias left, he established a garrison in Jerusalem and agreed to a compromise, allowing the Jews to follow their customs and worship as they pleased.<sup>17</sup>

6). Battle of Adasa (161 BCE) - Maccabean victory.

The Syrian-Seleucid Commander, Nicanor, proceeded to the region of Beth-Horon, northwest of Jerusalem, a place situated favorably for the Jews who were acquainted with the country where Judah encamped against him at Adasa. According to two Maccabees 15, Judah inspired his troops by relating to them a dream-vision he had experienced, wherein the Prophet Jeremiah presented a gold sword to him and said, "Accept this holy sword as a gift from God; with it you shall crush your adversaries." The battle ended in a glorious victory for the Jews; Nicanor fell, and 9,000 of his troops fled.<sup>18</sup>

### **Revolts During the Roman Period**

7). Siege of Jerusalem by Pompey (63 BCE) - Roman victory.

This time period was marred by civil war between two Maccabean brothers, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. The Roman politician, Pompey, had been sent by the Senate to deal with a pirate menace in Southern Turkey and was bribed by both brothers to lend support to their claim to the throne and intervene. Pompey eventually backed Hyrcanus and made him high priest. Josephus states that 12,000 were killed and recorded that Pompey went into the Holy of Holies but did not plunder or take anything from it. From that point on, Judea was annexed and became a client-kingdom of Rome.

8). Siege of Jerusalem by Herod, supported by Rome, against Hasmonean King Antigonus, supported by the Parthians (37 or 36 BCE) - Roman victory.

After the Roman civil war following the murder of Julius Caesar, Hyrcanus and Antipater became clients of Mark Antony, who now ruled the Roman east. In 40 BC, Antigonus II Mattathias, son of Hasmonean Aristobulus II, offered money to the Parthian army to help him recapture the Hasmonean realm. The Parthians invaded Roman Syria, took Judea, captured Hyrcanus and installed Antigonus II on the Judean throne. Herod and his family were besieged at Masada, but Herod escaped to Petra. When Herod received no

help from the Nabataeans, he made his way to Rome. Supported by Antony, he was proclaimed "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate and returned to Judea to claim the throne. Herod the Great's siege of Jerusalem was the final step in his campaign to secure the throne of Judea. Aided by Roman forces provided by Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony), Herod captured the city and deposed Antigonus II Mattathias, ending one hundred and twenty-six years of Hasmonean rule. Although Josephus does not mention how many Jews were killed, since the siege was nearly identical to that of Pompey, twenty-six years earlier, which killed 12,000, we can surmise that the number killed in Herod's siege was no less than 12,000 and likely more.<sup>19</sup>

9). Judas and Matthias of Galilee uprisings (4 BCE and 6 CE) - Roman victory.

As Israel Knohl, the author of *The Messiah before Jesus, The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, summarizes (from Josephus) about the cause of this uprising:

When Herod was ailing and near death, two pharisaic scholars in Jerusalem, Judas and Matthias, urged their disciples to remove the golden eagle that Herod had placed over the gate of the Temple, arguing that reorientation of living creatures were forbidden according to Jewish law. By erecting the eagle, Herod had been trying to please the Romans, for whom the eagle was a major symbol.

Thus, the opposition to the eagle must be seen as a mixture of political and religious zealotry. When there was a rumor that Herod had died, the disciples of Judah and Matthias went out and destroyed the eagle with axes. The rumor, however, was false: Herod was not yet dead: when he heard about the destruction of the eagle, he ordered Matthias and some of his disciples to be burned.

Herod died a short time afterward, and his son Archelaus succeeded him on the throne. Thousands of pilgrims had gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover. The disciples of Mattathias and Judah stirred up the people against Archelaus. The new King sent his cavalry against the crowds and three thousand people were killed. After the festival, Archelaus left for Rome, and the revolt now erupted with full force. The rebels rose up against Archelaus's supporters

and against the Roman soldiers stationed in the Tower of Phasael near the royal palace.

The soldiers poured out of the tower and assailed the rebels. Then the rebels went up onto the roof of the chambers of the Temple and from there threw stones and catapulted missiles at the Romans. In response, the Roman soldiers set fire to the chambers, which immediately went up in flames, causing the death of many of the rebels. The Romans then entered the courtyard of the Temple and pillaged the Temple treasury.<sup>20</sup>

Josephus records that Sabinus, the Roman procurator in command, killed thousands, with many rebels committing suicide. Judea then descends into chaos. When the Syrian Governor, Varus, learned of the revolt from Sabinus, he set out from Antioch with two legions, four troops of horsemen and several auxiliary forces. Varus brutally crushed the rebellion, burning down many towns and cities in the process and crucified 2,000.<sup>21</sup>

10). Jacob and Simon uprising (46 BCE) - Roman victory.

The information on the revolt which erupted in Galilee, then part of the Roman Judea province, is limited. However, the sources show that the revolt was motivated by anti-Roman sentiments and driven by Zealots. The revolt, which was concentrated in Galilee, began as a sporadic insurgency and then climaxed in 48 CE. Two of Judas the Galilean's sons, Jacob and Simon, were involved in a revolt and were executed by Tiberius Alexander, procurator of Judea from 46 to 48.<sup>22</sup>

11). The First Jewish-Roman War (66-73 CE) - Roman victory.

Since this war is part of the main thesis of *Caesar's Messiah*, we only need to summarize the casualties. According to Josephus, 1.1 million non-combatants died in Jerusalem and 100,000 in Galilee, with 97,000 enslaved.

### **Revolts During the Roman Period After Josephus, to the Rule of Hadrian**

12). The Kitos Revolt (115-117 CE) - Roman victory.

The Kitos War is the name given to the second of the Jewish-Roman wars. The Kitos War comprised major revolts by diaspora Jews in Cyrene (Cyrenaica), Cyprus, Mesopotamia and Aegyptus, which spiraled out of control, resulting in a widespread slaughter of Roman citizens and others (200,000 in Cyrene, 240,000 in Cyprus according to Cassius Dio) by the Jewish rebels. The rebellions were finally crushed by Roman legionary forces, chiefly by the Roman general Lusius Quietus, whose nomen later gave the conflict its title, as "Kitos" is a later corruption of Quietus. According to several sources, it is estimated that 200,000 were killed, and resulted in the annihilation of Jewish communities in Cyprus, Cyrenaica and Alexandria.

13). The bar Kokhba Revolt (132–136 CE) - Roman Victory.

The bar Kokhba revolt was the third major rebellion by the Jews of Judaea Province and the Eastern Mediterranean against the Roman Empire. It was the last of the Jewish-Roman wars. Simon bar Kokhba, the commander of the revolt, was acclaimed as a Messiah, and seen as a heroic figure who could restore Israel. The revolt established an independent state of Israel over parts of Judea for over two years, but a Roman army made up of six full legions with auxiliary elements of up to six additional legions finally crushed it. After the war, the Romans barred Jews from Jerusalem, except to attend Tisha B'Av. Although Jewish Christians hailed Jesus as the Messiah and did not support bar Kokhba, they were barred from Jerusalem, along with the rest of the Jews. To quell the revolt, Hadrian dispatched his best generals, most notably Julius Severus. As a near mirror of the revolt of 66 - 73 CE., where Nero had dispatched his best general who had also served in Britain (Vespasian), Severus was also dispatched by Hadrian from Britain. Severus adopted a slow but extremely brutal strategy, steadily crushing the rebels by destroying the infrastructure and much of the Jewish population of Judea.<sup>23</sup>

The Jewish sources are far more explicit, with tales of Roman soldiers smashing babies against rocks and the mass slaughter of civilians. One story relates that Hadrian could build a wall of corpses several miles long. While clearly somewhat apocryphal, these stories appear to reflect the reality of an extremely brutal campaign of what, in modern terms, would likely be called ethnic cleansing.

Both Eusebius and the Jewish sources agree that the war ended with bar Kokhba and his men making a final stand at the fortress of Beitar, near Jerusalem. "The siege lasted a long time before the rebels were driven to final destruction by famine and thirst and the instigator of their madness paid the penalty he deserved," Eusebius writes (4:6.3).

The Jewish sources relate that when Beitar fell, "men, women, and children were slain until their blood ran into the great sea," i.e., the Mediterranean, while another story tells of students and teachers of Jewish law being wrapped in the sacred scrolls and burned to death (Talmud HaBavli, Gittin 57a).

What followed the fall of Beitar was as horrendous as the war itself. Hadrian permanently changed the name of Judea to Palestina, effectively erasing its Jewish past. Jewish law and rituals were banned for some time, and many Jewish religious leaders were martyred, including Rabbi Akiva, who had believed fervently in bar Kokhba as the Messiah. Most tellingly, Jerusalem was permanently converted into a pagan city called Aelia Capitolina, and the Jews were forbidden to live within sight of it.

Because of the war, the remaining centers of Jewish cultural and religious life were all outside the land of Israel, especially in Babylonia, where the definitive codex of Jewish law, the Babylonian Talmud, was collected and redacted. In effect, the Jews were now a stateless people and would remain so until 1948 CE. The war was also very costly for the Romans. Indeed, it has been speculated that the legendary "lost legion," the Legio IX Hispana, was destroyed during the revolt, as it disappears from the historical records around that time.

Since there were such a high number of Romans killed in the war, Dio recounts that following the war: "Hadrian, in writing to the Senate, did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors, 'If you and your children are in health, it is well; I and the legions are in health'" (69:14.3).<sup>24</sup> According to Dio, 580,000 were killed and 985 Jewish strongholds and villages destroyed.

Since this revolt was probably much larger and more extensive than the revolt of 66-73 CE., we can surmise that the number of casualties were likely much higher.

### **Revolts During the Roman Period, After Hadrian**

The list below shows three more revolts after Hadrian. However, since the essence of this work deals with the Roman time period of the Flavians, we have included no synopses behind any of them. They are listed for reference only.

14). Jewish Revolt against Constantius Gallus (351–52 CE) - Roman Victory.

Revolt during the Sassanid (Neo-Persian) period.

15). Mar Zutra II revolt in Sasanian Persia (495–502 CE)

Revolt during the Byzantine period.

16). Jewish revolt against Heraclius (614–17 CE)

Revolt during the British colonial period.

17). Jewish insurgency in Mandatory Palestine (1940s)

### Summary

As we can see from the list above, from the time of Pompey to Vespasian, Rome had already been forced to put down four costly revolts, three of them involving the siege of Jerusalem. Therefore, at the time the Gospels and Josephus' works were created and composed, Rome had just completed mopping-up operations at Masada and had just endured a costly seven-year war in Judea, its fifth since Pompey had laid siege to Jerusalem in 63 BCE.

Although *Caesar's Messiah* shows Jesus a fictional character and a typological reconfiguration of Titus who was backdated forty years into the historical record before Vespasian arrived in Judea with his legions, if one takes the 40-year journey back in time from Jesus's crucifixion, we arrive at the close of Herod's rule.

The irony is that even here, a generation before Vespasian arrived in Judea, Jerusalem was mired in a similar revolt, the Judas and Matthias of Galilee uprisings of 4 BCE and 6 CE, that ended with Varus' crucifixion of 2,000 Jews.

This is important to note because many Christians and students of the Bible who do not fully understand the era or the clash of cultures that was taking place, view Jesus as a man walking about Galilee, Jerusalem and other Judean towns in a pastoral setting, where Roman soldiers are mentioned in passing (and in a positive light) as Jesus wages a war of words against Jewish religious leader and the Temple establishment. However, as our list above and its sheer number of casualties shows, nothing could be further than the truth.

What the list above does not show are the myriads of individuals, starting from the Maccabees to the time of Josephus, who claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. Of this list of claimants, we know from the historical record that most, if not all, came to a bad end.

Although in *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus writes about the three tyrants, John of Gischala, Simon bar Giora and Eleazar ben Simon, who each held leadership roles during Titus' siege of Jerusalem, Josephus does not tell us if any of them actually claimed the title of Messiah or not. Although not overtly stated, Josephus implies that Simon may have claimed to be the Messiah, given the manner in which Josephus described the way Simon surrendered to the Romans, where he rose out of the Temple ruins clothed in white and covered with a purple mantle.

For the Jews of the day, since the very idea of the Messiah was one who would *successfully* rid Israel of her enemies, any claimant who was prepared to take up armed rebellion or insurrection and *lead*, automatically became a potential candidate, even if that leader himself did not openly make such a claim. For many, this created a cruel and fateful double-edged sword. Fight and win, and be seen as the hero, or fight and lose, and be cursed as the goat. As with anything in life involving risk, the outcome is never guaranteed.

For a culture whose very identity was inextricably interwoven with its religion and its Messianic literature, where their Messiah was all but assured military victory because of divine help and intercession, this was a strong elixir and escape from reality, especially for the Zealots and oppressed lower-class working Jews. Contrast this to the Greeks and later the Romans, who saw any belief system that was not based on rationalism, technology and military might, as the beliefs of superstitious fools and delusional madmen "possessed of demons."

This difference in philosophical thought and outlook, and the widespread Roman view that also saw the practice of Jewish circumcision in the same light that the British later viewed the Chinese practice of binding women's feet (popular among the Chinese elite during the Soong dynasty, 960-1279 CE, and considered a status symbol and mark of beauty among the Chinese upper-class elite<sup>25</sup>), once again illustrates the clash of cultures.

Considering all the above, perhaps the greatest curse that ever happened to the Jews of Judea was the success of the Maccabees. To many of Josephus's era, the hope of a Messiah was deemed militarily and politically possible because it had in fact happened once already, with the Maccabees.

Therefore, any Jewish rebel looking back in time for inspiration, would see that the victories and the independence that the Maccabees had won, had not been handed to them on a silver platter, but had been won through action, brilliant military tactics, blood, sweat and tears, and of course, God's help.

In retrospect, considering that all Messianic-inspired insurrections after the Maccabees failed, we can also say that prophetic-inspired beliefs can also deal believers a cruel fate. For example, the War of 66 CE officially started when Cestius Gallus, the legate of Syria, marched on Jerusalem with the XII Legion, Fulminata and auxiliary troops with the aim of crushing the rebels and restoring order, but was met and defeated by Simon bar Giora in the Beth-Horon pass.

For those in Simon's camp looking for signs of divine help and intervention, the parallels would not have been missed, as one hundred years earlier, at the exact same place, Judah Maccabee had also won a great victory and defeated the Seleucid Army led by Seron, and killed him. And before that, in the days of Moses, Joshua had also won an important victory at the same pass (Joshua 10:10-11).

So, the Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth-Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth-Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.<sup>26</sup>

However, for those who study history, divine intervention can be fickle. What is a great victory today can sometimes sow the seeds of a great defeat tomorrow. Therefore, considering the seemingly never-ending cycle of Jewish revolts that the Romans had faced up to the destruction of the Temple and defeat of the rebels at Masada in 73 CE, we can see why the Romans finally decided enough was enough.

We can see why Rome decided it was time for them to once and for all “confute” and ridicule the Jews’ belief in oracles and prophecy by giving them a new type of “Romanized” Messianic literature.

In the next chapter, we will expound on the events of the 66-73 CE revolt that inspired the Romans to create the Gospels by providing some additional background information and context regarding that conflict.

Our purpose in doing so is to give the reader a more complete understanding of the dire situation that Rome faced in Judea in 66 CE. Once again, without this understanding, it is not possible to appreciate or understand *why* the Romans were finally forced to create an

alternative, benign-type of Messianic literature, one that would cooperate with Rome and not fight against it.



## *Chapter Three*

### **The Straw that Broke the Camel's Back**

Now that we have examined the clash of cultures from the time of the Maccabees to the rule of Nero, let us now re-visit the revolt that finally “broke the camel’s back,” the revolt of 66-73 CE. Although this revolt is covered in *Caesar’s Messiah* and is the historical event that led to the creation of the Gospels, since the revolt is not the sole or primary focus of *Caesar’s Messiah*, it is easy for readers of the Gospels, and *Caesar’s Messiah* to miss the revolt’s significance as a “last straw” event for the Romans.

An overview of what life was like for Jews living in first century Judea from the time of the Maccabees to the rule of Hadrian, and the powder keg that finally exploded in Judea in 66 CE, is provided in the synopsis below by the Jewish-Christian website: “That the World May Know” with Ray Vander Laan, at:

<https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/the-jewish-revolts>

Although Vander Lann’s synopsis finishes with the bar Kokhba revolt (132-136 CE) and includes a Christian-oriented commentary in the final six paragraphs of the synopsis that this author has not included, the historical background provided in Vander Lann’s synopsis is accurate. The synopsis accurately portrays the “rising storm” that led to the “bloody rebellion” that is chronicled by Josephus in *The Wars of the Jews*. The Jewish rebellion, which, from the Roman point of view, was “the straw that broke the camel’s back.”

#### The Jewish Revolts

Jewish people of Jesus’s day had a passionate desire for freedom from the domination of the pagan Romans and the oppressive Herod dynasty that had ruled them for many years. Revolt seethed continuously, mostly underground, for more than 100 years from the time Herod became King (37 BC) until the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple (AD 70). It is helpful to realize that this underlying struggle is the backdrop for Jesus’s ministry, and why so many hoped he would be a conquering King. This helps us understand why the adulation of the crowds during the triumphal entry reduced Jesus to tears, and

probably why many rejected his message.

THE RISING STORM. Ever since the Romans arrived on the scene in 64 BC, the Jewish people were divided over how to respond to the rule of their often-corrupt governors or the Herod family who served them. The religious community, particularly the Pharisees, believed the Jewish people were to be God's instruments on earth, from whom the Messiah would come to institute that glorious age when Israel would be a great and free nation. Many others, especially the secular community and apparently some of the Sadducees, noted the present reality of the rule of Rome and determined that cooperation was the best policy. The tyrannical rule of Rome and the paganism of its religious and Hellenistic culture heightened the contrast between the situation at hand and the Messianic hopes. This difference produced increasing fragmentation of the people, and several movements developed in response.

The Zealots, an ultra-nationalistic group, proclaimed revolution to be God's solution (Acts 5:37). The Essenes withdrew, waiting anxiously for the Messiah to lead a violent overthrow of the Romans and their Jewish supporters. The Sadducees apparently practiced a form of cooperation since it was Rome who kept them securely in their position over the Temple and therefore over the people (John 11:49-50). The Herodians appeared satisfied with the Herod dynasty (Matt. 22:16). The Pharisees, condemning Rome's pagan excesses, were removed from politics and viewed the foreign oppressors as God's hand punishing his people for their unfaithfulness to the Torah. The country was in turmoil, each faction longing in a different way for the freedom they desired. To this climate of confusion, hatred, and division, many so-called Messiahs came, each preaching his own brand of salvation (Acts 21:38). Jesus presented his unique message of redemption. Some followed his lead, but many did not. During feast days, especially Passover, tensions reached fever pitch and the Romans increased their military presence to prevent open revolt. The climate existed, however, for revolution to begin.

Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, died in AD 44 (Acts 12:19-23). The Romans appointed a series of governors called procurators, each apparently more corrupt and crueler than the previous ruler. Groups of rebel Sicarii

(assassins) were everywhere, killing Romans and the Jews who cooperated with them. Jonathan the high priest was assassinated. During this time, Paul was arrested (Acts 21:27-37) and accused of being one of the rebels (Acts 21:38). Popular support for the Zealots grew. The priesthood became more dependent on the Romans for security and support, and in so doing, they grew increasingly corrupt. This drove the common people toward the radical approach of the Zealots.

Felix (Acts 24) was replaced by Festus (Acts 25) as governor. Both were brutal but ineffective in their attempts to quell the rising revolt. Festus died after a short time. The high priest, Ananas, took this opportunity to murder his opponents, including many in the Christian community and James, brother of Jesus. Ananas was deposed and replaced with a man named Jesus, and then another priest named Jesus. These two were in such opposition that their followers fought in the streets.

The Roman administration was in disorder, and the Zealots and Sicarii flourished. Florus, another governor, attempted to stop the violence by flogging and crucifying hundreds of people. The time was ripe. The desperate hope of a Messiah who would bring freedom from political oppression was ready to bear fruit.

THE REVOLT BEGINS. While Christians and Jews were thrown to the wild animals by the emperor Nero in Rome, violence flared in Judea. In Caesarea, a conflict between Jews and Gentiles over activities next to the synagogue had been brewing for some time. In AD 66, on the Sabbath day, a Gentile offered a pagan sacrifice next to the entrance to the synagogue. There was an outcry from the citizens of Caesarea. The authorities in Jerusalem decided to end all foreign sacrifices, including the one for Caesar himself, in the Temple. Florus the governor, who lived in Caesarea, came to Jerusalem with troops, entered the Temple treasury, and took a large amount of gold. When people gathered to protest, Florus unleashed his legionnaires on innocent civilians of the city. Hundreds of women were raped, whipped, and crucified. More than 3,500 people were killed, including women and children.

The reaction was outrage. Mobs swarmed the streets, driving the outnumbered soldiers out of the city. The people stormed the Antonia (the Roman fort) and burned the archives, destroying records of debts. The revolt spread. The Zealots surprised the Roman garrison and occupied the fortress of Masada. From this fortress, huge supplies of weapons were distributed. Though there were voices urging calm, even the nonpolitical Pharisees joined the Zealot movement in droves.

The violence mounted within the rebel movement. Another Zealot leader, Eleazar, who then ordered the slaughter of the Roman prisoners remaining in the city, assassinated Zealot leader Menahem. There was no turning back.

A BLOODY REBELLION. The Gentiles in Caesarea, hearing of the violence against fellow Romans in Jerusalem, rose against the Jews of that town. Within a day, 20,000 Jews were killed. This slaughter of men, women, and children, young and old, was repeated in many places in the country and throughout the empire, including Syria and Egypt. Fifty thousand were killed in Alexandria alone. The land ran with blood.

Gallus, the governor of Syria, advanced on Jerusalem with the twelfth legion. However, Zealots ambushed him in the mountain pass of Beth-Horon and his force destroyed. The Romans had lost their advantage, and the Jews gained their national freedom (albeit temporarily) and the weapons of an imperial legion. Nero acted quickly. He ordered his leading general, Vespasian, to end the Jewish problem once and for all.

Vespasian began his campaign in AD sixty-seven in Galilee, where a young priest, Joseph, was in command. His army numbered more than 50,000 men. Vespasian took Sepphoris, Jotapata (where Joseph surrendered to the general and became the Roman scribe Josephus), and several other towns with brutal force. He also destroyed Gamla, where the Zealot movement began, putting 10,000 people to the sword. Most of the towns of the region were left as smoking ruins. Many men were executed, often crucified, and the women and children were sold into slavery. A few were saved for the games in the arena. Galilee was again Roman.

Vespasian then conquered the coast, including Joppa, and the lands to the east of Judea. He took Jericho, which guarded the eastern approach to Jerusalem, and Emmaus, which guarded the western. Jerusalem was now isolated.

In AD 68, the campaign halted due to the suicide of Nero. As Josephus had predicted (a prediction that apparently spared his life), Vespasian became emperor. He left his son Titus to complete the campaign against Jerusalem.

The situation in Jerusalem was horrible. Several factions of Zealots converged on the city, having been defeated elsewhere. They blamed each other for their defeats. One group controlled the Temple Mount and appointed their own priest. When the Sadducee priests resisted, they were slaughtered along with 8,500 of their supporters. The sewers of the city ran with Jewish blood. Simon bar Giora, another self-proclaimed Messiah, entered the city and fought the Zealots. Confusion and terror reigned. Jerusalem was divided into three sections, each fighting the other as the Romans tightened the noose. Apparently, the Christian community, possibly remembering Jesus's words (Matt. 24:15-16), fled to the mountain regions east of the country, beginning the long separation of Jew and Christian that would bear horrible consequences later.

In the spring of AD 70, Titus arrived outside Jerusalem. His army now numbered 80,000 or more. Titus breached the third wall near the end of May and slaughtered the people of that part of the city. Five days later, the second wall fell. Half of the city belonged to the Romans. In July, the Romans built a siege wall around the city to prevent escape and to starve the citizenry.

Unbelievably, the killing between Jewish factions continued. People killed each other over scraps of food. Anyone suspected of contemplating surrender was killed. Because some Jews had swallowed gold coins before trying to escape, their fellow citizens began to disembowel those they caught, looking for money. In one night, 2,000 were ripped open. No one bothered to bury the dead. Many who did surrender were crucified just outside the walls so the hapless defenders could watch their agony. Josephus records that the Roman soldiers nailed people in various positions for their own amusement until they could not find enough crosses for the victims.

The famine took its toll as well. Josephus reports that 600,000 bodies were thrown out of the city. This may be an exaggeration, but gives a sense of the carnage.

THE END OF THE REVOLT. The Antonia fortress fell in mid-July. On August 6, the sacrifices ceased in the Temple. The Temple itself was burned and destroyed on the ninth of the Jewish month of Ab (the end of August), the same day it had been destroyed by the Babylonians more than 600 years before. It has never been rebuilt.

On August 30, the lower city fell, and in September the upper. Titus ordered all buildings leveled, except for three towers in Herod's palace, which were left as evidence of his former strength. All the citizens of the city were executed, sold into slavery, or saved for the games in the arena. The slaughter was beyond description. Infants were thrown to their deaths from the top of the city walls, and people were burned alive; the alleys of the city were choked with corpses. Eleven thousand prisoners died of starvation waiting for their execution. Josephus records that more than one million perished and nearly 100,000 were sold into slavery. The Jews' Holy City was gone and their Temple destroyed.

A few Zealots took refuge at Herod's fortress of Masada. Here they hoped to outlast the Romans. One can only imagine the state of mind of these people, some of whom had seen Jerusalem fall. Titus left their fate in the hands of Silva, the new governor. The tenth legion laid siege to Masada in AD 72. A wall was built by Jewish slaves around the base of the enormous mountain plateau, six feet high and more than two miles in length. However, there was little chance of starving out the defenders because Herod's extensive storehouses were still filled with food and weapons and his cisterns with water. The Zealots apparently felt safe here.

Over the next seven months, the Romans built a siege ramp against the western side of the mountain. When the ramp was finished, a battering ram was winched to the top, and Roman soldiers smashed a hole in the fortress wall. The Zealots fortified their wall with timbers, but these were set on fire. That night the Zealots met. Their leader, Eleazar from Gamla, argued forcefully that suicide

was the only honorable action. They had seen what the Romans would do to them, their wives, and their children. They had lived their lives for freedom and the opportunity to serve God alone. Now they must remove all possibility of serving anyone else.

Every man killed his family. Ten men were chosen to kill the Jewish soldiers; one killed the other nine and then committed suicide. In so doing, the Zealots stole the final victory from the Romans. However, the revolt was ended. Two old women and five children survived to share the story with the world.

POSTSCRIPT. The Romans eventually built a temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount. Emperor Hadrian (c. 117-138) desired to remake Jerusalem as a Roman city named Aelia Capitolina. The few Jews who remained held to their desire for freedom and their hopes of a conquering Messiah. When Simon bar Kokhba, a descendant of David and apparently a charismatic leader, began a new resistance, the religious community declared him, Messiah. Open rebellion (the Second Jewish Revolt) began in AD 131 and the Jews rallied around his leadership.

The Romans were surprised and initially defeated, but their follow-up was swift and devastating. The Roman commander Julius Severus, and even Hadrian himself, responded with overwhelming force. Nearly a thousand villages were destroyed, and bar Kokhba was killed. In AD 135, the Second Jewish Revolt ended. Any Jews who had not fled the land were killed or enslaved. Jerusalem became Hadrian's Roman city, the Jewish religion was outlawed, and Judea became Palestine. The Jews were a people without a land.

Out of this disaster came two new religious movements: Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. The revolt drove Christianity to the ends of the earth, and it soon became a largely Gentile faith. Only today are its Jewish roots being recognized. Rabbinic Judaism became the Orthodox faith of the Jewish people of today, the descendants of the Pharisees. The Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots are no more.<sup>27</sup>

## Summary

Hopefully, the expanded historical and political overview of the clash of cultures covered in chapter two and the overview of the events that led to the rebellion of 66 CE outlined in the synopsis above, has given the reader the ability to see and appreciate and “the problem of Judea,” from Roman eyes. This overview, from Roman eyes, is crucial toward our understanding of the Gospels and why they were created because they are Rome’s “final solution” to the problem of Judea.

Once again, if we put ourselves in Roman shoes after the war of 66-73 CE, the choices before Rome and its new Caesar, Titus, were straightforward. Either commit mass-genocide and wipe the people from the land (which we can surmise was likely considered but deemed not practical because it could risk other rebellions since large Jewish populations were scattered throughout the Roman Empire), or figure out some way to transform the Jewish Messianic mindset. In *Caesar’s Messiah*, Atwill expounds on this Roman aim with: “To achieve this goal would require a new type of Messianic literature. Thus, what we know as the Christian Gospels were created.”<sup>28</sup>

Although in *The Wars of the Jews* Josephus tries to show that setting fire to the Temple went against Titus’s siege objectives and commands and is portrayed as collateral damage that Josephus blames on the actions of the seditious, it is this author’s view that the destruction of the Temple was one of Titus’s chief siege objectives.

Given the historical perspectives outlined in the preceding chapters, it is this author’s view that Vespasian and Titus were sent to Judea with orders from Nero and the Senate to: 1) crush the rebellion; 2) wipe out the religion; 3) level the Temple, and 4) extinguish once and for all the root of Jewish expectations of a warrior-Messiah and its prophetic Messianic literature.

With the first three orders carried out, and Jerusalem, Masada and Galilee in ruins with the insurrectionists killed or captured, the victors could now use the spoils and prisoners of war now at their disposal to carry out order number 4, and work on extinguishing the “root.”

In *Caesar’s Messiah*, Atwill again provides key insights and analysis in the chapter, *New Root and Branch*, showing the exact technique the Romans used to accomplish this objective after they first rounded up and confiscated the Jew’s religious literature: “... following their war with the Jews, the Romans took the Torah scrolls and other religious literature and locked them up in the Flavian palace in Rome.”<sup>29</sup>

At this turning point in Judea’s tumultuous history, with the rebellion crushed and Jerusalem now in ruins, the new Roman dynasty under Vespasian and Titus now set out to

“graft” a new “root” onto an old “branch,” thus creating a new “root and branch.” It is at this period that Atwill believes (and this author agrees with him) the Gospels and *The Wars of the Jews* were written.

In the next chapter, we shall examine the Jewish source material and the likely “blueprint” that Josephus and his literary team used and co-opted from Jewish scriptures and from the various sects to create the version and story line for their Roman Messiah. One who would tame and “domesticate” Messianic Judaism and “transform it into a religion that would cooperate with the Roman Empire.”<sup>30</sup>

However, before examining the Roman “blueprint,” as we did in chapter two where we offered additional context to the historical overview, we also need to do the same with our understanding of the word “Messiah” and what it meant to first century Jews in Judea. Once again, it is not possible to understand or appreciate the genius of the Gospels or understand why they were written the way they were, unless one totally understands the “version” of Messiah that Rome selected and co-opted to create their Messiah.



## *Chapter Four*

### **The Messiah and First Century Jews**

Considering all that is covered in the preceding chapters, we can surmise that Rome's idea of supplanting militant Jewish Messianic literature with something more benign had probably been kicked around and proposed by Romans and Hellenized upper-class Jews, long before the 66-73 CE revolt in Judea.

The question that likely arose was how to go about doing it, since the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots each had different philosophies and views of the law, the afterlife, and the Messiah.

Naturally, if the aim of the project was to “graft” a new root and branch onto the “old” branch in a credible manner, it meant the Romans needed to first have a thorough understanding of the “old” branch and what the Messianic figure meant to all the various sects.

For the conquerors, this understanding would not be difficult because the Romans also had a pool of Jewish religious and literary experts to choose from to help with the effort, namely those from the ruling-class of Hellenize Jews, which Atwill also covers in *Caesar's Messiah*.

Since the aim of this work is to provide additional background information and context so that the reader might better appreciate and understand the “method behind the madness,” we need to first understand the different views and sects that existed in Judea in the first century CE when the Gospels were written.

Although this information can be found in Josephus's *The Wars of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*, and is also provided with lesser detail in the Gospels, since Josephus's works are not as widely read or known to readers as the Gospels, let us now examine who the main “players” were at the time of war (66 CE) and what they believed because this is crucial to a better understanding and appreciation of how the Gospels and its story line were constructed.

### **Four Sects, Four Philosophies**

To better understand how each of the above groups viewed the role and mission of the Messiah, we need to first see how the four group's religious and philosophical outlooks

differed. On the Jewish Virtual Library website at:

*<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pharisees-sadducees-and-essenes>*

the core philosophies of the four sects are summarized below.

### The Pharisees

The most important of the three were the Pharisees because they are the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism. Their main distinguishing characteristic was a belief in an Oral Law that God gave to Moses at Sinai along with the Torah. The Torah, or Written Law, was akin to the US Constitution in the sense that it set down a series of laws that were open to interpretation.

The Pharisees believed that God also gave Moses the knowledge of what these laws meant and how they should be applied. This oral tradition was codified and written down roughly three centuries later in what is known as the Talmud.

The Pharisees also maintained that an afterlife existed, and that God punished the wicked and rewarded the righteous in the world to come. They also believed in a Messiah who would herald an era of world peace.

Pharisees were in a sense blue-collar Jews who adhered to the tenets developed after the destruction of the Temple; that is, such things as individual prayer and assembly in synagogues.

### The Sadducees

The Sadducees were wealthy upper-class elitists who wanted to maintain the priestly caste, but they were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Hellenism into their lives, something the Pharisees opposed. The Sadducees rejected the idea of the Oral Law and insisted on a literal interpretation of the Written Law; consequently, they did not believe in an afterlife, since it is not mentioned in the Torah. The focus of Sadducee life were rituals associated with the Temple.

The Sadducees disappeared around AD 70, after the destruction of the Second Temple. None of the writings of the Sadducees has survived, so the little we know about them comes from their pharisaic opponents.

These two “parties” served in the Great Sanhedrin, a kind of Jewish Supreme Court made up of seventy-one members whose responsibility was to interpret civil and religious laws.

#### The Essenes

A third faction, the Essenes, emerged out of disgust with the other two. This sect believed the others had corrupted the city and the Temple. They moved out of Jerusalem and lived a monastic life in the desert, adopting strict dietary laws and a commitment to celibacy. Their secluded desert community was dedicated to prayer and study in preparation for the return of the Messiah. They were obsessed with purifying themselves for the Messiah, and constantly went in the mikvah, the Jewish ritual bath.

The Essenes are particularly interesting to scholars because they are believed to be an offshoot of the group that lived in Qumran, near the Dead Sea. In 1947, a Bedouin shepherd stumbled into a cave containing various ancient artifacts and jars containing manuscripts describing the beliefs of the sect and events of the time.

The most important documents, often only parchment fragments that had to be meticulously restored, were the earliest known copies of the Old Testament. The similarity of the substance of the material found in the scrolls to that in the modern scriptures has confirmed the authenticity of the Bible used today.<sup>31</sup>

The fourth group, which Josephus describes as the “fourth philosophy,” were probably splinter groups from the Pharisees, and are described by the Jewish Virtual Library website below.

#### The Zealots and Sicarii

The Zealots and Sicarii were yet another offshoot of the Pharisees. The Zealots

would not tolerate pagan idols and practices in their land and believed that they could, with God's help, bring the beginning of the Messianic era (which included an end to foreign domination of Judea) by starting a rebellion against Rome.

In short, the Zealots and the Sicarii were members of a radical, warlike, ardently patriotic group of Jews in Judea, particularly prominent from 66 to 81 CE, advocating the violent overthrow of Roman rule and vigorously resisting the efforts of the Romans and their supporters to heathenize the Jews.<sup>32</sup> The word "sikarim" actually means "little dagger," which the Sicarii used to kill both Romans and Jews that deemed to be Roman sympathizers.<sup>33</sup>

### **Four Sects, Four Messianic Interpretations**

Besides the above philosophical differences, the four groups also had different ideas about the Messiah and the Messiah's mission and role. For example, the Sadducees did not believe in a Messiah. They did not believe in a national one or one who would exert moral authority, or an eschatological one. The Sadducee's main fear was always that some misguided impostor Messiah would come along and deprive them of the wealth and offices that they kept at the pleasure of Judea's occupiers.<sup>34</sup>

The Pharisees were the chief opponents of the Sadducees, and in religious matters, determined public opinion. The Pharisees believed the Messiah was pre-destined to come into the world and would be from the lineage of David (Judah). For the Pharisees, the reign of David had for centuries been regarded as the golden age of the past, and a type and symbol of the golden age that was still to come. They believed that although the Messiah would be a purely human being, he would be clothed in superhuman dignity as God's representative of the theocracy.

To the Pharisees, the great work of the Messiah is none less than the redemption of Israel. To the Pharisees, the Messiah would be a second Moses, leading his people out of the various miseries of foreign bondage that Jews had suffered since the destruction of the Temple under Nebuchadnezzar. The Messiah would conduct many great signs and wonders, gather all the scattered tribes of Israel, and be given (by God) the keys to the awakening of the dead (resurrection) where the resurrected would face righteous judgment.<sup>35</sup>

The Essenes, who lived a monastic existence at Qumran, were preparing themselves for what they believed was a coming eschatological war between the "Sons of Light" and the "Sons of Darkness." Unlike the Pharisees, the Essenes had an eschatological hope of the

rise of the “Messiah of Aaron” who would defeat the armies of the nations, overthrow the Romans, and usher in a new era of peace and stability.

From the Dead Sea Scrolls, it appears as if the Essenes envisioned two Messiahs. A “Messiah of Israel” and a “Messiah of David.” A Priestly Messiah from the line of Aaron (Levi) who would serve as high priest, and a Royal Messiah from the line of David (Judah). Two Messiahs, where one is a high priest and sage, and the other is a military leader. To the Essenes and their view of two Messiahs, the Royal Messiah would be subordinate to the Priestly Messiah of Israel (Aaron). In the *Damascus document*, The Priestly Messiah who is sometimes referred to as the “Teacher of Righteousness” may have been a reference to the founder of the sect, and suggests that their leader had died or had been killed, but would one day return.<sup>36</sup>

Some scholars have suggested that the reason the Essenes developed the dual Messiah was because of their objection to the Hasmoneans (Maccabees) combining the two roles of the Messiah into one unified King-Priest.<sup>37</sup> For many Jews of the era, the reason for the collapse and extinction of the Hasmonean dynasty was because the Maccabean kings (from Jonathan to Antigonus) who were from the lineage of Aaron (Levi) and not David (Judah) had all taken the Davidic title of King-Priest.<sup>38</sup>

The nationalistic and fanatical Zealots and Sicarii, who emerged from pharisaism and were referred to as the “fourth sect” or the “fourth philosophy” by Josephus, became a separate party within the nation and were akin to today’s political activists. Both groups were opposed to Roman occupation of Judea and attempted to expel (by violence) the Romans and their Jewish or Greek sympathizers / collaborators from the area. The two groups also looked forward to a warrior-Messiah who would liberate Judea and destroy all her enemies and oppressors, but did not think this would happen without a Maccabean-style armed resistance movement.

The Sicarii carried *sicae*, or small daggers, concealed in their cloaks and at public gatherings and pulled these out to attack Romans and Roman sympathizers / collaborators where they would then blend into the crowd after the deed to escape detection. The Zealots, Sicarii and other prominent rebels finally joined forces to attack and temporarily take control of Jerusalem from Rome in 66 CE, where, they took control of the Temple, executing anyone who tried to oppose their power. The local populace resisted their control and launched a series of sieges and raids to remove the rebel factions.<sup>39</sup> The rebels eventually silenced the uprising and Jerusalem stayed in their hands for the duration of the war.

Since these two groups had surely received inspiration from the earlier military successes of the Maccabees (which had in fact freed Judea for one hundred and twenty-six years), we

know in first century Judea that many Messianic claimants had indeed come and gone. For example, in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus records that during the revolt against Archelaus in 4-6 BCE, and the revolt Vespaian was sent to crush in 66-73 BCE, that many of the “seditious” had either crowned themselves with a royal diadem, or had cloaked themselves as a Judean King.

Therefore, from the time Judea came under Roman control in 63 BCE until the war of 66-73 CE, many Jewish guerrilla leaders had come and gone. Men whose very acts of armed resistance had earned for them (either in their eyes or the eyes of their supporters or sympathizers) some kind of royal or Messianic title.

As Atwill points out in *Caesar's Messiah*:

I suspect that the herd of Jesuses roaming about at the conclusions of the four Gospels are an ironic joke that there were numerous individuals claiming to be the Messiah during this era, a fact that is recorded in both the New Testament and *The Wars of the Jews*. The authors of the New Testament are perhaps sarcastically making the point that, since there are already so many “Messiahs,” or Christs,” there is no reason why Titus could not be one as well.<sup>40</sup>

### **Messianic Terminology in the Old Testament**

Now that we have examined the four sects and their respective views and interpretations of the Messiah, before we show the method the Romans used to create the name and title of their Messiah and the Gospel's story line (over and above that not covered in *Caesar's Messiah*), we also need to inspect terminology that is used in the Jewish Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) to describe the Messiah, his role, and his title.

Once again, to understand and appreciate the genius of the Gospels (as a literary and propaganda masterpiece), we need to understand why the Romans used and co-opted some of this terminology to construct their Messiah.

Although most students and readers of the Gospels today are familiar with some phrases we will show below, it is important to note that they were not commonly used by Jews in first century Judea to describe the Messiah.

Because of this, we can surmise that these phrases and the attributes that they represent were deliberately selected by the Romans (likely at the recommendation of their Hellenized Jewish collaborators) to show that their Messiah had in fact fulfilled *all* the Messianic prophecies of *all* the various Jewish sects, including a title that would have also been well-

familiar to Romans and Jews to describe the Roman Emperor.

### **The Melchizedek Tradition**

Despite being one of the least mentioned and most obscure figures in the Old Testament, Melchizedek, the King-Priest of Salem, is foundational for understanding what role the authors of the Gospels wanted their Messiah to play. Their “Jesus” would occupy the offices of King and priest, a dual honor that finds little to no precedent among Israelite kings.<sup>41</sup>

In the Old Testament, Melchizedek, "King of righteousness," was the King of Salem and priest of *El Elyon* (often translated as "most high God"). He is first mentioned in Genesis 14:18-20, where he brings out bread and wine and then blesses Abram and El Elyon.

In the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews, which was written after the Gospels, Jesus is identified as "high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."<sup>42</sup> This shows that the authors of the Gospels, and the Roman authors who added to them after Josephus (Hebrews), clearly constructed Jesus as a King-Priest who would serve the dual role of King and High Priest, once and for all. However, unlike the Hasmonean (Maccabean) king-priests, this one would be from the lineage of David (Judah).

In Douglas Kennard's *Messiah Jesus: Christology in His Day and Ours*, Kennard provides keen insight into the Jewish Heritage of a King-Priest Messiah, which scholars refer to as “The Melchizedek Tradition.” Understanding the Melchizedek interpretation and tradition of the Messiah will help explain later on in this chapter why the Romans chose a Messiah from the “Melchizedek Tradition” to model their Messiah after.

This author has highlighted in italicized text those sections from *Messiah Jesus* that, in this author's view, show why The Melchizedek Tradition was selected by the Romans.

#### Priestly Messiah

#### The Jewish Heritage of King-Priest

The Mosaic pattern presented a leader of the people who also did priestly roles as well. For example, Moses fulfilled the priestly role by cleansing the tabernacle and Aaron, the high priest (Ex. 39:43; 40:17-35; Lev. 8-9). Furthermore, when David moved the tabernacle into Jerusalem, he sacrificed oxen and danced in the parade, which tends to merge the royal and priestly roles (2 Sam. 6:13-15). Additionally, David showed a priestly concern in trying to construct the temple, which Solomon actually constructed (2 Sam. 7:2, 13). David also contributed to

the worship in the Temple with his composition of Psalms which helped to express the prayers of the people.

Once the monarchy had disappeared during the Babylonian captivity, the high priest appropriated the royal paraphernalia, such as the crown, indicating that he was the head of the nation (Zech: 9-14; cf. 2 Sam. 12:30; Jer. 13:18; Ezek. 21:31). Under Seleucid domination of Israel, the high priesthood was for sale to the highest bidder, or vacant. With the resolution of the Maccabean Revolt, Jonathan, of the obscure priestly lineage of Yehoyarib, was elevated by the Seleucid emperor to high priest for the Feast of Booths in 152 BC and then promoted to be also military and civil governor of Judea.

Under the Hasmonean the eight high priests (from Jonathan to Antigonus) were also kings, and took the title as well. Antigonus Mattathias, the last King-Priest of this line (40-37 BC) was replaced by Herod the Great. Thereafter, the high priest was at the disposal of the sovereign, who could appoint and dismiss nominees at his caprice.

### The Melchizedek Tradition

The Melchizedek Tradition begins with an enigmatic appearance of Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-24. The name of Melchizedek in Hebrew means “King of righteousness” (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:2-11). He is also King of Salem or peace (shalom), the city that would eventually be known as Jerusalem (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:2). In second Temple Judaism, Melchizedek’s rule becomes identified as over all the forces of light.

*No genealogy identifies who Melchizedek is; he just appears as a priest of the Most High God in the narrative (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:3). Without a genealogy mentioned in Genesis, the individual priest becomes the focus rather than a lineage of high priests.* Abram heard that the forces of Chedorlaomer had taken his relative Lot captive so he went after them with three hundred and eighteen men defeating the rear guard, thus freeing the captives. As he returned with these rescued captives and spoil from the battle, Melchizedek, the King of Salem,

came out to meet Abram with provisions of bread and wine (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:2-4).

Melchizedek blessed Abram with prayer to the name of God Most High, *El Elyon*, to which Abram could relate (Gen. 14:19-20; Heb. 7:1, 6-7). Abram responded by giving God's priest, Melchizedek, a tenth of the spoil and thereby indicating that both recognized that the victory was from God. Apart from this tithe of gratitude to God and the spoils consumed by his fellow warriors, Abram insisted on returning the people and the spoils to their rightful kings (Gen. 14:21-24).

*The enigmatic picture of Melchizedek continues in the Davidic royal Psalm 110. Here the Davidic King or a King greater than David is seen as having a willing and strong conquering army. However, Yahweh swore by an oath that this King was a priest forever like Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4). The word does not indicate that a new priestly order is being established but rather the comparison that this King-Priest is like or in the manner of Melchizedek in role. Yahweh will destroy kings and nations in judgment in order to establish this King-Priest as triumphant in his kingdom of refreshment (Ps. 110:5-7).*

In Qumran an eschatological priest was to be associated, if not equated with Melchizedek. Marvin Pate summarizes the primary document for this view, *11QMelchizedek* as interpreting the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:13) and the return from the Babylonian exile (Isa. 61:1-3) as ultimately fulfilled in the Qumran community.

Three points dominate the work:

1. The DSS (Dead Sea Scrolls) people are the true inheritors of the land of Israel (*11QMelch* 2:1-4).
2. They have followed the true interpretation of the law (*11QMelch* 2:20-24); therefore Melchizedek, the heavenly priest, has made atonement for their sins (*11QMelch* 2:6-9).

2. When Melchizedek, the heavenly priest, wages eschatological war against those who follow Belial, which have departed from the true Torah (*11QMelch* 2-5; 11-13; 25), the Essenes will be vindicated and rule with him (*11QMelch* 2:10-11, 14-24; cf. *1QM* 17:1-9, where Michael most likely is to be equated with Melchizedek).

The purpose of the Essenes' aligning themselves with Melchizedek was as the true descendants of Aaron (see *CD* 6:2-6; *1Qsa* 2), to legitimate their interpretation of the law of Moses over against the Jerusalem leadership's reading of the Torah. *Melchizedek is described in Qumran as Elohim in his role as eschatological judge.* However, the *Elohim* are plural here for he is standing among the *Elohim* and exacting the vengeance for our God (*Elohenu*).

However, the Qumran interpreter takes the *Elohenu* to refer to Melchizedek and cites passages which he takes to be angels judging fallen angels. In this role of judging angels and the saints, Melchizedek is also "the Messiah of the Spirit" who cultivates a people for Himself. *This identifies Melchizedek with the Messiah of Daniel 9:26, "after sixty-two weeks the Anointed One shall be cut off."*

None of the Gospels develop Jesus in a priestly manner. James Dunn suggests that the reasons for this were: 1) Jesus's descent was known well enough to establish Him as in Judah and to be Davidic, and to exclude Him from that of a priestly lineage of Aaron (Mt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-33; Heb. 7:14), and 2) the Gospel writers considered that it would be inappropriate to create such facts.

*Such is the case, even though Jesus quotes from Psalm 110:1 to elevate their Jewish understanding, "If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" (Mt. 22:41-45; Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44).* Hebrews identifies that Melchizedek appears in Genesis as King of Salem to meet Abraham (Heb. 7:1-10). *Hebrews identifies that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, because the lesser is blessed by the greater (Heb. 7:7).* Additionally, this sentiment is extended to Melchizedek as greater than Aaron through a figurative analogy (Heb. 7:9 "so to speak").

So, this text is not trying to teach a biological and theological seminalism that the subsequent generations are actually within the previous generations, participating

in the deeds of the previous generation. However, on a literary analogy (“so to speak”) Levi, who collects tithes from Israel paid tithes to Melchizedek because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and literary speaking Levi was within Abraham thus paying tithes to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:4-10). *Thus, in Hebrews’ argument Melchizedek being greater than Abraham further identifies that Melchizedekian priests are greater than Levitical priests.*

This literary analogy points out that Levi and his sons are mortal humans in order to carry the literary analogy further into the issue of genealogy, whereas in contrast Melchizedek is described to “live on” (Heb. 7:8). Hebrews identifies this Melchizedek in this Genesis narrative as *“Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither the beginning of days nor end of life” to present the point that “he abides a priest perpetually” (Heb. 7:1-3).*

If Melchizedek actually did not have parentage nor beginning, then he would be a divine or angelic being. Such a view fosters both interpretations of: 1) the Christian interpretation of Melchizedek as a pre-incarnate visitation of Jesus Christ, and 2) the angelic dualism of Archangel Michael/Melchizedek with a rival figure the chief evil angel *Melchiresha* (King of wickedness). *However, the emphasized metaphors do not speak of the eternity of Melchizedek, but rather that he is a perpetually living and functioning priest (Heb. 7:3).*

Furthermore, nowhere in this text does our author ever identify that Jesus Christ is Melchizedek. Instead, Hebrews *repeatedly identifies Jesus as fitting into a previous pattern provided by the historical figure of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:15, 17, 21-22). Thus, Hebrews’ emphasis is that Jesus is not Melchizedek but in certain ways Jesus follows Melchizedek’s priesthood pattern.*

Thus, the literary analogy is still being developed, and the point is that there is *no record of Melchizedek’s human genealogy in Genesis, so one can think of him as appearing and then disappearing, so that he can become a metaphor for perpetually remaining as a high priest (Heb. 7:3, 8).* Some interpreters conjecture that this no genealogy move was an attempt to establish Jesus as the “Messiah of Aaron” by a mystical way. Hebrews does not develop it that way for there is an extended argument developing that the Mosaic Covenant and the priesthood of Aaron must be changed because the

mortal men of Aaronic priesthood could not bring about perfection for the people (Heb. 7:8, 11-13, 23; 8:6-10:18).

*So, Jesus's perpetuity as a Melchizedekian priest goes further than the climax of a lineage ("Messiah of Aaron") to the climax of all priests (a perpetual Melchizedekian priest). Hebrews three times quotes portions of Psalm 110:4, but always includes that Jesus is a priest forever (Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21, indicating perpetuity in time). While the high priests of Aaron were still functioning in series, Jesus became a Melchizedekian high priest perpetually.*

*Jesus is identified as a superior high priest because He did not glorify Himself to become high priest, but became a Melchizedekian priest with an oath that God initiated: "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, Thou art a priest forever like Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:5-6; 7:20-21; Ps. 110:4). The oath with regard to Jesus's priesthood is fused with His kingship in that Psalm 2:7 is also seen as the divine oath to initiate Jesus into priestly ministry, since it initiates Jesus into kingly ministry and the Melchizedek role is King-Priest: "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee" (Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Ps. 2:7).*

### **The Son of Man**

Another concept that the Romans used in their story line was the term "Son of Man." It is important to note that to the Jews of the time, this would not have been a common expression to describe the Messiah. However, as *Caesar's Messiah* shows, it was necessary to link the Roman version of the Messiah to the book of Daniel, which the Romans (probably at the recommendation of their Hellenized Jewish "subcontractors") used to set up their prophetically-fulfilled history and timeline.

The Christian writer, preacher and teacher Samuel Whitefield, is a faculty member of the International House of Prayer University. On his website:

<https://samuelwhitefield.com/resource/why-son-of-man-in-the-gospels-was-a-unique-reference-to-daniel-7>

Whitefield posts an excellent essay showing how the "Son of Man" was used in the Gospels. This author has used italicized text to highlight those sections that, in this author's view, show why the phrase "Son of Man" was selected by the Romans to describe their Messiah

## Why “Son of Man” In the Gospels Was a Unique Reference to Daniel 7

Jesus used the title the Son of Man far more than any other title including well-known titles such as Messiah or Son of God. There are a number of reasons why this title was a reference to Daniel 7. One is the context of the phrase. The second one is the uniqueness of the language Jesus used.

### The Context of the Phrase Son of Man

The phrase Son of Man can be translated as human because that is the essential meaning of the phrase. As we get further into the pages of this book, we will see *Jesus took this phrase from Daniel and turned it into a title*. If we read this title as only meaning human, we miss a significant part of Jesus’s message.

Jesus’s great challenge was revealing His divinity, not proving His humanity. His humanity was never challenged in the Gospels; in fact, the opposite was true. He was so human people had difficulty believing He was God. The nature of Jesus’s humanity only became a question centuries later when the church became predominantly Gentile and had to deal with various heresies.

Jesus used the phrase as a title. Jesus called Himself the Son of Man (or we could say the human). He was not a Son of Man, He was the unique Son of Man. While son of man was an ancient phrase, this was not a known title, and Jesus’s use of Son of Man was unusual.

*The use of Son of Man is unique in the Gospels. Jesus was the only person referred to as Son of Man in the Gospels. He was also the only person who called Himself the Son of Man, and He did it at least seventy-eight times. When other people referred to Jesus, they called him a man - not a Son of Man - over fifty times in the Gospels. Furthermore, Jesus used man to refer to Himself as a man in John, revealing Jesus did not use Son of Man to reference His humanity. The Gospel authors made a clear distinction between Son of Man and generic references to humanity.*

Son of Man and man or human were not used interchangeably in the Gospels. This indicates the authors expected us to read Son of Man as a unique title and

not a generic reference to humanity. No one else dared to claim the title Son of Man. Others claimed the title Messiah and Gentile rulers claimed to be sons of God, *but no one else claimed Son of Man. It was unique.*

Son of Man was an unusual title, but Jesus never had to explain it. Jesus's audiences and His opponents understood Son of Man was a title and a claim to an exalted status. Jesus consistently used Son of Man to claim that status, and no one ever challenged Him to explain His claim. *His opponents disagreed with it, but they understood it.*

Jesus repeatedly used Son of Man as the justification for His exalted status. As we will see in the Gospels, *Jesus consistently used Son of Man to justify His exalted status and the authority of His teaching, and to present Himself as divine.* He also used His identity as Son of Man as the basis for His primary teaching themes.

Jesus primarily lived in Galilee; a religious area familiar with the scriptures. The Jewish Galileans Jesus lived among were religious and knew the Bible well enough to recognize Jesus was referring to the book of Daniel. Again, this is demonstrated in the fact Jesus used the title to make bold claims and did not have to explain it.

Jesus was accused of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of Man. Three of the four times Jesus was accused of blasphemy were directly related to His claim to be the Son of Man, and a case can be made that the fourth instance was also a reference to the Son of Man as we will see in a future chapter.

*Jesus's claim to be the Son of Man was the reason He was executed.* This is especially significant because Jesus was asked if He was the Messiah and the Son of God. Jesus answered He was the Son of Man, and *that provoked the high priest to accuse Jesus of blasphemy and demand His death.*

*Jesus was betrayed as the Son of Man. Jesus asked Judas at the time of Jesus's arrest, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).* The first Christian martyr died for claiming Jesus as the Son of Man. Stephen was executed when he declared Jesus as the Son of Man in the heavens.

Jesus usually combined Son of Man with other themes from Daniel 7. It is relatively simple to make an argument on language alone that Son of Man was a reference to Daniel. However, Jesus usually combined the title Son of Man with other themes from Daniel, further indicating *He expected His audience to connect Son of Man with Daniel. For example, when Jesus referred to Himself as Son of Man in seventy-eight verses, He directly referenced other themes from Daniel in fifty-three of those verses. In seven more verses, He made allusions to themes in Daniel when claiming to be the Son of Man.*

This means sixty out of seventy-eight references to Son of Man also include other elements from Daniel. That alone is enough to communicate a firm link to Daniel. Taking it one step further, *we will see Jesus likely was alluding to Daniel's prediction of suffering when He predicted He must suffer as the Son of Man.* If we consider suffering as a Daniel theme, it leaves only six references to Son of Man in the Gospels that do not also include another reference to a theme from Daniel 7.

It was a common teaching technique at the time to reference a phrase or excerpt from a passage to make a connection to that passage. Jewish teachers during Jesus's time would often quote a phrase or excerpt from a passage their audience knew in order to reference the entire passage. When they used a key phrase, their audience understood they were expounding on the larger passage the phrase or quotation was pulled from.

This teaching technique is found throughout the New Testament, but unfortunately our lack of familiarity with the Old Testament often causes us to miss many intentional references to the Old Testament. And Son of Man is a critical Old Testament reference many readers miss.

While there has been considerable debate over the title Son of Man, we will find Jesus intentionally referenced Daniel, His audience knew He was referencing Daniel, and the Gospels were written so we could recognize Jesus's use of Daniel.

### The Uniqueness of the Phrase Son of Man

To grasp how unique the phrase Son of Man is, we need to also consider it in

light of the original languages of the Bible. There is much that has been said about this, but we can summarize a few main points for our purposes.

Nearly the entire Old Testament was written in Hebrew. One exception is Daniel 2:4, and Daniel 7:28. The verses were written in Aramaic. The entire New Testament was written in Greek. Additionally, there are other phrases in the Bible which can be translated son of man in English, but Daniel 7:13 contains the only time in the Bible son of man was written in Aramaic (בראנש, bar enate). Every other instance of son of man in the Old Testament was written in Hebrew (בן אדם, ben adman).

While Hebrew and Aramaic are related languages, the words are different, which means son of man in Daniel 7:13 is completely unique. No other verse contains bar enasha. This is even true in the book of Daniel. In an English translation, we find Son of Man in Daniel 7:13 and Daniel 8:17. However, because Daniel 7 was written in Aramaic and Daniel 8 was written in Hebrew, it is not the same. Daniel 7 contains bar enasha and Daniel 8 ben adam.

The difference in meaning is even obvious when you read the chapters in English. In Daniel 7, the Son of Man is presented as a divine figure in the heavens, and in Daniel 8, son of man is used to address Daniel. They are obviously not the same person.

This may seem to be a small detail, but it is very significant. Jesus was multilingual, but most of His public teaching was probably done in Aramaic. *Therefore, when He referred to Himself as the Son of Man, He spoke the Aramaic (bar enasha) found only in Daniel 7 rather than the Hebrew (ben adam) found in a few other passages.* Again, there is only one bar enasha in the Old Testament, so it is clearly linked to Daniel.

With this in mind, we need to briefly consider the way Jesus's words are recorded for us in the Gospels. Once again, Jesus taught in Aramaic, but the Gospels were written in Greek. What we want to notice is the way Jesus's words were translated into Greek emphasized the link between Son of Man and Daniel.

During Jesus's time, son of man was used in Aramaic to indicate human. For

example, *Daniel used the phrase that way in chapter 7. “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him (v. 13 ESV).”* His description of Jesus could literally be translated as, “I saw one who looked human coming with the clouds in the heavens.” While son of man meant human in Aramaic, son of man was not used in Greek. In Greek, you would simply say man (ἄνθρωπος, anthrōpos). Therefore, if Jesus has used the phrase son of man simply to mean human, the authors of the Gospels could have translated His words directly to anthrōpos, but they did not.

When the Gospel authors recorded Jesus’s claim to be the Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ho huios ho anthrōpos), they wrote Jesus’s Aramaic literally in the Greek rather than translating what Jesus said into proper Greek. *This indicates the authors wanted to make sure we knew exactly what Jesus said in Aramaic. They also included the definite article the (ὁ, ho) so readers would recognize Jesus used Son of Man as a title. He did not say He was a Son of Man. He said he was the Son of Man.*

This becomes even more significant when we remember *Son of Man was used seventy-eight times in the Gospels, and every time it referred to Jesus, and in every instance but one, Jesus was the one who used it.* However, the word for man (anthrōpos) is found in over one hundred and ninety verses. Jesus also used this word when He wanted to describe Himself as a human. Other people used the word to refer to humans. They even used the word to refer to Jesus as human.

### Summary

The Son of Man was an intentional title in the Gospels. Son of Man was an Aramaic phrase. It made sense in Aramaic and basically meant human. However, it was an odd phrase in Greek and not the way to say human in Greek which means the Gospel authors did not translate Son of Man into proper Greek. They clearly wanted to communicate the Aramaic phrase Jesus used. Furthermore, every time Jesus used Son of Man, the Gospels included the definite article the which made the phrase a distinct title. Jesus was not just a Son of Man; He was the Son of Man. While the Gospels were written in Greek, they were written in such a way to emphasize the Aramaic Jesus used, and the Aramaic phrase is only

found one place in the Old Testament, Daniel 7.

The Gospel authors did not use son of man in a generic sense to refer to humanity. The Gospel authors consistently used the normal Greek word for man (humanity) when they wanted to refer to humanity. Jesus was referred to as a man, and Jesus even used the word to speak about himself. So, the Son of Man was used by Jesus in an intentional way while man was consistently used in a generic way to speak of humanity.

Again, this is important because these conversations did not originally happen in Greek. They are translated conversations. Perhaps the original speaker used the phrase son of man to speak of humanity because that would have been correct Aramaic. However, when it was recorded in the Gospels, it was written down in correct Greek as man. The Gospels frequently use the generic Greek word for man, but they never use the phrase son of man to speak about humanity in a generic way.

The Gospel authors used the same Greek for Son of Man as the Greek translation of Daniel used by the early church. The Septuagint (LXX) was the Greek translation of the Old Testament most frequently used by the apostles. In the Septuagint, Daniel 7:13 was translated into Greek as “like a son of man” instead of “like a human.” The translators preserved the Aramaic phrase in Greek instead of converting it into an equivalent Greek word. The Gospels used the same Greek translation of Jesus’s words as the most common Greek translation of Daniel 7:13.

*The authors of the Gospels translated the conversations in the Gospels in a very intentional way. When Jesus called Himself the Son of Man, it was an Aramaic phrase literally written in Greek. However, when speaking of humanity, the Gospel authors used the typical Greek word. Their translation was obviously intentional. They wanted us to know what Jesus said in Aramaic when He called Himself the Son of Man. In other cases, they only communicated that someone spoke about a man.*

*The Gospel authors intentionally created a connection between Jesus’s words and Daniel 7. We have to remember the books of the Bible were written as literature. They were*

written intentionally so readers could make connections and come to correct conclusions. The authors often used biblical language from passages to help readers make connections to those passages.

Though they wrote in a different language from the Old Testament, the Gospel authors were clearly trying to communicate a direct connection to Daniel in the language they chose. When we consider their choice of language in light of everything we have already seen, *the connection to Daniel is simply undeniable.*<sup>43</sup>

### **The Son of God**

Another concept that the Romans used in their version of the Messiah was the use of the term “Son of God.” Although the term “Son of God” was not common to Jewish literature or its scriptures, as we shall see later on in this chapter, it was very important to the Romans.

It was important for political purposes and had, in fact, been used a few years before the war of 66-73 BCE by Augustus’s regime, to both legitimize his relationship with Julius Caesar and justify his claim to the throne. Since the Gospels were written after the war of 66-73 CE when Rome faced the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, this same technique would be used and exploited by the Flavians to show that the “hand of God” had seen to the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and the beginning of the Flavian dynasty.

Some historical examples of how rulers of other cultures and empires (not just the Romans) used a filial connection to the gods, and used the term “Son of God” to legitimize their rule over their subjects are shown below. As we shall see, although the use of the term was common to many rulers throughout the ages, because of their religion and laws of the Tora, it was not a common expression for Jews.

### **Historical Examples**

From the dawn of time, many rulers have assumed titles such as Son of God, son of a God, or Son of Heaven. For example, Emperors and rulers ranging from the Western Zhou dynasty (c. 1000 BC) in China to Alexander the Great (c. 360 BC) to the Emperor of Japan (c. AD 600), have assumed titles that reflect a filial relationship with deities.

Although Egyptian pharaohs have been referred to as the sons of a particular God, with their conception even shown in sexually explicit detail, Egyptian pharaohs did not have full parity with their divine fathers but were subordinate. In the first four dynasties, the Pharaoh was considered the embodiment of a God, thus implying that Egypt was ruled by direct

theocracy, with God himself recognized as the head of the nation. During the later Amarna Period, Akhenaten reduced the Pharaoh's role to one of co-regent, where the Pharaoh and God ruled as father and son. Akhenaten also took on the role of the priest of God, eliminating representation on his behalf of others. Later still, the closest Egypt came to the Jewish variant of theocracy was during the reign of Herihor, where he took on the role of ruler not as a God, but as a high priest and king.

In Greek mythology, Heracles (son of Zeus) and many other figures were considered as sons of gods through a union with mortal women. From around 360 BCE onwards, Alexander the Great may have implied he was a demigod by using the title "Son of Ammon–Zeus."

The title "Son of Heaven" 天子 (from 天 meaning sky/heaven/God and 子 meaning child) was first used in the western Zhou dynasty (c. 1000 BC). It is mentioned in the Shijing book of songs and reflects the Zhou belief that as Son of Heaven (and as its delegate) the emperor was responsible for the well-being of China by the Mandate of Heaven. This title may also be translated as "Son of God" as the word “Tian” in Chinese may either mean sky or God and “Zi” is the suffix character for son. The Emperor of Japan was also called the Son of Heaven (天子 tenshi) starting in the early seventh century.

Among the Eurasian nomads, there was also a widespread use of "Son of God/Son of Heaven.” For example, in the third century BC, the ruler was called Chanyü and similar titles were used as late as the thirteenth century by Genghis Khan.<sup>44</sup>

### **Roman Usage**

At the time the Gospels were written, which was immediately following the 66-73 CE revolt, the Roman Empire had already codified the term into the vernacular and was placing the phrase on its coinage and on the inscriptions of public monuments, arches and structures.

In Rome, the process began in 44 BCE, when Julius Caesar was murdered by a group of conspirators headed by Brutus and Crassus. After the murder of Caesar, his will was opened and examined, where it was discovered that Caesar had adopted Octavian (who was the son of his niece Atia) as his son. Because of this, nineteen-year-old Octavian was given the name of the murdered Caesar, and thus became Caesar Octavianus.

In the years that followed, Octavian, who was later given the title “Augustus,” had to struggle for power in Rome against older and more experienced rivals, namely Mark Anthony. As Dead Sea Scrolls scholar Israel Knohl points out:

Octavian's main effort at that time was directed toward gaining divine honors for the murdered Caesar; for if his adoptive father was recognized as divine, Octavian would as a matter of course also be given divine status. Wishing to stress that he was the son of the "divine Julius," Octavian called himself *divi filius*, which means "Son of God" or "son of the deified." This title appeared on his coins.<sup>45</sup>



Portrait of Augustus with Divus Iulius

Image credit: Numismatics Paris

[https://www.cgbfr.com/auguste-denier-ttb-v52\\_0448,a.html](https://www.cgbfr.com/auguste-denier-ttb-v52_0448,a.html)



Silver Denarius of Octavian issued before 31 BC showing *Divi filius*

Image credit: GJCL Classical Art History

(<http://gjclarthistory.blogspot.com/2015/04/coin-shown-here-is-coin-issued-by.html>)

In the years following Caesar's murder, Rome was racked with political instability and endless wars. At first, Octavian and Mark Antony cooperated and fought together against Caesar's murders and supporters. However, eventually their alliance fell apart, sparked in part by Mark Antony's relationship with Cleopatra and Mark Antony's treasonous aspirations (as found in Mark Antony's will which Augustus unlawfully opened in Rome and read to the Senate) to move Rome's capital to Egypt.

The breakdown in their relationship culminated in the sea battle at Actium in 31 BCE, where Octavian defeated Mark Anthony and his forces, and the suicides of Cleopatra and

Mark Antony.

### **Jewish Usage**

In Jewish literature and scriptures, although some references to "sons of God," "Son of God," and "son of the Lord" are occasionally found, they never refer to physical descent from God. There are some instances in the Old Testament where Jewish kings are figuratively referred to a God. However, these terms are often used in the general sense in which the Jewish people were referred to as "children of the Lord your God."<sup>46</sup>

In *Caesar's Messiah*, however, Atwill provides an example of how the authors of the Gospels co-opted theology found in the Dead Sea Scrolls in their description of the Messiah found in Luke 1:32-35 (Son of God), which Atwill shows was borrowed almost entirely from scrolls found at Qumran.<sup>47</sup>

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon Thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow Thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of Thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:32-35)

### **Summary**

As we can see from all the above, in first century Judea, the Jewish Messiah and all that the word entailed was diverse and meant different things to the different sects and classes of Jewish society. Because of this, and with the help of its Hellenized Jewish collaborators, Rome would have been well-aware of the diversity of Messianic titles and interpretations espoused by the different Jewish groups and sects.

This meant the Romans would have also known the terminology used in all Jewish sources of Messianic literature to describe the Messiah, and would have known all the various titles and phrases ever used by all the older and recent Jewish prophets to describe the Messiah.

Besides what is outlined above, in *The Wars of the Jews*, after relating events considered portents of the destruction of Jerusalem, Josephus also mentions the prophecies of unnamed

“oracles.” Since Josephus does not ascribe any names to the “oracles,” it suggests that these were likely not references to prophets from the Jewish Tanakh, but were references to other prophetic works likely floating around Judea possibly written by the Essenes or others from within the Qumran community.

The first mention of an “Oracle” is where Josephus admonishes the rebel leader John, after Josephus and Titus noticed that: “... the ‘Daily Sacrifice’ had failed, and had not been offered to God, for want of men to offer it...”

And who is there that does not know what the writings of the ancient prophets contain in them, —and particularly that Oracle which is just now going to be fulfilled upon this miserable city? For they foretold that this city should be then taken when somebody shall begin the slaughter of his own countrymen. And are not both the city and the entire temple now full of the dead bodies of your countrymen? It is God, therefore, it is God himself who is bringing on this fire, to purge that city and temple by means of the Romans, 8 and is going to pluck up this city, which is full of your pollutions.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter 2.1.)*

The second mention is that of an “ambiguous Oracle,” which Josephus mentions at the end of his chapter describing the burning of the Temple and the blame he puts on those Jews who caused it when he writes: “... but those men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; for the Jews, by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple four-square, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracles.”

But now, what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous Oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how," about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth."

The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this Oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure, and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was

demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter 5.4.)*

In the next chapter we shall look at one possible and interesting source of literature that the “Oracle” Josephus referred to above may have come from.

## *Chapter Five*

### **The Oracle of Hystaspes**

Besides the literary traditions, titles, and phraseology concerning the Jewish Messiah mentioned above, there was another writing known in some Jewish circles during the time of Josephus, known as the Oracle of Hystaspes. The prophecy of Hystaspes was first mentioned in the middle of the second century CE in the writings of Justin Martyr, who was killed by the Rome for his Christian beliefs.

The mythical Hystaspes, to whom the Oracle was ascribed, was a King of Media (Persia) who supposedly lived before the Trojan War.<sup>48</sup> However, as Israel Knohl, in his book *The Messiah before Jesus, The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* posits: “the Persian identity disguises the fact that the apocalyptic work was written by a Jew about the Jewish people and Jerusalem.”<sup>49</sup>

Although the text of the work is not extant, sections that scholars feel are attributable to the work (because they mention the name Hystaspes and contain prophetic material) have been found in the writings of Justin Martyr (ca. 150 CE), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 190 CE), Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* (written between 305 and 310 CE), and an excerpt from the *Theosophy* (attributed to Aristokritos) a work anonymously handed down from the late fifth century.<sup>50</sup>

There are sections of Lactantius’s works that contain passages of a more comprehensive kind, which are assumed (though with less certainty) to stem from the oracles of Hystaspes. These passages seem to portray the imminent decline of the Roman Empire, from which there would arise ten kingdoms.

These are vanquished by a powerful King from the north, who will establish a reign of tyranny on earth and make a torment of people’s lives. In addition, there will be earthquakes, floods, plagues, poor harvests, famines, and other natural disasters.

A Great Prophet then appears and warns and educates humanity with miraculous devices, which prove quite successful; but there then arises another King from Syria, who kills the prophet. However, the prophet rises on the third day and goes to heaven.

The new King turns out to be a false prophet, who demands divine adulation, destroys the temple of God, and wants to persecute the righteous people.

The righteous escape to a mountain, on which the tyrant imprisons them. They pray to God, who sends them a Great King from heaven (in whom Lactantius apparently saw Christ; see Colpe, 1994, col. 1078). The Great King liberates the righteous and subjects their persecutors to fire and the sword.

The tyrannical King alone escapes and still causes many feuds, until he is put in chains and punished (or, according to Lactantius's *Epitome*, burned). Highly significant from the point of view of the history of religion is Lactantius's remark that, once the righteous had implored God's assistance, "God would hear them and send the Great King from heaven (*regem magnum de caelo*), who would snatch them away and free them and ruin all the godless ones by fire and sword." (*Divinae Institutiones* VII, 17, 11; ed. Brandt, 1890, p. 640).<sup>51</sup>

Although the above section is a generalized synopsis from Lactantius' writings, In Knohl's *The Messiah Before Jesus*, Knohl provides the actual passage from Lactantius, where Hystaspes spoke of two kings, of which the first would rule over Asia.

He shall harass the world with his intolerable rule ... and shall mediate new designs in his breast, that he may establish the government for himself ... And finally, he shall change the name of the empire and transfer its seat.<sup>52</sup>

Knohl writes: "After that, another King would come, more terrible than the first and would destroy him." Hystaspes described this second King: "He will constitute and call himself God and will order himself to be worshipped as the Son of God."<sup>53</sup>

Knohl continues: "According to Hystaspes the second King, the 'Son of God' would be a false prophet who would bring fire down from heaven."<sup>54</sup>

He will be a prophet of lies, and he will constitute and call himself God and will order himself to be worshipped as the Son of God, and power will be given to him to do signs and wonders by the sight of which he may entice men to adore him. He will command fire to come down from heaven.<sup>55</sup>

Knohl then describes the coming of a great prophet in a section titled:

*THE SLAYING OF THE MESSIAHS AND THEIR  
SUBSEQUENT RESSURECTION.*

When the time draws nigh, a great prophet shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God. And he will receive the power of doing wonderful things. Whenever men shall not hear him, he will shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains; he will turn water into blood ... and if anyone shall endeavor to injure him, fire shall come forth out of his mouth and shall burn that man. By theses prodigies and powers, he shall turn many to the worship of God.<sup>56</sup>

Knohl then writes: “The second King, the ‘Son of God,’ described as a false prophet, will wage war on the prophet of God and slay him.”

He shall fight against the prophet of God and shall overcome and slay him, and shall suffer him to lie unburied: but after the third day he shall come to life again; and while all look on and wonder, he shall be caught up to heaven.<sup>57</sup>

Knohl then adds: “A parallel tradition is found in the story of the two witnesses in chapter eleven of the book of Revelation. The same miracles that Hystaspes attributes to the prophet of God are ascribed to the two witnesses. The final destiny of the witnesses resembles that of the prophet.”<sup>58</sup>

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the abyss will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them. And their bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

For three days and a half, men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb. But after three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up hither!” And in the sight of

their foes, they went up to heaven in a cloud. (Revelation 11: 7-9, 11-12)<sup>59</sup>

Knohl concludes his section on the fate of the great prophet in the Oracle of Hystaspes and the two prophets in Revelation eleven, and the suppression that followed their death and resurrection with two verses from the first century Jewish apocryphal, pseudepigraphic work, the Assumption of Moses. (The Assumption of Moses, otherwise called the Testament of Moses, purports to contain secret prophecies that Moses revealed to Joshua before passing leadership of the Israelites to him).<sup>60</sup>

Into their parts cohort and a powerful King of the west shall come, who shall conquer them: and he shall take them captive, and burn a part of their temple with fire, (and) shall crucify some around their colony.<sup>61</sup>

Knohl contends that the tradition concerning the killing of the great prophet in the Oracle of Hystaspes and the two Messiahs found in Revelation eleven, “came from the members of the Qumran sect or some circles close to them. It thus appears that the Messianic leaders whose deaths were related in these sources belonged to the Qumran community.”<sup>62</sup> Knohl’s thesis is based in part on the fact that all four copies of the Messianic hymns of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been dated to the time of the reign of King Herod (37-4 BCE).<sup>63</sup>

While this author agrees with Knohl that the authors of Revelation eleven and thirteen made use of the older composition (Oracle of Hystaspes), thanks to *Shakespeare’s Secret Messiah*, this author does not share Knohl’s view that the two parallel prophecies refer to the same historical event.

Although the “two kings” who are both portrayed as “false prophets,” (where the second King constituted himself as a God and demanded to be worshipped as a “Son of God”) bears an unmistakable similarity to the struggle that took place between Mark Antony and Augustus, thanks to Atwill’s “Rosetta Stone,” we can now see that what appears on the surface to be two different descriptions of the same event, are actually two different “prophecies” talking about two different “kings” and two entirely different events.

Therefore, once again, thanks to *Caesar’s Messiah* and *Shakespeare’s Secret Messiah*, it is this author’s view that the authors of Revelation eleven deliberately constructed their prophecy to reflect current events, and mimic and mock the older work (Oracle of Hystaspes).

In Atwill’s second work, *Shakespeare’s Secret Messiah*, Atwill dissects and interprets all the books of Revelation and shows who wrote them, when, and why. In this author’s view, Atwill’s interpretation of Revelation eleven and thirteen, which both contain unmistakable

witty and ingenious puzzles which are then answered in *Wars of the Jews*, shows that the book of Revelation followed the same pattern and aim as the Gospels.

In this author's view, both were written as a humorous form of veiled plagiarism that mocks all past and present works of Jewish Messianic "prophecy," including those from the book of Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah and the Oracle of Hystaspes, of which all would have been known to the Romans and their Hellenized Jewish collaborators.

### **Might We Guess Who Was This "Great Prophet"?**

Before we try to answer this question, let us once again look at how the "great prophet" is described by Hystaspes:

When the time draws nigh, a great prophet shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God. And he will receive the power of doing wonderful things. Whenever men shall not hear him, he will shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains; he will turn water into blood ... and if anyone shall endeavor to injure him, fire shall come forth out of his mouth and shall burn that man. By theses prodigies and powers, he shall turn many to the worship of God.<sup>64</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Knohl posits that the "great prophet" mentioned by Hystaspes and the two Messiahs or two "olive trees" of Revelation are both referring to the same individual(s), where one of the two individuals was more prominent than the other. Knohl writes:

The Oracle of Hystaspes speaks of the killing of the "prophet of God" and the book of Revelation relates the killing of the two Messiahs. How is one to explain the difference between the two sources? It seems that one of the two Messianic leaders was more prominent than the other. Hystaspes referred only to the prominent one, who is described as the "prophet of God" in order to create an opposition to the "prophet of lies" – Augustus.<sup>65</sup>

However, now that we have established that the "great prophet" mentioned in the Oracle of Hystaspes and the "two witnesses" or the two "olive trees" of Revelation eleven are not the same individuals, and (thanks to *Shakespeare's Secret Messiah*) can pinpoint beyond

the shadow of any doubt who the two olive trees are in Revelation eleven are, then who is the “great prophet” in the Oracle of Hystaspes?

In his work, Knohl puts forth the hypothesis that the “great prophet” and the two “olive trees” in Revelation eleven is the Menahem the Essene mentioned by Josephus in *The Antiquities of the Jews*.

Knohl bases his hypothesis on the fact that most scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls accept that the Qumran sect can be identified with the Essenes, and also out of the sympathy and respect that Josephus said that Herod had for the Essenes because of the special relationship that Herod had developed with Menahem, the Essene.

Knohl then cites the passage from Josephus that describes this Menahem:

It is, however, proper to explain what reason Herod had for holding the Essenes in honor and for having a higher opinion of them than was consistent with their merely human nature. For such an explanation is not out of place in a work of history, since it will at the same time show what the general opinion of these men was.

There was a certain Essene named Menahem, whose virtue was attested in his whole conduct of life and especially in his having from God a foreknowledge of the future. This man had once observed Herod, then still a boy, going to his teacher, and greeted him as “King of the Jews.” Thereupon Herod, who thought that the man either did not know he was, or was teasing him, reminded him that he was only a private citizen.

Menahem, however, gently smiled and slapped him on the backside, saying, “Nevertheless, you will be King and you will rule the realm happily, for you have been found worthy of this by God. And you shall remember, the blows given by Menahem, so that they too, may be for you a symbol of how one’s fortune can change.”

For the best attitude for you to take would be to love justice and piety toward God and mildness toward your citizens. But I know that you will not be such a person, since I understand the whole situation. Now you will be single out for such good fortune as no other man has had, and you will enjoy eternal glory, but you will forget piety and justice. This however, cannot escape the notice of God,

and at the close of your life His wrath will show that He is mindful of these things.”

At the moment Herod paid very little attention to his words, for he was quite lacking in such hopes, but after gradually being advanced to kingship and good fortune, when he was at the height of his power, he sent for Menahem and questioned him about the length of time he would reign. Menahem said nothing at all.

In the face of his silence, Herod asked further whether he had ten years more to reign, and the other replied that he had twenty or even thirty, but he did not set a limit to the appointed time. Herod, however, was satisfied even with this answer and dismissed Menahem with a friendly gesture. And from that time on he continued to hold all Essenes in honor.

Now we have seen fit to report these things to our readers, however incredible they may seem, and to reveal what has taken place among us because many of these men have indeed been vouchsafed a knowledge of divine things because of their virtue.<sup>66</sup>

Considering all the above, and taking nothing away from the deep respect that this author has for Knohl and his work, it is this author’s view that the “great prophet” mentioned in the Oracle of Hystaspes was probably not the Menahem the Essene in Josephus. Why not Menahem the Essene? Because Josephus does not tell us what happened to this Menahem, or how he died.

This is significant because in the passage above, Josephus portrays Menahem in a positive light and pays homage to him as a man: “whose virtue was attested in his whole conduct of life.” Josephus then pays further respect to Menahem by stating that men like Menahem had: “indeed been vouchsafed a knowledge of divine things because of their virtue.”

Since we now know (thanks to *Caesar’s Messiah*) that all of Josephus’ works are to be read inter-textually alongside the Gospels, this author feels it would be out of character for Josephus to mock or satirize this Menahem by flattering him with false praise if Menahem had in fact been an insurrectionist or a false Messianic claimant.

In *Caesar's Messiah*, all the Jewish rebels that were satirized and mocked in the Gospels by turning them into Jesus's disciples, or given the names Lazarus, Mary or Martha, were never painted in a positive light or praised by Josephus in *The Wars of the Jews* or *The Antiquities of the Jews*, as he does Menahem.

Therefore, considering the Gospels, *The Wars of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*, were all written at least seventy-three years after Herod's rule, had this Menahem or "great prophet" been executed by the Romans, as is implied by the Oracle of Hystaspes, it surely would have been known to Josephus and would not have gone unmentioned in any of his works.

From the Rabbinic sources that Knohl cites (the Mishna, The Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud) we learn three important things about this Menahem: 1) that Menahem was not one of the pharisaic sages, but belonged to one of the opposing sects, 2) that Menahem was a member of the king's court, which corresponds to what we are told about Menahem the Essene in Josephus, and 3) that Menahem "went out, suggesting that he and his followers were excommunicated by the Pharisees led by Hillel."<sup>67</sup>

As part of his hypothesis, Knohl posits that after the death of Herod in 4 BCE and the revolt that followed, Menahem ceased living a secret double life and revealed his Messianic secret to the public, including the Pharisees.

However, from the Rabbinic sources, it appears the Pharisees under Hillel rejected Menahem's claim, and excommunicated him and his eighty pairs of Torah scholars.

Knohl writes:

The oldest collection of Rabbinic literature, the Mishna, mentions five pairs of religious leaders who succeeded one another during the period from the Hasmonean rebellion (167 BCE) to the time of Herod. Hillel and Menahem were named as the pair active in the time of Herod. The Mishna adds: Menahem went out, and Shammai came in.<sup>68</sup>

Knohl then adds:

The Jerusalem Talmud quotes the statement "Menahem went out" from the Mishna and asks, "where did he go?" It answers: "some say he went from one way to behaving to another and some say he turned round and left: he and eighty pairs of Torah scholars clad in golden tikri (armor), whose faces went black as

pots because they told them, write on a bull's horns that you have no part in the God of Israel.”<sup>69</sup>

### Summary

In this author's view, information gleaned from the Rabbinic sources about the Menahem mentioned above is invaluable, and will be examined in the next chapter to help us determine the likely identity of this “great prophet.”

We will also show how the Gospel authors also co-opted and borrowed material from the execution narrative of the “great prophet” in Hystaspes and that of another prophet mentioned by Josephus in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, and inserted both of them into the story line of the Messiah that we see in the Gospels.



## *Chapter Six*

### **The Great Prophet**

In order to discern a possible identity for the “great prophet” in the Oracle of Hystaspes, we need to refresh our memories by once again examining the passage outlined in the previous chapter.

Before we do so, however, it is important to note that the identity of the “great prophet” has no bearing on the main thesis or validity of *Caesar’s Messiah* and is only being referenced and proposed in this work to show that the Romans’ Messiah, Jesus Christ, may have been based in part, on this historical individual. (Assuming the historicity of the individuals mentioned in *The Wars of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*, are accurate).

We also need to point out that not all scholars agree that the entire body of the Dead Sea Scrolls was written during the time of Herod, or were all written by the Essenes. For example, some scholars have posited that some of the cryptic codes found in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest that religious leaders from Jerusalem authored at least some scrolls.<sup>70</sup>

In a National Geographic article by Ker Than titled: *Dead Sea Scrolls Mystery Solved?* the author writes:

According to an emerging theory, the Essenes may have actually been Jerusalem Temple priests who went into self-imposed exile in the second century BC, after kings unlawfully assumed the role of high priest. This group of rebel priests may have escaped to Qumran to worship God in their own way.

While there, they may have written some of the texts that would come to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Essenes may not have abandoned all of their old ways at Qumran, however, and writing in code may have been one of the practices they preserved. It is possible too that some of the scrolls were not written at Qumran but were instead spirited away from the Temple for safekeeping...”<sup>71</sup>

### **The Killing of the Great Prophet, and His Resurrection**

Considering the above, let us once again examine Hystaspes’ prophecy, where he speaks of

two kings or “false prophets” who would rule over Asia.

He shall harass the world with his intolerable rule ... and shall mediate new designs in his breast, that he may establish the government for himself ... And finally, he shall change the name of the empire and transfer its seat.

After that, another King would come, more terrible than the first and would destroy him.

He will constitute and call himself God and will order himself to be worshipped as the Son of God.<sup>72</sup>

He will be a prophet of lies, and he will constitute and call himself God and will order himself to be worshipped as the Son of God, and power will be given to him to do signs and wonders by the sight of which he may entice men to adore him. He will command fire to come down from heaven.

When the time draws nigh, a great prophet shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God. And he will receive the power of doing wonderful things. Whenever men shall not hear him, he will shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains; he will turn water into blood ... and if anyone shall endeavor to injure him, fire shall come forth out of his mouth and shall burn that man. By theses prodigies and powers, he shall turn many to the worship of God.<sup>73</sup>

The second King, the ‘Son of God,’ described as a false prophet, will wage war on the prophet of God and slay him.

He shall fight against the prophet of God and shall overcome and slay him, and shall suffer him to lie unburied: but after the third day he shall come to life again; and while all look on and wonder, he shall be caught up to heaven.<sup>74</sup>

If we accept the possibility that the Oracle of Hystaspes was written by Jews and ascribed to a Persian to conceal their true identity, and also accept the possibility that some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written during the first century BCE and during the reign of Herod, then the description and historical context of the two kings or “false prophets” does

indeed parallel that of Mark Antony and Augustus.

If true, is there anything in the writings of Josephus covering that time period that resembles the situation described by Hystaspes?

It turns out there is. In *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Chapter 6, Josephus describes how two prominent Jewish “interpreters of the Jewish laws” inspired their youthful “scholars” to pull down a golden eagle that Herod had erected over the great gate of the Temple. The significance of the event and the aftermath that affected Judea is detailed in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Chapters 6-10.

This author has included partial sections from chapters six and nine, and used italics to highlight those parts of the narrative that indeed seem to be referenced in the Oracle of Hystaspes.

CHAPTER 6. Concerning the Disease That Herod Fell into and the  
Sedition Which the Jews Raised Thereupon; with the Punishment of the  
Seditious.

*There was one Judas, the son of Saripheus, and Matthias, the son of Margalothus, two of the most eloquent men among the Jews, and the most celebrated interpreters of the Jewish laws, and men well beloved by the people, because of their education of their youth; for all those that were studious of virtue frequented their lectures every day.*

These men, when they found that the King's distemper was incurable, excited the young men that they would pull down all those works which the King had erected contrary to the law of their fathers, and thereby obtain the rewards which the law will confer on them for such actions of piety; for that it was truly on account of Herod's rashness in making such things as the law had forbidden, that his other misfortunes, and this distemper also, which was so unusual among humankind, and with which he was now afflicted, came upon him; for Herod had caused such things to be made which were contrary to the law, of which he was accused by Judas and Matthias; for the King had erected over the great gate of the temple a large golden eagle, of great value, and had dedicated it to the temple.

Now the law forbids those that propose to live according to it, to erect images six or representations of any living creature. *So these wise men persuaded [their*

*scholars] to pull down the golden eagle; alleging, that although they should incur any danger, which might bring them to their deaths, the virtue of the action now proposed to them would appear much more advantageous to them than the pleasures of life; since they would die for the preservation and observation of the law of their fathers; since they would also acquire an everlasting fame and commendation; since they would be both commended by the present generation, and leave an example of life that would never be forgotten to posterity; since that common calamity of dying cannot be avoided by our living so as to escape any such dangers; that therefore it is a right thing for those who are in love with a virtuous conduct, to wait for that fatal hour by such behavior as may carry them out of the world with praise and honor; and that this will alleviate death to a great degree, thus to come at it by the performance of brave actions, which bring us into danger of it; and at the same time to leave that reputation behind them to their children, and to all their relations, whether they be men or women, which will be of great advantage to them afterward.*

*And with such discourses as this did these men excite the young men to this action; and a report being come to them that the King was dead, this was an addition to the wise men's persuasions; so, in the very middle of the day, they got upon the place, they pulled down the eagle, and cut it into pieces with axes, while a great number of the people were in the temple.*

*And now the King's captain, upon hearing what the undertaking was, and supposing it was a thing of a higher nature than it proved to be, came up thither, having a great band of soldiers with him, such as was sufficient to put a stop to the multitude of those who pulled down what was dedicated to God; so he fell upon them unexpectedly, and as they were upon this bold attempt, in a foolish presumption rather than a cautious circumspection, as is usual with the multitude, and while they were in disorder, and incautious of what was for their advantage; so he caught no fewer than forty of the young men, who had the courage to stay behind when the rest ran away, together with the authors of this bold attempt, Judas and Matthias, who thought it an ignominious thing to retire upon his approach, and led them to the King.*

*And when they were come to the King, and he asked them if they had been so bold as to pull down what he had dedicated to God, "Yes, [said they,] what was contrived we contrived, and what hath been performed we performed it, and that with such a virtuous courage as becomes men; for we have given our assistance to those things which were dedicated to the majesty of God, and we have provided for what we have learned by hearing the*

*law; and it ought not to be wondered at, if we esteem those laws which Moses had suggested to him, and were taught him by God, and which he wrote and left behind him, more worthy of observation than thy commands. Accordingly, we will undergo death, and all sorts of punishments which thou canst inflict upon us, with pleasure, since we are conscious to ourselves that we shall die, not for any unrighteous actions, but for our love to religion."*

But the people, on account of Herod's barbarous temper, and for fear he should be so cruel and to inflict punishment on them, said what was done was done without their approbation, and that it seemed to them that the actors might well be punished for what they had done. But as for Herod, he dealt more mildly with others [of the assembly] but he deprived Matthias of the high priesthood, as in part an occasion of this action, and made Joazar, who was Matthias's wife's brother, high priest in his stead.

Now it happened, that during the time of the high priesthood of this Matthias, there was another person made high priest for a single day, that very day which the Jews observed as a fast. The occasion was this: This Matthias the high priest, on the night before that day when the fast was to be celebrated, seemed, in a dream, seven to have conversation with his wife; and because he could not officiate himself on that account, Joseph, the son of Ellemus, his kinsman, assisted him in that sacred office.

*But Herod deprived this Matthias of the high priesthood, and burned the other Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon.*

*(The Antiquities of the Jews, Book XVII, Chapter 6)*

#### CHAPTER 9. How the People Raised a Sedition Against Archelaus, and How He Sailed to Rome.

At this time also it was that some of the Jews got together out of a desire of innovation. *They lamented Matthias, and those that were slain with him by Herod, who had not any respect paid them by a funeral mourning, out of the fear men were in of that man; they were those who had been condemned for pulling down the golden eagle.*

*The people made a great clamor and lamentation hereupon, and cast out some reproaches against the King also, as if that tended to alleviate the miseries of the deceased.* The people assembled together, and desired of Archelaus, that, in way of revenge on their account, he would inflict punishment on those who had been honored by Herod; and that, in the first and principal place, he would deprive that high priest whom Herod had made, and would choose one more agreeable to the law, and of greater purity, to officiate as high priest.

This was granted by Archelaus, although he was mightily offended at their importunity, because he proposed to himself to go to Rome immediately to look after Caesar's determination about him.

However, he sent the general of his forces to use persuasions, and to tell them *that the death which was inflicted on their friends was according to the law*; and to represent to them that their petitions about these things were carried to a great height of injury to him; that the time was not now proper for such petitions, but required their unanimity until such time as he should be established in the government by the consent of Caesar, and should then be come back to them; for that he would then consult with them in common concerning the purport of their petitions; but that they ought at present to be quiet, lest they should seem seditious persons.

So when the King had suggested these things, and instructed his general in what he was to say, he sent him away to the people; but they made a clamor, and would not give him leave to speak, and put him in danger of his life, and as many more as were desirous to venture upon saying openly anything which might reduce them to a sober mind, and prevent their going on in their present courses, because they had more concern to have all their own wills performed than to yield obedience to their governors; *thinking it to be a thing insufferable, that, while Herod was alive, they should lose those that were most dear to them*, and that when he was dead, they could not get the actors to be punished.

Now, upon the approach of that feast of unleavened bread, which the law of their fathers had appointed for the Jews at this time, which feast is called the Passover and is a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, when they offer

sacrifices with great alacrity; and when they are required to slay more sacrifices in number than at any other festival; *and when an innumerable multitude came thither out of the country, nay, from beyond its limits also, in order to worship God, the seditious lamented Judas and Matthias, those teachers of the laws*, and kept together in the temple, and had plenty of food, because these seditious persons were not ashamed to beg it.

*(The Antiquities of the Jews, Book XVII, Chapters 6-10)*

From the passages from Josephus above, we can see that the revolt of 4 BCE to 6 CE that started near the end of Herod's life and continued on under Herod's son Archelaus, was triggered by the two influential teachers, Judas and Matthias.

Although easy to overlook, the root cause of the revolt of 4 BCE to 6 CE (disrespect of Jewish religious customs and sensibilities) was not that dissimilar to the root cause of the revolt that would occur sixty years later (the Great Revolt of 66-73 CE) that Vespasian was sent to quell.

As we can see from Josephus' narrative above, the trigger event surrounding Matthias' execution resulted in thousands of Jews being killed, bloody protests and insurrections throughout Judea, the temple being plundered by the Roman Sabinus, and finally, Judean towns burned down and 2,000 souls crucified by Varus.

Josephus does not mention what sect Judas and Matthias belonged to, but goes to great length to emphasize that both men were respected and held in high esteem by the Jews. Although Josephus does not mention the specific fate of Judas, he says that Herod had Matthias and his "companions" burned alive.

From this and the passage that says: "They lamented Matthias, and those that were slain with him by Herod, who had not any respect paid them by a funeral mourning, out of the fear men were in of that man; they were those who had been condemned for pulling down the golden eagle," suggests that Matthias was perhaps the more prominent and influential of the two men.

The passage also tells us that after his execution, Matthias and his "companions" were not given the respect of a funeral. From this, we can surmise that Matthias and his companions' bodies were left where executed, and were not immediately taken away or disposed of.

If so, Josephus's description of events and the virtues of Judas and Matthias seems to parallel the description of the "great prophet" and his fate, by Hystaspes:

When the time draws nigh, a great prophet shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God. And he will receive the power of doing wonderful things. Whenever men shall not hear him, he will shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains; he will turn water into blood ... and if anyone shall endeavor to injure him, fire shall come forth out of his mouth and shall burn that man. By theses prodigies and powers, he shall turn many to the worship of God.

He shall fight against the prophet of God and shall overcome and slay him, and shall suffer him to lie unburied: but after the third day he shall come to life again; and while all look on and wonder, he shall be caught up to heaven.

### Summary

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, in his work *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Knohl proposes that the story of the two witnesses in chapter eleven of the book of Revelation bears strong similarities to the attributes ascribed to the prophet of God, as all three prophets seem to share the same fate and final destiny.

Although the two prophecies do bear striking similarities, the narrative in Revelation eleven is subtly differentiated from the narrative in Hystaspes by use of the phrase: “For three days and a half...” to describe the number of days the two prophets’ bodies remained unburied, and is italicized below:

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the abyss will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them. And their bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. *For three days and a half*, men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb. But after three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up hither!” And in the sight of their foes, they went up to heaven in a cloud. (Revelation 11: 7-9, 11-12)

In the Oracle of Hystaspes, after the prophet of God is killed, it says: “... and shall

suffer him to lie unburied: *but after the third day* he shall come to life again; and while all look on and wonder, he shall be caught up to heaven. However, in Revelation eleven, it says: *For three days and a half*, men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb.

Although, on the surface, the difference of a “half day” may seem insignificant, it is crucial in resolving the identities of the two “olive trees” in Revelation eleven, which Atwill deciphers in *Shakespeare’s Secret Messiah*.

Once again, although the Oracle of Hystaspes and the identity of the “great prophet” both have no bearing on *Caesar’s Messiah* or its primary thesis, the subtle change in days made in Revelation eleven, and the subtle use linking the two “olive trees” in Revelation eleven to the two anointed olive trees of Zechariah 4:11,14 (which according to Knohl is a clear reference to two Messiahs anointed with oil, the Royal Messiah Zerubbabel, and the priestly Messiah Jeshua),<sup>75</sup> and the two teachers mentioned in Book XVII, Chapter 6 of *The Antiquities of the Jews*, shows, in this author’s view, that the author of Revelation indeed made use of all the earlier works.

As to the identity of the “great prophet” in the Oracle of Hystaspes, although we cannot say with absolute certainty, in this author’s view the most logical choice is the Matthias mentioned by Josephus who inspired his young students or “scholars” to tear down the golden eagle over the Temple’s gate.

Naturally, we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that Matthias’s real name was Menahem the Essene (Knohl’s hypothesis), or rule out that Menahem the Essene’s real name was Matthias, and that Josephus intentionally turned one man’s identity into two, in order that readers not confuse or conflate either man or one man (if the two were the same man) with the Gospel’s character, Jesus.

Considering all the above, we can also see the validity of Knohl’s primary thesis, which posits (based on his examination of the Messianic hymns found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Oracle of Hystaspes, which Knohl posits was authored by the Qumran community) that one generation before Jesus, the Jews had suffered the loss of a highly respected leader or teacher, who was executed for inspiring his scholars to tear down the golden eagle from the Temple gate. And that after this great teacher was killed, insult was added to injury when that teacher and his companions were not given the respect of a burial by Herod for what we can surmise was a period of at least three days, where his body laid unburied.

If this leader and his sect had in fact gained the respect of Herod and was held in high esteem by Herod as Josephus says Menahem the Essene was, then the loss of this leader and the hope of redemption that his death had betrayed, would surely have been seen and felt as

a catastrophic disappointment to his followers and other Jews.

It is here, amid the backdrop of this catastrophic disappointment of broken Messianic expectations, that Knohl posits Menahem's followers may have found comfort and meaning in Daniel seven, Zechariah twelve, and Isaiah fifty-three, and created a "catastrophic" Messianic ideology. An ideology in which the rejection of the Messiah, his humiliation, and his death were thought to be foretold in the scriptures and was a necessary stage in the process of redemption, as shown in the famous passage from Isaiah fifty-three below.<sup>76</sup>

He was despised and rejected by men: a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53: 9, 12)

Thus, according to Knohl, the "suffering servant" described by Isaiah is indeed reflected in the Messianic hymns in the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, the disciples believed that the humiliated and pierced Messiah had been resurrected after three days and that he was due to reappear on earth as a redeemer, victor and judge, as reflected in Hystaspes prophecy:

He shall fight against the prophet of God and shall overcome and slay him, and shall suffer him to lie unburied: but after the third day he shall come to life again; and while all look on and wonder, he shall be caught up to heaven.<sup>77</sup>

Since Daniel had prophesied that the fourth beast would be destroyed and the kingdom would be given to the "son of man," whom Daniel described as sitting on a heavenly throne and as coming in the clouds of heaven, the disciples and followers of the Qumranic Messiah believed he had been resurrected after three days and had risen to heaven in a cloud where he now sat in heaven on a "throne of power in the angelic council" and would eventually return.

He would return, descending from above with the clouds of heaven, surrounded by

angels and would overthrow the fourth beast, Rome, and would thus fulfill Daniel's vision of the "son of man."<sup>78</sup>

In this author's view, it is interesting to note that the names of the two teachers who inspired their youthful followers to pull down the golden eagle from the Temple gate are Judas and Matthias, the son and founder of the Maccabean dynasty. However, as the narrative progresses, the roles are reversed as Matthias becomes the featured character and Judas's name is not mentioned again. Josephus then concludes the narrative by singling out Matthias as the leader who was burned alive by Herod.

Considering the above, it is entirely possible that the entire story told by Josephus about the two teachers, (if not historical) was borrowed and co-opted from material from the Oracle of Hystaspes and used as allegory to tell the story of the fate of the birth and death of the Maccabees and their dynasty.

If correct, since Judas and Matthias are described by Josephus as being virtuous men, being "two of the most eloquent men among the Jews," and "beloved by the people, because of their education of their youth," it appears Josephus is making a subtle commentary on the founder of the Maccabees, Matthias, who like the Matthias who pulled down the golden eagle, were virtuous heroes for refusing to compromise their sacred religious beliefs.

After the golden eagle was pulled down and Josephus tells how Judas and Matthias "thought it an ignominious thing to retire upon his approach, and led them to the King," Josephus is informing the reader that not only did the two men refuse to run away from Herod's guards, they willingly went to Herod and admitted their involvement in front of him.

From this part of the account, Josephus seems to make a subtle commentary on the virtues of righteous protest and righteous martyrdom, versus cowardly acts perpetrated by those who run away, who use and hide behind their religion to foment political insurrection and sedition, for personal gain.

If correct, this theme would be consistent with many of Josephus's accounts in *The Wars of the Jews* that portray the pains and extra mile that Vespasian and Titus went, in their attempt to respect and accommodate the Jews' religious laws. And in equal fashion, the contempt they had for all the rebels who used and hid behind the religion to engage in seditious activities, to gain monarchical powers for themselves.<sup>79</sup>

Considering all the above, now that we have shown some of the literary sources and characters that Romans likely borrowed and co-opted to create the themes and storyline for their "great prophet" Jesus, in the next chapter we will examine how the main storyline in the Gospels likely came about.

A storyline that is interjected and interspersed together with parallels between Jesus's

ministry and Titus's military campaign, which are outlined in *Caesar's Messiah*.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **Deconstructing the Gospels' Storyline**

In *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus twice makes mention of an "Oracle." The first is in Book VI, Chapter 2:

And who is there that does not know what the writings of the ancient prophets contain in them, and particularly *that Oracle* which is just now going to be fulfilled upon this miserable city? For they foretold that this city should be then taken when somebody shall begin the slaughter of his own countrymen.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter 2.1)*

The second is in Book VI, Chapter 5:

Now if any one consider these things, he will find that God takes care of humankind, and by all ways possible foreshows to our race what is for their preservation; but that men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; for the Jews, by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple four-square, while at the same time they had it written in their *sacred oracles*, "That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become four-square."

But now, what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an *ambiguous Oracle* that was also found in their sacred writings, how, "about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth."

The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination.

Now this Oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure, and some of them they utterly despised, until

their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter 5.4)*

Although Josephus could have quoted or mentioned the prophet's name or the specific scriptures that he was referring to, he did not. He also does not explain the Jewish background of the "Oracle." As we have outlined in the previous chapter, knowledge of the Messianic hymns from the Qumran community and the collection of works that make up the Oracle of Hystaspes would have been known to the Romans and their Hellenized Jewish collaborators. If not before the revolt, certainly after the Great Revolt.

Therefore, it is this author's view that the Romans (through Josephus) deliberately made use of all known sources of Jewish literature and prophecies to construct the Gospels and all of Josephus's works. And when it suited their fancy, or to drive home the point that all Jewish prophecies were in fact foretelling the rise and rule of Vespasian, they did what the Romans felt the rebellious Jews were guilty of; they cherry-picked passages that could be stretched or construed as either foretelling or fulfilling the absurd claim.

Later, in Book VII, Chapter 10, Josephus recounts the mindset of the Sicarii who were captured at the end of the war and tortured:

For when all sorts of torments and vexations of their bodies that could be devised were made use of to them, they could not get any one of them to comply so far as to confess, or seem to confess, that Caesar was their Lord; but they preserved their own opinion, in spite of all the distress they were brought to, as if they received these torments and the fire itself with bodies insensible of pain, and with a soul that in a manner rejoiced under them.

But what was most of all astonishing to the beholders was the courage of the children; for not one of these children was so far overcome by these torments, as to name Caesar for their Lord. So far does the strength of the courage [of the soul] prevail over the weakness of the body.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book VII, Chapter 10.1)*

Although this event may or may not have actually taken place, it bears a striking similarity to the heartiness of the "young companions" who were brought before Herod, and

willingly admitted that they had torn down the golden eagle as told in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Chapter 6:

And when they were come to the King, and he asked them if they had been so bold as to pull down what he had dedicated to God, "Yes, [said they,] what was contrived we contrived, and what hath been performed we performed it, and that with such a virtuous courage as becomes men; for we have given our assistance to those things which were dedicated to the majesty of God, and we have provided for what we have learned by hearing the law; and it ought not to be wondered at, if we esteem those laws which Moses had suggested to him, and were taught him by God, and which he wrote and left behind him, more worthy of observation than thy commands.

Accordingly, we will undergo death, and all sorts of punishments which thou canst inflict upon us, with pleasure, since we are conscious to ourselves that we shall die, not for any unrighteous actions, but for our love to religion." And thus, they all said, and their courage was still equal to their profession, and equal to that with which they readily set about this undertaking.

(*The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Chapter 6.3).

Considering all the above, we can see that from the Torah and all its prophets and prophecies, to the Messianic literature that may have been developed by the various sects in those days, to the chronicled historical record (which the Romans were free to manipulate and alter at their whim), there was no shortage of source material for the Romans to choose from to create their own new Messianic literature, the Gospels.

### **The Gospel Storyline**

Down through the ages, there are Christians who have tried to show that Jesus "fulfilled" over one hundred Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Claims that, of course, are denied and refuted by religious Jews (non-Christian Jews).

For example, in an online article by Mary Fairchild, *Old Testament Prophecies of Jesus: 47 Predictions of the Messiah Fulfilled in Jesus Christ* posted on the website *Learn Religions*, Fairchild outlines forty-seven different passages from the Old Testament about the Messiah, that Fairchild shows Jesus fulfilled.

All forty-seven are shown below, with the story heading first, then the Old Testament passage or verse that predicted it, then the corresponding verses in the Gospels (or other books of the New Testament) that, according to Fairchild, prove the prophecy was fulfilled.

#### Forty-Seven Old Testament Verses About Jesus as Messiah

- 1) Messiah would be born of a woman.  
Genesis 3:15, Matthew 1:20, Galatians 4:4
- 2) Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.  
Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1, Luke 2:4-6
- 3) Messiah would be born of a virgin.  
Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:22-23, Luke 1:26-31
- 4) Messiah would come from the line of Abraham.  
Genesis 12:3, Genesis 22:18, Matthew 1:1, Romans 9:5
- 5) Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac.  
Genesis 17:19, Genesis 21:12, Luke 3:34
- 6) Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.  
Numbers 24:17, Matthew 1:2
- 7) Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.  
Genesis 49:10, Luke 3:33, Hebrews 7:14
- 8) Messiah would be heir to King David's throne.  
2 Samuel 7:12-13, Isaiah 9:7, Luke 1:32-33, Romans 1:3
- 9) Messiah's throne will be anointed and eternal.  
Psalm 45:6-7, Daniel 2:44, Luke 1:33, Hebrews 1:8-12
- 10) Messiah would be called Immanuel.  
Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23

- 11) Messiah would spend a season in Egypt.  
Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:14-15
- 12) A massacre of children would happen at Messiah's birthplace.  
Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew 2:16-18
- 13) A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah.  
Isaiah 40:3-5, Luke 3:3-6
- 14) Messiah would be preceded by a forerunner.  
Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:10
- 15) Messiah would be rejected by his own people.  
Psalm 69:8, Isaiah 53:3, John 1:11, John 7:5
- 16) Messiah would be a prophet.  
Deuteronomy 18:15, Acts 3:20-22
- 17) Messiah would be preceded by Elijah.  
Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 11:13-14
- 18) Messiah would be declared the Son of God.  
Psalm 2:7, Matthew 3:16-17
- 19) Messiah would be called a Nazarene.  
Isaiah 11:1, Matthew 2:23
- 20) Messiah would bring light to Galilee.  
Isaiah 9:1-2, Matthew 4:13-16
- 21) Messiah would speak in parables.  
Psalm 78:2-4, Isaiah 6:9-10, Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35
- 22) Messiah would be sent to heal the brokenhearted.  
Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18-19

- 23) Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.  
Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5:5-6
- 24) Messiah would be called King.  
Psalm 2:6, Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 27:37, Mark 11:7-11
- 25) Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey.  
Zechariah 11:12, Matthew 21:4-5
- 26) Messiah would be praised by little children.  
Psalm 8:2, Matthew 21:16
- 27) Messiah would be betrayed.  
Psalm 41:9, Zechariah 11:12-13, Luke 22:47-48, Matthew 26:14-16
- 28) Messiah's price money would be used to buy a potter's field.  
Zechariah 11:12-13, Matthew 27:9-10
- 29) Messiah would be falsely accused.  
Psalm 35:11, Mark 14:57-58
- 30) Messiah would be silent before his accusers.  
Isaiah 53:7, Mark 15:4-5
- 31) Messiah would be spat upon and struck.  
Isaiah 50:6, Matthew 26:67
- 32) Messiah would be hated without cause.  
Psalm 35:19, Psalm 69:4, John 15:24-25
- 33) Messiah would be crucified with criminals.  
Isaiah 53:12, Matthew 27:38, Mark 15:27-28
- 34) Messiah would be given vinegar to drink.  
Psalm 69:21, Matthew 27:34, John 19:28-30

- 35) Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.  
Psalm 22:16, Zechariah 12:10, John 20:25-27
- 36) Messiah would be mocked and ridiculed.  
Psalm 22:7-8, Luke 23:35
- 37) Soldiers would gamble for Messiah's garments.  
Psalm 22:18, Luke 23:34, Matthew 27:35-36
- 38) Messiah's bones would not be broken.  
Exodus 12:46, Psalm 34:20, John 19:33-36
- 39) Messiah would be forsaken by God.  
Psalm 22:1, Matthew 27:46
- 40) Messiah would pray for his enemies.  
Psalm 109:4, Luke 23:34
- 41) Soldiers would pierce Messiah's side.  
Zechariah 12:10, John 19:34
- 42) Messiah would be buried with the rich.  
Isaiah 53:9, Matthew 27:57-60
- 43) Messiah would resurrect from the dead.  
Psalm 16:10, Psalm 49:15, Matthew 28:2-7, Acts 2:22-32
- 44) Messiah would ascend to heaven.  
Psalm 24:7-10, Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51
- 45) Messiah would be seated at God's right hand.  
Psalm 68:18, Psalm 110:1, Mark 16:19, Matthew 22:44
- 46) Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin.  
Isaiah 53:5-12, Romans 5:6-8

47) Messiah would return a second time.

Daniel 7:13-14, Revelation 19<sup>80</sup>

Although Fairchild's list only includes forty-seven prophetic fulfillments, this author has seen other similar works that claim one hundred. If one were to take the time to read every one of the Old Testament scriptures and passages listed above (as this author has), one soon realizes that some of them seem to be "grasping at straws."

For example, the first one, the "Messiah would be born of a woman," or the sixteenth and twenty-fourth one: the "Messiah would be a prophet" and the "Messiah would be a King." To this author, this would be akin to saying: the "Messiah will eat food and be subject to gravity."

Therefore, while some passages may hardly seem that prophetic, and others used without consideration of either the historical or literary context of the passage, we can see as the Roman's surely did, that "prophecy," like beauty, "is in the eye of the beholder." Once again, if one were to ask a rabbi to comment on Fairchild's list of forty-seven above, one would get an entirely different interpretation, and would be shown another list of verses that show why Jesus was not, and could not have been the Jewish Messiah.

The Roman point of view can be seen in the passage from Josephus shown at the beginning of this chapter that shows the contempt the Rome had for prophecy and its ability to deceive, even many of the "wise men."

The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this Oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure, and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter 5.4)*

Therefore, considering the plethora of prophecies inherent in Hebraic literature, from the Tora to "ambiguous oracles" to sectarian Jewish sources, it would have been easy for the Romans to come up with a storyline for their Messiah.

To launch the Gospel project, one can almost picture Titus or some member of his inner circle taking the same steps that producers use today to make movies, where no

shooting ever starts before there is a script and a storyboard in hand.

One can take a step back in time and imagine Titus having a meeting with a committee of Hellenized Jews (likely Tiberius Alexander and Bernice) and arranging for the Alexanders (who likely had direct access to Philo's scribes and servants) to be issued the first in a series of research and writing contracts, likely issued by Roman Imperial Cult.

In such a scenario, one can also imagine that the first "deliverable" was to comb through the Tora Scrolls and every other known source of Jewish Messianic literature, and copy and record every single passage that hinted of being a Messianic prophecy, such as Fairchild's list of forty-seven above.

Once all confiscated Jewish literature was rounded up and in Roman hands, considering the status, wealth, and likely material and political gains to be realized from the project, we can imagine that the tasks contracted to the families of "contractors" would not have taken long to complete.

Once the "prophetic list" was in hand, which was probably much more extensive than the one above, we can imagine that a second contract could have been issued to create a general script and a "storyboard" around that list. One that would also develop concurrently with Titus's military campaign. We can imagine that this too would not be too difficult, especially if it was tackled by a team of Jewish Torah experts and Jewish / Roman scribes, with help rendered by a team of chroniclers from the Roman Imperial Cult.

Although Atwill contends in online interviews that the Gospels are also a Flavian "vanity piece," this author would like to add a few thoughts to support this claim, albeit from a slightly different perspective.

As one who grew up and has lived in several authoritarian countries where the leader of the country is projected as a supreme authority figure who is beyond criticism and reproach, there will exist an entire bureaucracy whose mission and sole purpose is to promulgate, cultivate and promote, the authority, the "benevolence," and the image of that leader.

Since this bureaucracy has under its domain, control of the press, segments of the legal system and sectors of the military, it does not need to receive direct instructions from the leader to create propaganda, erect statues of the leader, or build bridges or buildings with the leader's name or face on them.

Rather, these agencies do so because this is their mission and their job, and the bureaucrats who are typically hand-picked by the leader or the leader's inner circle to run those agencies (like Joseph Goebbels who was Reich Minister of Propaganda minister for the Nazis) do so because their own benefit and survival within the regime is based on how effectively they carry out the job. And, as with all fascist authoritarian regimes, they know they

will be removed, demoted or punished, if they do not effectively carry out the job.

This reality, which exists today in the twenty-first century, was no different in ancient Rome with the Roman Imperial Cult. By the time the Flavians arrived on the scene, the Roman Imperial Cult was a Roman institution whose role and function are summarized in the online encyclopedia synopsis below:

The Roman Imperial Cult identified emperors and some members of their families with the divinely sanctioned authority (*auctoritas*) of the Roman State. Its framework was based on Roman and Greek precedents, and was formulated during the early Principate of Augustus. It was rapidly established throughout the empire and its provinces, with marked local variations in its reception and expression.

The Maison Carrée in Nîmes, one of the best-preserved Roman temples. It is a mid-sized Augustan provincial temple of the imperial cult. Augustus's reforms transformed Rome's Republican system of government to a de facto monarchy, couched in traditional Roman practices and Republican values. The princeps (Emperor) was expected to balance the interests of the Roman military, Senate and people, and to maintain peace, security and prosperity throughout an ethnically diverse empire.

The official offer of cultus to a living emperor acknowledged his office and rule as divinely approved and constitutional: his Principate should therefore demonstrate pious respect for traditional Republican deities and mores. The imperial cult was inseparable from that of Rome's official deities, whose cult was essential to Rome's survival and whose neglect was therefore treasonous.<sup>81</sup>

By adding the additional context above, this author is not saying that the Flavian Caesars were not ego-maniacal sociopaths who were not motivated by vanity, but simply pointing out that regardless of whether it is a great wall, a great pyramid, a great coliseum, a grandiose unfinished hotel, or the writing of prophetic propaganda, it is easy to turn “a desert into an oasis” in a short period, when a “regime” of individuals have total control over an army of “worker ants” tasked to carry out the work.

## Summary

Considering the above, we can see that after all the source material was identified and confiscated, and every conceivable Messianic prophecy pulled out and analyzed from that material, the Hebraic prophecies that Rome would claim had all along predicted the coming of the Flavians, would create the following Messiah storyline outline that we are all familiar with.

### Lineage and Birth

- He would be a prophet from the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David (Judah).
- He would be born in Bethlehem, from a virgin.
- A messenger would precede him.
- He would hold three titles: he would be a Messiah in the tradition of Melchizedek (perpetual King-Priest), he would be a Messiah who was the “Son of God,” and he would be a Messiah who was the “Son of Man.”

### Ministry

- Like the Great Prophet in the Oracle of Hystaspes and the esteemed teachers Matthias and Menahem the Essene mentioned by Josephus, he would be a wise and influential teacher / leader and would speak in parables.
- His Galilean and Jerusalem ministries would prophetically foretell Titus’s military activities and campaign.

### Rejection and Excommunication

- Like Menahem the Essene, he would be rejected and excommunicated by the Pharisees and his own people.
- Like the Matthias mentioned by Josephus, he would be taken before a member of

the Herod family and accused of “sacrilege before God.”

- Like Menahem the Essene, he would be questioned by a member of Herod’s family and like Menahem the Essene, would remain silent before King Herod and his Jewish accusers.
- He would be charged with blasphemy by Jewish authorities for violating Jewish law and executed by Jewish authorities after Roman authorities had protested his innocence and washed their hands of Jewish demands.
- He would be betrayed and crucified with criminals.

#### Resurrection and Return

- Like the Great Prophet in the Oracle of Hystaspes, and the Matthias mentioned by Josephus, he would rise again on the third day.
- Like the Great Prophet in the Oracle of Hystaspes, and the Matthias mentioned by Josephus, he would ascend to heaven and be seated at God’s right hand.
- Like the Son of Man in Daniel seven, he would return in the clouds of heaven: “At that time they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and with great glory” (Luke 21:27).

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

Although most are familiar with the Gospel storyline above, what we could not see until Atwill gave us the “key,” is the way Jesus’s ministry is laid out in the same sequence as Titus’s

military campaign. What we could not see or appreciate is how Jesus's ministry brilliantly acts as a satirical prophecy that is fulfilled by Titus's military campaign.

As we can see from all the above, once the general storyline and cast of characters were agreed upon, we can imagine the next step for the authors would have been to fill in, complete, and refine the "script."

While listening in on many of Atwill's podcasts and interviews, this author has often heard Atwill say: "we must give the devil his due." This author could not agree more. Although we are reading political propaganda, the entire typological composition that includes the Gospels and virtually all of Josephus' other works is indeed, in this author's view, a literary masterpiece! One that, thanks to *Caesar's Messiah*, we can see and appreciate in all its fullness.

Naturally, when a group of people or "regime" controls the state and all of its assets and resources, it is not difficult to "gerrymander" and "cherry-pick" a list of prophecies from multiple literary sources to come up with a propaganda "script" that promotes the state's political goals and objectives.

As *Caesar's Messiah* shows, given the contempt that Romans had for a religion that they felt was irrational, archaic and superstitious (but tried to accommodate as best they could, according to Josephus), and Messianic literature that Rome also saw as works of delusion subject to "the eye of the beholder," Rome set out to prove that they too could create Messianic literature using all the known Jewish sources, and do it better than the Jews.

Although this chapter's primary focus is on the Gospels' *storyline* and not the entire *structure* of the Gospels, it is important to point out that some literary analysts and cultural anthropologists have long noticed that the Gospel of Matthew, the longest Gospel, can be subdivided into five distinct themes, modeled after the five books of the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

To these scholars, analysis of Matthew shows it was written by the Romans as a satiric parody, designed to serve as a substitute or "imitation" version of the Torah, which the Romans had confiscated and banned the Jews from reading after the war.

Through literary analysis, this same group of scholars have concluded that while Matthew seems to have been the "master template," the Gospels of Mark and Luke were then changed and written around the style and convention of a Greek (Homer) and Roman epic (Virgil). Therefore, according to these scholars, what the synoptic Gospels actually represent are three classical literary epics: a Jewish one (Matthew), a Greek one (Mark), and a Roman one (Luke).<sup>82</sup> A thesis that this author also agrees with.

*\*Epic: Classical epics are marked by at least the illusion of orality, where a speaker tells a story, presumably of events that he has either witnessed himself or heard tell of, typically involving a protagonist or hero who are great warriors or national heroes. The gods play an active and important role in the stories, often intervening in the affairs of men to change the course of events. (<http://karolus.net/epic.html>)*

## *Chapter Eight*

### **Lost in Translation**

As one who has lived in foreign lands and speaks other languages besides English, one soon learns that there are many nuances particular to a culture and a language that are difficult, if not impossible, to translate.

Some phrases, idioms, jokes or names are simply not possible to translate that capture the essence of the meaning in the native language. It is here that this author has a special sense of empathy for non-Christian Jews who are surrounded by an army of now-Jewish “biblical experts” who are prone to pontificate on matters, terms and words that all derive from the Jewish religion, culture and language.

This is akin to non-Chinese speaking foreigners making their livings professing to be experts in matters that require some native knowledge and understanding of the Chinese language and its literature, who, at the same time lack all such knowledge. It is not that only native speakers can understand or translate a foreign language, but to not bother to consult with the native speaker on matters related to their language and meanings is to risk getting “lost in translation.”

This problem is especially prevalent when translating names from one language to another, or in the case of the Gospels, when a name is translated from Hebrew to Greek. Since many Hebrew names also have a meaning behind them, not only will the name undergo a pronunciation change, much of its meaning in the original language (if there was one) will be lost.

For example, Messiah or “Mashiach” in Hebrew becomes “Christos” in Greek, and Eleazar or “El'azar” in Hebrew becomes “Lazarus” in Greek. The problem is not limited to Hebrew and Greek, and exists when any name is changed into another language where, for example, “Charles” in English becomes “Carlos” in Spanish, or “Wong” in Chinese becomes “Wang” in English.

With this “lost in translation” dilemma in mind, we now turn our attention to three English names that we are familiar with in the Gospels, and the English name “Josephus,” and examine these names in Hebrew. Four important names that, in this author’s view, have become “lost in translation.” The four names are: Matthew, Judas, Jesus and Josephus.

## Matthew

We start with the name “Matthew,” which became a popular name for boys thanks to Matthew the Apostle. In Christian tradition, Matthew is one of the twelve apostles of Jesus and the author of the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew. In the synoptic Gospels, Matthew is described as a tax collector.

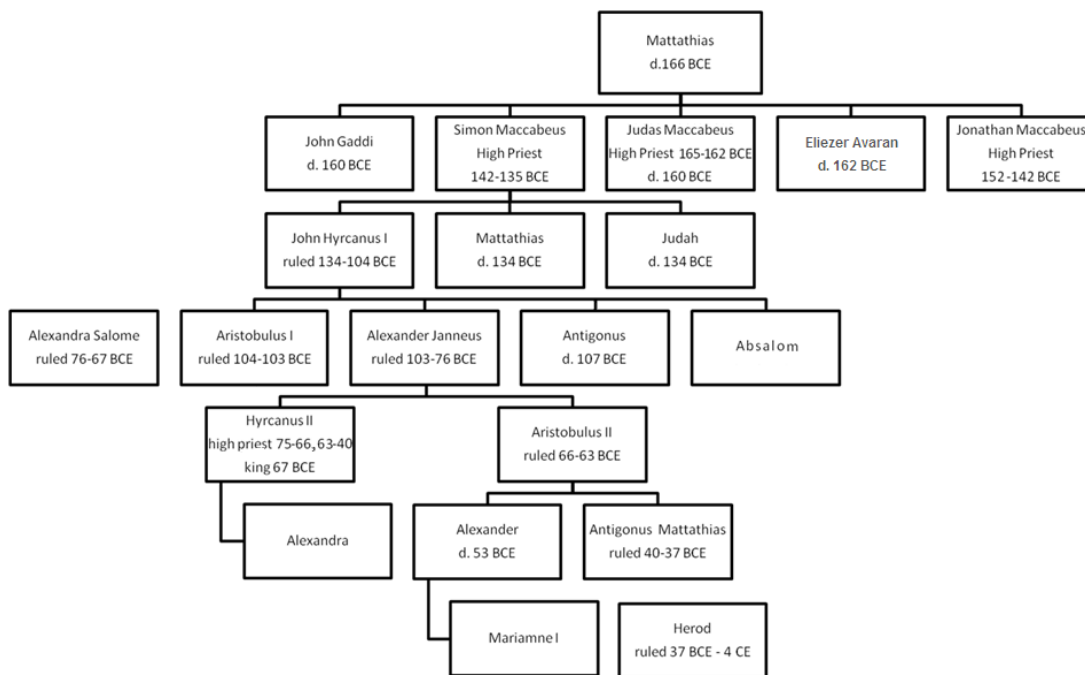
To better understand the name’s Hebrew roots, we look to Jeff A. Benner from the *Ancient Hebrew Research Center* who gives us insight into the Hebrew word “Matityahu,” from which the Greek word “Matthias” and the English word “Matthew” come from.

*And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles. (RSV, Acts 1:26)*

To replace Judas, the disciples cast lots for the new apostle, and the lot fell on Matthias, which in the Greek is written as *Mat-thai-os*. The Greek for Matthias is very similar; *Mat-thi-as*. Both *Matthaios* and *Matthias* are Greek forms of the Hebrew name מַתִּיתָיָה (*matityah*), which we previously found to be מַתָּה (*matat*, Strong's #4991) meaning "gift" or "reward," and the name יָה (*Yah*, Strong's #3050) and when combined, this name means "gift of Yah" or "reward of Yah."<sup>83</sup>

Since *Caesar’s Messiah* shows the apostles are literary images of the Maccabees, it is not surprising that the authors of the Gospels would choose Matthew (Matthias) to be the author of its first book.

Matthias was the author of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucids, and father of five sons (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan) who carried on their father’s rebellion and founded the Maccabean dynasty. Matthias, whose full name was Mattathias ben Johanan, was an Aaronic priest from Modiin.



Block diagram shows the descendants of Matthias

Image credit: Wikipedia Commons

Therefore, we can see the cleverness of the Gospel authors who, after Jesus's death and resurrection, had the apostles meet in Jerusalem where they cast lots and chose Matthias over Joseph, called Barsabbas, to replace the Judas who betrayed Jesus.

Thanks to *Caesar's Messiah*, given what we now know of the typological pattern of the characters in the Gospels, the selection of Matthias was no accident and was done to show that the Romans had indeed “grafted” a new branch and “father” of the Maccabean dynasty onto the old lineage and father of the dynasty.

The significance of the name Matthias (Matthew) can also be seen in the revolt of 4 BCE to 6 CE discussed in previous chapters where Judas and Matthias inspired their young companions to pull down the golden eagle over the Temple gate Herod had erected, and were then burned alive and not given the respect of a burial because of it.

As we have shown in the previous chapter, since Matthias is the only name singled out by Josephus when he tells us who Herod had burned alive, it shows that Matthias was more prominent than Judas (the oldest son of Matthias Maccabee). If the event was fictional, and the name Matthias was deliberately chosen, then this also shows the satirical importance of the name to the author(s).

If the leader who was burned alive was in fact named Matthias and was in fact an actual historical figure, then it is possible that the character Jesus Christ in the Gospels may have been based on this Matthias.

As the father of the Maccabean dynasty, the lampoon of Matthias in the synoptic Gospels books (Matthew, Mark and Luke) is then made complete with “insult added to injury” by all three accounts emphasizing that the apostle Matthew was a tax collector. Since the aftermath of the revolts that followed the killing of Judas and Matthias are described by Josephus as originating in Galilee, which in first century Judea was a Zealot anti-tax hotbed, we can surmise that Matthias and Judas were from there as well.

As Chad Ashby, M. Div. in biblical and Theological Studies posts on his website *After+Math*:

Matthew’s Gospel is often summed up by the theme ‘Jesus is the King.’ In many ways, this is accurate. However, the irony and beauty of Matthew’s Gospel is that Jesus is not merely the King of the Jews—read ‘Judahites.’ He is the King of the Gentiles—read ‘Nations.’ Matthew introduces Jesus as the Anointed Son of David who begins his ministry as a light to the Gentiles in Galilee (Matthew 4). In Matthew, Jesus’s ministry takes place exclusively outside of Jerusalem.

When Jesus finally comes riding toward the city of Jerusalem on a donkey, it is his first and final visit in Matthew’s narrative. He is celebrated by his fellow Galilean pilgrims outside of the city gates, but when he enters the city, Jerusalem’s response is, “Who is this?!” (Matthew 21:10) They are deeply disturbed by the uproar the Galilean leader has caused.<sup>84</sup>

## Judas

The name “Judas” is another important name and character in the Gospels that, in this author’s view, has become “lost in translation.” As with Matthias, to better understand the name’s Hebrew roots, we look to Jeff A. Benner.

The name Judas is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Judah, in Hebrew יהודה (ye-hu-dah, Strong's #3063). Most Hebrew dictionaries will define this name as "praise," but as this English word is an abstract word it falls short of its true Hebraic meaning. The parent root of this word is י' (yad, Strong's #3027)

meaning "hand." The child root יָד (Y.D.H, Strong's #3034) is derived from yad and means "to throw or stretch out the hand" and is the base root in the name Yehudah.

If you were standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon for the first time you might throw your hands out and say "Wow, will you look at that." This is the Hebraic understanding of "praise" and the name Yehudah.<sup>85</sup>

The name Judah was a common name for Jewish men during the first century CE because of the renowned hero, Judas Maccabeus. Unfortunately, although the names “Judas” and “Judah” are mentioned throughout the Gospels and in all of Josephus’s works, they are actually the same name. As a result, much of the hidden meaning and satire found in the Gospels are missed if this name is not fully understood.

For example, let us take the story of Joseph in the Old Testament.

It was Judah who spoke up to his brothers saying, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” So, they sold Joseph, the child of blessing, to Ishmaelite traders for twenty shekels of silver (Genesis 37:27-28).

In the Gospels, we find Judas Iscariot, ‘one of the twelve’ (Matt. 26:14), acting out this same role as he, like Judah who betrayed his brother Joseph, betrays Jesus—the son of Joseph—into the hands of the conspiring religious leaders for thirty pieces of silver.<sup>86</sup>

Another example that parallels Judas’s betrayal of Jesus is the story of Absalom and David in 2 Samuel 14, as told by Chad Ashby on his website *After+Math*:

King David’s son, Absalom wins the hearts of the people and usurps the throne, chasing his father David out of Jerusalem and sending him on the run for his life. Betraying his own father, Absalom leads the people in Jerusalem to reject David as their King. After a few years of rebellion, Absalom ends up dead, hanging from a tree by his hair.

In similar fashion, Judas betrays the heir to the throne of David, playing the leading role with all of Jerusalem in rejecting Jesus from being their King. Like Absalom, Judas himself ends hanging dead from a tree.<sup>87</sup>

Adding to the name confusion is the English word “Jew,” which originates from the biblical Hebrew word “Yehudi,” meaning “from the Kingdom of Judah,” or, in a more religious meaning: “worshipper of one God.” Over time, the English word “Jew” is an anglicizing of the word “Judahites,” or “Judeans.”

This name and its usage are significant because throughout the Gospels, the words “Judas,” “Judah” and “Jew” are used synonymously as a literary device to show that all three names can be used interchangeably to represent either the Jerusalem establishment, the people of Judah, or the individual who betrayed Jesus.

Thus, as Ashby shows, Judas as “Judah” is a vital antagonist in the story told in the Gospels as he represents the sentiments and rejection by the entire people of “Judah,” personifying the statement John writes in his opening chapter: “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:11).

What the Gospel authors are showing, is that the way Judas or ‘Judah’ acted toward Jesus is the way the nation of “Judah” responded to their Messiah.<sup>88</sup>

## Jesus

Perhaps at no time in history has a name ever evoked the emotions and passions in the hearts and minds of men and women, and for as long a time, as the name “Jesus.” When “Christ” is added to the name (either before or after), the two-word name seems to take on another life of its own.

This is not surprising, since, for many, the name represents forgiveness of one’s sins, and hope beyond the grave.

This author will never forget the conversation held with an Israeli friend years ago, where this author asked the Israeli what he thought about Jesus? To this author’s surprise, he answered: “I love Jesus!” Then quickly added, “that is, I love the idea of Jesus!” After a few seconds of silence, he then said: “in a dog-eat-dog world, what is not to love about the personification of an unselfish perfect human being.”

After the comment, the Israeli friend explained how everyone had the name wrong. Intrigued by his comments, later that evening, this author researched the friend’s claims and found what he had said was indeed correct.

The name “Jesus” is incorrect and, therefore, is arguably one of the most misunderstood and mispronounced names on the planet.

This is unfortunate because a name that is “lost in translation” means that the original Hebrew character that the Roman “Savior” was named after, and the reason and significance behind *why* that character from the Torah was chosen, is then “lost” to the reader.

Most people do not know that the name “Jesus” is less than 400 years old. So where did this name come from, and what was the original name given to “Jesus” in the Gospels? To better understand this, it is important to note (as we said earlier) that in Hebraic literature and throughout the Old Testament, Hebrew names have significant meanings behind them.

For example, “Abram” means exalted father, but “Abraham” means father of a multitude. Therefore, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, because: “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.” (Genesis 17:5).

To better understand the name “Jesus” and its Hebrew roots, we again look to the insights of Jeff A. Benner, from the Ancient Hebrew Research Center.

The name "Jesus" has a long, long history. The origin of this name is the Hebrew name **יהושע** (Yehoshu'a, Strong's #3091 [Latinized as Joshua]), which means "Yahweh saves." This Hebrew name is first used Exodus 17:9 where we are introduced to Yehoshu'a ben Nun.

When this Hebrew name was transliterated in the Greek Septuagint (2,000-year-old Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) it was written as Ἰησοῦς (iesous). The Greek alphabet had no "Y" sound, so it used the "I" sound. The Greek alphabet has no consonant "H," or equivalent, so this sound is dropped. The Greek alphabet also had no "Sh" sound, so it used the "S" sound. Then, Greek male names end with "s," so the "s" was added. And this is how **יהושע** (Yehoshu'a) became Ἰησοῦς (iesous) in the Greek.

It is common for names to shift and evolve when transferred from one culture to another. For instance, the German name Ludwig is Louis in France and the Spanish name Juan is John in English speaking countries. The Hebrew name **יהושע** (Yehoshu'a, Strong's #3091) is **ישוע** (Yeshu'a, Strong's #3442 [Latinized as Jeshua]) in the Aramaic language, such as we see in Ezra 2:2.

When this Aramaic name was transliterated in the Greek Septuagint, they used the same method as stated above and it comes out to Ἰησοῦς (iesous), the same as it did for Yehoshu'a.

When we come to the New Testament period, we find that the name of the Messiah is Ἰησοῦς (iesous) in the Greek New Testament, but we find that it is **ישוע** (Yeshu'a) in the Aramaic New Testament. When the Greek New Testament was translated into Latin in the fourth century this name was written as Iesus, an exact match to the Greek that it came from. The Latin letter "I" split into two letters, "I" and "J." Originally this was two different ways of writing the same letter.

So, the Iesus became Jesus, but they were both pronounced the same way. Years later, some cultures began using the "I" for the vowel sound and "J" for a "Y" sound. It was not until around AD 1500 that the letter J took on the "dg" sound we are familiar with today.

So, the modern name "Jesus" comes from the Latin Iesus, which comes from the Greek Iesous, which comes from the Aramaic Yeshu'a and the Hebrew Yehoshu'a.<sup>89</sup>

Benner's analysis of how the "Yeshu'a" turned into "Jesus" can be easily confirmed by other Hebrew-speaking Jewish scholars, and is summarized below.

1. The Hebrew name Yeshu'a means salvation, the Lord saves, the Lord is salvation, or the Lord will save.
2. The word we know today as "Jesus" has been in use for less than 400 years, as evidenced by the 1611 King James Bible which spells the name "Iesus" (ee-ay-sooce), nor for that matter are the names: "Jehovah" "Judah" "Joseph" "Jacob" "Jerusalem" "John" or "Joshua" found in the original 1611 KJV.
3. The name Iesus was used in Greek, Latin and English until the seventeenth century when the letter "J" was used as a replacement for the letter "I" when used as consonant. However, it was still pronounced Iesus for many years until

it was replaced with the J sound. This means the use of the word “Jesus” is a fairly recent development in the English Language.

4. If the name were translated directly from Hebrew into English, it would be “Joshua,” because Joshua of the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament are the same name in both Hebrew and Greek. This can be seen in the book of Acts when Joshua is referenced his name is identical in Greek to the name of Jesus in Greek. Likewise, in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, Joshua is also translated into the Greek word “Iesus.”
5. When the Old Testament Hebrew text was translated into English, they phonetically translated “Yehoshua” into “Joshua,” and when they translated the New Testament Greek text into English, they phonetically translated “Iesus” into “Jesus.”
6. What is always found in the original KJV is “Iesus” (ee-ay-sooce), a curious translation of the Aramaic “Yeshua,” the Hebrew equivalent of the name “Yehoshua.”
7. Yehoshua is found 218 times in the Tanak (Old Testament). The revised translators renamed him “Joshua.”<sup>90</sup>

This is further corroborated by the two English versions of the New Testament; the King James Version, and the Complete Jewish Bible, and their versions of Matthew 1:21 are shown below:

#### King James Version

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name *Jesus*: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

#### Complete Jewish Bible

She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him *Yeshua*, [which means ‘Adonai saves,’] because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

The reason the authors of the Gospels chose Yehoshua (Yeshu'a) or "Joshua" for their Messiah was no accident or mistake. In Judea in the first century CE, "Yeshu'a," the shortened form of "Yehoshua," was common and popular around Jerusalem, as seen on many ossuaries from that time period. So why name the Roman Messiah Joshua? To answer this question, we need to look at who Joshua was in the Old Testament (Torah).

Joshua or "Jehoshua" functioned as Moses's assistant in the books of Exodus and Numbers and later succeeded Moses as leader of the Israelite tribes in the Hebrew Bible's Book of Joshua. His name was Hoshea, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, but Moses called him "Joshua," the name by which he is commonly known in English.

According to the Bible, Joshua was born in Egypt prior to the Exodus. The Hebrew Bible identifies Joshua as one of the twelve spies of Israel sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan. In Numbers 13:1, and after the death of Moses, he led the Israelite tribes in the conquest of Canaan, and allocated lands to the tribes.

After Moses's death, Joshua, who was Moses' second-in-command, becomes Moses' successor and leads the Israelites into the Promised Land. Therefore, Joshua is one of the Bible's greatest military leaders for leading the seven-year conquest of the Promised Land and is often held up as a model for leadership and a source of practical application showing how to be an effective leader.<sup>91</sup>

From the Jewish website: <https://free.messianicbible.com/> we are also given an insightful analysis as to the significance of Joshua's original name (in Hebrew) and why Moses changed it.

In the Tanakh (Jewish Bible), the names Yeshua and Yehoshua are mentioned almost thirty times and are given to five different men. They are frequently translated interchangeably as Joshua; for example, in Ezra 3:2, there is a reference to Joshua / Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) son of (בֶּן) Jozadak (יֹזָאדָק), one of the priests in the time of Zerubbabel after the return from the exile in Babylon.

Many English translations of Ezra 3:2 use the name Jeshua (Yeshua) instead of Joshua. In Zechariah 3 and 6, this same man is called Yehoshua (Joshua). The first instance of Yehoshua is in Exodus: Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) Ben (בֶּן) Nun (נֹחַן), most often translated as Joshua son of Nun, who was Moses's assistant and led the Israelites into the Promised Land.

In Numbers 13:8, however, Joshua is called Hoshea (הושע) ben Nun, one of the spies sent out by Moses to scout out the land of Canaan. The name Hoshea means he saves. But that was not accurate enough for Joshua's mission in life.

Moses changes his name to Yehoshua by taking Hoshea and adding the letter yud, which comes from the yud in YHWH, the divine name. In doing this, Moses changed Joshua's name to mean YHWH is salvation or YHWH saves, delivers. "These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Yehoshua.)" (Numbers 13:16).

As an example of the interchangeability of Yehoshua and Yeshua in later books of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and among the Jews of the Second Temple period, in Nehemiah 8:17, Joshua son of Nun, usually called Yehoshua ben Nun, is called Yeshua Ben Nun. "From the days of Joshua [ישוע—Yeshua] son of Nun until that day...."

The Talmud (Rabbinic teachings) mentions the name Yeshua only once in reference to Yeshua ben Jozadek (whom we mentioned above). All other instances of the name Joshua are Yehoshua, although the name for one man—Yeshua of Nazareth—is rendered Yesu (ישו).<sup>92</sup>

Considering all the above, we can now see why the Roman authors of the Gospels picked the name "Yeshu'a" or "Joshua" for their Messiah. As Atwill points out in *Caesar's Messiah*, although "Jesus" was constructed from the lives of several prophets in the Jewish Canon (Elijah, Elisha) and was also constructed to be the prophet envisioned by Daniel, "the character he was primarily based upon was Moses."<sup>93</sup>

Since it would have been inappropriate to name the prophet who was to be the new successor to Moses by the same name, and since the whole point of the Gospels is to show that the real Messiah who would "save" Israel envisioned and foretold by all the prior Jewish prophets was Titus, "Yeshu'a" or Joshua would be the perfect name.

Perfect not only because the Hebrew meaning of the name means salvation, but also perfect because Joshua had been appointed a replacement for Moses, where the new leader and covenant mediator is Joshua.

Like Moses, Jesus will deliver the Jews from bondage and sin, and, like Joshua, Jesus will be the one who brings both Israel and the gentiles into the eternal Promised Land.<sup>94</sup>

As Atwill outlines in *Caesar's Messiah*: "All four Gospels show, as does Paul, that Passover and Judaism itself are obsolete. Jesus' sacrifice of himself creates a new Passover and a new religion."<sup>95</sup> Although *Caesar's Messiah* does not mention the Transfiguration, in this author's view, the story is worthy of note.

For those readers not familiar with the story, this is where Jesus takes three of his disciples, Peter, James and John and leads them to the top of a mountain to pray. While there, Jesus is "transformed" where his face and clothing are described as shining like "the sun," "a dazzling light," and "bright as a flash of lightning." While Jesus is transfigured, both Moses and Elijah also appear with Jesus (Joshua) also in "glorious splendor."

As Caesar's Messiah oft reiterates, there is nothing inadvertent in the Gospels and all four Gospels and *The Wars of the Jews* were written to be read inter-textually. Therefore, since the Gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell the same story; with all three saying that a voice came from a cloud; with all three saying that the voice said "This is My Son," and with all three then adding "who I love and am well pleased," that then said "that I love," and "that I have chosen," and where all three finish by saying the voice said "listen to him," we can see the length the authors went, to emphasize and make the following three points about their Messiah:

1. That Jesus (Joshua) had fulfilled the Mosaic "first covenant" commandments of the law, but in a manner that the law could not do. "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (Joshua Christ)." - John 1:17.
2. That since Elijah (who was an outstanding figure in the Old Testament and was a great prophet) appeared alongside Moses, this testified that Jesus (Joshua) fulfilled both the prophets and the law.
3. That since the voice of "God the Father" gave the final confirmation that Jesus (Joshua) was also the Son of God who God the Father loved, had chosen, and was well pleased with his son, all were commanded to listen to Him.

When we put ourselves in the shoes of the Roman authors who are crafting the narrative and writing every line and verse as a prophetic foretelling of Titus's military

campaign, we can see that Jesus (Joshua) is never overtly presented as the hero or main character of the story.

This can be seen in all the synoptic Gospels where Jesus never declares himself to be the Messiah, and when others called him the Messiah, his instructions were always that it not be publicly revealed.

As in the narrative of the Transfiguration, Jesus is presented as a great prophet who is always quick to point to the real and main hero who is yet to come, the “Son of Man.” This can be seen in the brilliant manner in which the authors’ subtlety set up the story of the Transfiguration by ending the chapter that immediately precedes it with the following passage.

For the Son of Man is going to come in his father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (Matthew 26: 27-28).

Therefore, thanks to a name that has been “lost in translation” that has since taken on a meaning all of its own, the “Jesus” that has been passed down to us today is mistakenly seen as the main character and hero in the story, “the Messiah.”

If we read the Gospels and substitute the name “Yeshu’a” or Joshua, for “Jesus” as was originally intended by the authors, it becomes immediately apparent that Jesus is not the main character of the story, but plays an important secondary role. A secondary character who is both a great prophet and messenger, a precursor who prepares the way for the main character of the story; the coming “Son of Man,” Titus Flavius.

Now that we have clarified what the correct name should be for Jesus, if any English reader is a frequent user of the words “Jesus” or “Jesus Christ” to express amazement, disbelief, frustration or anger, a more fitting and accurate expression would be: “Joshua” or “Joshua Messiah!”

We make final mention of this here because the character Jesus and the selection of his name Yeshu’a (Joshua) was a fairly common name in first century CE among Jews as seen in the number of “Jesuses” that are also featured and mentioned by Josephus in *The Wars of the Jews*.

This is important to keep in mind because the unfortunate transformation of the Greek word “Iesus” into the unique and one-and-only English name “Jesus,” has created a mystical name and character which has usurped the original name and meaning of the character that

the authors of the Gospels created to play the “co-starring” role in the story, not the starring role.

## Josephus

In this author’s view, Josephus is another name that is “lost in translation” and thus denies the Gospel authors recognition for their literary creativity and total expertise in all matters Jewish.

Considering what we also covered in the previous chapter about the Roman Imperial Cult, it is also this author’s view that it is improbable that a lone individual, Jewish or non-Jewish, single-handedly wrote all the works.

However, given the political objectives of the Gospels that we discussed in earlier chapters, from a Roman perspective, it would be essential that the author of all the works (the Gospels and the works attributed to Josephus) be seen as a Jewish author. And not just any Jewish author, but one that had the credentials and educational / occupational background to give all the works the credibility that Rome hoped all the works would have on lower-class Jews and non-Jews.

From this perspective, if correct, we can see that the nom de plume was also clever because (as we shall see below) of the typological connection that the name “Josephus” had to another important Hebrew name in Genesis, and the important role that individual played in the history and salvation of the Jews.

Josephus’ English name, Titus Flavius Josephus, born Yosef ben Matityahu (Hebrew: יוסף בן מתתיהו Yosef ben Matityāhu) or Yosef son of Matthias, suffers from the same problem as that of Jesus, in that “Josephus” is the English translation of the Greek name *Iōsēpos*. In Hebrew, the name is “Yosef,” meaning “to add.”<sup>96</sup>

This verb becomes a name in the book of Genesis when Rachel, the second wife of Jacob, finally bears a son after many years of infertility.

Then God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach”; and she called his name Joseph, saying, “May the Lord add to me another son!” (Genesis 30:22-24) And she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son. (KJV, Genesis 30:24)<sup>97</sup>

Just as “Yehoshua” was translated “Jesus” in Greek, “Yosef” is translated “*Iōsēpos*” in Greek, which then is translated “Josephus” in English. This means that Josephus is actually the same name as Joseph in the book of Genesis.

Joseph, the boy who was given a coat of many colors by his father who was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, who rose to become vizier, the second most powerful man in Egypt next to Pharaoh, where his presence and office enabled Israel to leave Canaan and settle in Egypt.<sup>98</sup>

Therefore, just as Joseph in Genesis had been put into an empty cistern by his brothers before he was betrayed and sold to merchants traveling to Egypt, in *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus tells how he and forty of his companions escaped to a cave during the siege of Jotapata, where he then surrendered to the Romans.

Just as Joseph remained in prison for two more years after interpreting a dream for Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and baker, who then remembered Joseph and brought him before Pharaoh to interpret a dream that others could not interpret, Josephus was imprisoned for two years before he was released by Vespasian after prophesying before Vespasian that he would become "... not only Lord over me, but over the land and the sea, and all humankind."

Just as Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh's dream that Egypt would see seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, Josephus received a divine revelation that led to his speech before Vespasian:

Thou, O Vespasian, art Caesar and emperor, thou, and this thy son. Bind me now still faster, and keep me for thyself, for thou, O Caesar, are not only Lord over me, but over the land and the sea, and all humankind; and certainly, I deserve to be kept in closer custody than I now am in, in order to be punished, if I rashly affirm anything of God.<sup>99</sup>

Just as Joseph had been used by God to serve the Egyptians as part of God's master plan for the redemption of the Israelites, God had selected and chosen Josephus to do the same through the Romans.

This is also why the authors gave Jesus's father the name Yosef (Joseph). Following the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, Yosef (Joseph) is told by an angel in a dream to take the family to Egypt to escape the massacre of the children of Bethlehem planned by Herod. Once Herod has died, an angel then tells Yosef (Joseph) to return, but when he learned that Herod's son Archelaus was reigning over Judea, he was afraid to go there and, being warned in a dream, takes his wife Mary and the child to Nazareth in Galilee and settles there.

In the Gospel of Matthew, like Moses, the infant Jesus is in peril from a cruel King. Like Moses, he has an ancestor named Yosef (Joseph) who goes down to Egypt, and like the

Yosef (Joseph) of Genesis, the Yosef (Joseph) who is the father of Jesus, also has a father named Jacob.

Considering all the above, since in both stories the two Yosefs (Josephs) receive important dreams foretelling their future, in this author's view, the authors of the Gospels are giving the reader a subtle clue that the "father" of Jesus is also the "father" or author of the Gospels.

### Summary

In summary, we can see from their Hebrew names that the names given to the Gospel's main characters, Matthias, Judah, Yeshu'a and Yosef, and the name given to the author of *The Wars of the Jews* and his other works, was no accident.

They were names deliberately chosen as typological parallels, linking them to previous important names and characters (prophets) from the Torah. Although Atwill shows the typological connection between Jesus and Moses in *Caesar's Messiah*, that work does not focus on the typological connection between some of the other Gospel names and characters shared above.

In Yosef's (Josephus's) case, naturally, we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that someone on the Roman team (possibly a relative of Philo or Tiberius Alexander) was actually named "Yosef." However, as we mentioned earlier, it defies credulity to think that any single Jewish person could have the child prodigy background that Josephus (Yosef) claimed, and be from both a priestly and royal Jewish family, and also have been a member of all sects that Josephus (Yosef) claimed.

Therefore, given the Hebrew meaning and significance of the name "Yosef," we can surmise that for the Romans, the selection of the name that would be penned on all the works that supported the Gospels, was more important to them and their literary creation, than the believability of the author's background.

Although the main purpose of this chapter is to examine the Jewish meaning and "historical" background of the *names of individuals* mentioned above, there is one other important word (not an individual's name) that, in this author's view, has become massively misunderstood and misused because the word also suffers from the "lost in translation" dilemma. The word "Gospel."

The English word "Gospel" comes from the old English word "God-spell" which means "good news" and comes from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion), pronounced "you-an-gellion."

In Greek, “ea.” means good, and “angelion” means message or news. The noun occurs seventy-six times in the New Testament, eight times in the Gospel of Mark, and four times in the Gospel of Matthew. At the time the Gospels were written, secular use of the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) was common to the Roman world and used to describe the good news of a military victory, the emperor’s birthday, or the emperor’s presence in a particular place.

An example of how the word was used by the Romans can be seen in an inscription found in Priene, which, during the time of Jesus, was a city in the Roman province of Asia Minor in modern-day Turkey. The stone inscription has been dated to 9 BCE and is a letter written in Greek from Proconsul Paulus Fabius Maximus. A section of the letter speaks of the birthday of the God Augustus, where the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus is referred to as a God and his birthday is the beginning of the εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) or the “good news” or “good tidings” for the world. (*Source: New Testament Words: εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) / Geoffrey Plant*).

Considering the above, we can see that the Roman selection of the word εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) from which comes the modern English word “evangelical” (which has unfortunately taken on a new meaning of its own), to serve as a prefix for the names of their three literary epics, where it was used twice as many times in Mark, (Greek epic) than in Matthew (Jewish epic), was surely no accident and shows the word was a political one.

Just as Caesar Augustus had used the word and meaning to describe the beginning of an era - the beginning of the “Gospel” announcing his kingdom that heralded peace and salvation for his people, the Flavian Caesar’s would now use their three satiric literary epics to do the same.



## *Chapter Nine*

### **Handel's *Messiah***

Unbeknownst to many people, the American rock musician, singer and songwriter Jimi Hendrix (November 27, 1942 - September 18, 1970), lived in the same London apartment block on Brook Street that the German-born composer George Frederic Handel lived in two centuries before.

The Handel House Museum is located in a Georgian house in Mayfair, London and is dedicated to the composer George Frederic Handel. The Museum is actually two houses, number 25 and number 23. Number 25 was the home of Handel in the 1700s, while number 23 was the home of rock star Jimi Hendrix in the 1960s. Almost all of Handel's works after 1723 were composed in this house, including the *Messiah*, *Zadok the Priest*, and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*.<sup>100</sup>

Since it is this author's view that the Gospels and *The Wars of the Jews* is a literary masterpiece on the same par with Handel's musical masterpiece *Messiah*, for those not familiar with Handel's *Messiah*, let us see what the website *Handel & Hendrix in London*: (<https://handelhendrix.org/>) shows about the work from their Handel's *Messiah* factsheet.

The *Handel & Hendrix in London* website describes their mission as follows:

Our mission is to promote knowledge, awareness and enjoyment of Handel and his music to as wide a public audience as possible. We strive to inspire, educate and inform through the interpretation of the Georgian house at twenty-five Brook Street, where Handel lived and composed for thirty-six years, through live music performances, educational and outreach activities and collecting, exhibiting and interpreting objects related to Handel's life and works.

In addition, we aim to promote the continuing and diverse musical and cultural heritage of twenty-three Brook Street through its association with Jimi Hendrix who lived here in the late twentieth century.

## *Messiah* Factsheet

Handel wrote *Messiah* in 1741 at twenty-five Brook Street, in only twenty-four days. The work was written by Handel's good friend Charles Jennens, who collaborated with Handel for many other works, including *Saul* (1753-9) and *Belshazzar* (1744-5). The words were taken from the Bible and tell of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jennens used a compilation of extracts from the King James Bible and from the Psalms included in the Book of Common Prayer. A portrait of Charles Jennens can be seen in the composition room at Handel House.

*Messiah* is the first instance in the history of music of an attempt to view the mighty drama of human redemption from an artistic standpoint. In contrast with most of Handel's oratorios, the singers in *Messiah* do not assume dramatic roles; there is no single narrative voice, and very little quoted speech is used.

For the first performance, the small orchestra included strings, two trumpets, timpani, organ and harpsichord continuo. This was a relatively sparse orchestra for a large-scale work because the first performance of *Messiah* was to be in Dublin and Handel did not know what instruments would be available to him. Handel added more instruments (oboes and bassoons) for later performances.

*Messiah* is made up of fifty-three pieces of music; twenty-one of which are full chorus pieces.

*Messiah* premiered in Dublin in 1742 and was very well received. The original female soloists were Christina Maria Avoglio and Susanna Cibber. However, for the London premiere (March 1743), the reception was not as warm as it was in Dublin. The press declared that the work's subject matter was too dignified to be performed in a Theater, by secular singers like Cibber, and as a result Handel presented the work as the New Sacred Oratorio instead of *Messiah*. Handel had to adapt his music to fit different venues and to fit different singers. This is why *Messiah* was continually re-worked and revised.

The work gained recognition and eventually became one of the most popular choral works in the history of western music. It has been said that upon hearing the "Hallelujah Chorus" movement of *Messiah*, King George II of England was

reputedly so overcome with emotion that he spontaneously rose to his feet. When the King stands, everyone stands, so the audience immediately rose also. The tradition of standing for the chorus is still observed today in most live performances of *Messiah*. The work has been altered and updated many times since its composition, and was revised by many other musicians, Mozart in particular.

By 1754 Handel was afflicted by the onset of blindness, and in 1755 turned over the direction of *Messiah* to his pupil, J.C. Smith. The final performance of the work at which Handel was present was at Covent Garden on 6 April 1759, eight days before his death.<sup>101</sup>

Although for many, the “Hallelujah Chorus” has become synonymous with the work and the favorite movement for many people, this author’s favorite has always been “And the Glory of the Lord,” which to this author’s ear, is one of the most beautiful choruses every composed. The factsheet below is also from the *Handel & Hendrix in London* website:

#### “And the Glory of the Lord” factsheet

“And the Glory of the Lord” is the first full chorus that appears in *Messiah*; it is the first time in the work that the choir sing.

The words tell of the coming of the Lord (the promised Messiah): “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all the flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

The piece opens with a short orchestral introduction. The first vocal entry is by the altos singing the melody of the orchestral introduction. The other vocal parts then respond to this with the bass line repeating the alto line with the soprano and tenor lines in homophonic harmony. The piece continues with repetition and variation between each vocal line with both polyphonic and homophonic textures.

Handel splits the text into four, creating four separate musical motifs: I. And the glory, the glory of the Lord | II. Shall be re-veal-ed | III. And all flesh shall see it together | IV. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

The chorus follows this basic plan:

1. Presentation and development of the first two motifs (Bar 1-43).
2. Presentation and development of the latter two motifs (Bar 43-73).
3. Combination of all four motifs.

It is a joyous movement which is reflected in the bright key of A major, the allegro tempo and the lilting rhythms.<sup>102</sup>

For those not from a music background, to show the complexity of what it takes for a music composer to write an oratorio like *Messiah* for four vocal parts (soprano, alto, tenor and bass), the chorus and all the orchestral parts, this author has included the first few bars from the sheet music of “And the Glory of the Lord.”

### And the Glory of the Lord

Messiah 1.04  
Georg Friedrich Handel  
1685-1759

The image displays a page from a musical score for the oratorio 'Messiah' by Georg Friedrich Handel. The title 'And the Glory of the Lord' is prominently displayed at the top, along with the work's designation 'Messiah 1.04' and the composer's name and dates. The score is for a full orchestra and choir, with parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trombone, C Trumpet, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The lyrics are in Latin: 'And the glo - ry, the glory of the Lord, the glory of the Lord shall be re - vea - led, and the glo - ry, the glory of the Lord shall be re - vea - led, and the glo - ry, the glory of the Lord shall be re - vea - led.' The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte).

Image credit: Handle Hendrix House

<https://handelhendrix.org/>

Now that we have shown the background and number of parts and components that make up Handel's musical masterpiece, *Messiah* enables us to make the following analogy.

If the Gospels are the four vocal parts of Handel's *Messiah* (soprano, alto, tenor and bass), then *The Wars of the Jews*, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, and all the rest of Josephus' (Yosef's) works are the orchestral score. All together, they make up a complicated and masterful composition, a literary masterpiece of pseudo-history and satire.

Dr. Justin B. Clearsky

A work filled with clever wordplay and puns, a work filled with name and character identification puzzles, a work that puts the reader's memory skills to the test, a work that is chocked full of lampoons and black humor. A work that satirizes prophecy and mocks the notion that men can predict or foresee the future.

### Summary

In modern use, the word “masterpiece” is defined by some dictionaries as a creation in any area of the arts that has been given much critical praise, especially one that is considered the greatest work of a person's career, or a work of outstanding creativity, skill, profundity or workmanship.

With this definition in mind, although this author is not judging or endorsing the moral or ethical content or implications of the Gospels / *The Wars of the Jews* composition (as that is not the emphasis of this work), nor implying that reading the Gospels and Josephus' works, and listening to Handel's *Messiah*, will or should generate the same emotional feeling and response, it is this author's view that all of Josephus' works, including whatever contributions he may have made to the Gospels, when viewed as a whole, is indeed a masterpiece!



## *Chapter Ten*

### **Salieri's Envy**

In the movie *Amadeus*, this author's favorite scene is where, in a meeting with Mozart's wife, the court composer Salieri is shown a folder containing the original scores of her husband Mozart's works.

When Salieri realizes that what he is looking at are first and only drafts of music which showed no corrections of any kind, "not one," he enviously laments how Mozart had: "written down music already finished in his head, page after page of it as if he was taking dictation, and music, finished as no music is ever finished."

Then in his state of bewildered wonderment and envy, Salieri says:

Replace one note and there would be diminishment, replace one phrase and the structure would fall. It was clear to me that sound I had heard in the archbishop's house had been no accident. Here again was the very voice of God. I was staring through the cage of those meticulous strokes at an ABSOLUTE beauty!

As Salieri is caught up in a moment of wonderment and envy, he drops the folder, spilling all the pages of sheet music all over the floor.

When this author first read *Caesar's Messiah*, although it did not evoke the emotional response of longing that Salieri's "ABSOLUTE beauty" and "the voice of God" can indeed induce in men, this author was filled with the same feelings of wonderment, amazement, and "envy" (said with tongue in cheek) that Salieri felt.

Wonder, amazement and envy at what Atwill had discovered. Especially the many puzzles, puns and wordplay that Atwill had found and deciphered in the Gospels / *The Wars of the Jews* masterpiece.

It was the same feeling of wonderment and "envy" that this author felt in 2020 when the "340 cipher," was finally, after fifty-one years, unraveled by a trio of code breakers that all the FBI and all the US intelligence agencies could not decipher.

For those not familiar with the case, the so-called Zodiac Killer first began terrorizing the streets of Northern California between 1968 and 1969, leaving behind a trail of five unsolved murders. The killer was never caught, but gained notoriety by writing letters to

police and local media until 1974, often in code, where he claimed he killed thirty-seven people. Bloody bits of clothing were included with the letters as proof of the claimed actions.<sup>103</sup>

Without going into any detail and giving away the “punchline,” thus denying readers the pleasure of reading Atwill’s works for themselves, this author has compiled below, a partial list of puzzles, puns and wordplay that are interpreted by Atwill in his two works, *Caesar’s Messiah* and *Shakespeare’s Secret Messiah*.

When this author first read the two works, perhaps the best words to describe the wonderment that this author felt when reading each of the puzzles shown below are the words Salieri used to describe Mozart’s gift of musical composition: “astounding” and “beyond belief.”

“Astounded,” that Atwill could figure out what people for the past 2,000 years could not see or figure out. Once deciphered, “beyond belief,” as the only way to describe the genius that is on display in the Gospel / *The Wars of the Jews* masterpiece.

*Caesar’s Messiah, Shakespeare’s Secret Messiah*, deciphered puzzles:

- The deciphering of the “myth for the world.”
- The deciphering of the “myth for the word” three-word wordplay.
- The deciphering of the names given to Mary, Martha, Lazarus and the disciples.
- The deciphering of the pun used on the name Joseph of Arimathea.
- The deciphering of the identities where individuals are described as a “certain young man.”
- The deciphering of the two-part story in the puzzle of the empty tomb.
- The deciphering of “the son/stone cometh.”
- The deciphering of Masada and the identity of the survivors.

- The deciphering of the story timeline to match the prophecies of Daniel.
- The deciphering of the parallel origins of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism.
- The deciphering of Shakespeare's real identity.
- The deciphering of the riddle of how the Temple tax was paid.
- The deciphering of the identity of the two witnesses in Revelation eleven who are described as two olive trees and two lampstands.
- The deciphering the raising of Lazarus, the feast of Lazarus, the cost basis for "sold for more than 300 denarii," and the real use and purpose of the three donkeys.
- The deciphering of the real meaning of "666" in the book of Revelation.
- The deciphering of the book of Revelation, its author and its purpose.

Without the "Rosetta Stone," all the above segments in the Gospels and *The Wars of the Jews* have been enigmas open to speculation and interpretation. With the "Rosetta Stone," all the segments above finally make perfect and brilliant logical sense.

It is here that this author would like to single out two of the puzzles mentioned above. The first is the puzzle of the empty tomb because, in this author's opinion, this puzzle is so ingeniously constructed that one wonders how Atwill ever saw its solution.

Without explaining it in this work, what this author can reveal is a tiny detail that Atwill did not cover. That being, the mathematically perfect way in which the number of women who visit the tomb in each of four accounts increases by one member. However, the number of women who visit in Luke, (unlike Matthew and Mark who mention the number of women at the start of the story), is placed in the middle of the story, so not to make the numeric progression too absurdly obvious.

The second is the puzzle of the Temple tax that begins in Matthew seventeen, which is then brilliantly answered in both Revelation thirteen (in code), with Revelation's "mark of the beast," and also *The Wars of the Jews*. Here too, this author experienced the amazement and "envy of Salieri" wondering how Atwill ever saw it because it is ingeniously disguised and

difficult to spot or see.

### Summary

Some puzzles are easier to solve than others. For example, like everyone else, this author watched in amazement when the American Chess Champion, Bobby Fischer, appeared on the Johnny Carson Show in 1972 and solved a handheld fifteen number puzzle (the precursor to the popular Rubik's Cube puzzle of the 1980s) in seventeen seconds.

Some, like the three men who deciphered the Zodiac "340 cipher" and the Bobby Fischers of the world, seem to be born with the gift. The rest of us mere mortals have to work at it.

Other puzzles do not require complicated math or code-breaking skills, like the sixteen-piece matchstick puzzle shown at the end of chapter one. They just require a keen eye. As mentioned in chapter one, the matchstick puzzle has always fascinated this author because the solution is difficult for the mind to see, and goes to show that sometimes that which hides in plain sight is hardest to see.

For those who have not cracked the matchstick puzzle yet, the solution is to divide the total number of matchsticks (sixteen), by four. In other words, each square, logically, can only have four matchsticks. Therefore, the key to solving the puzzle is to find a way to arrange the configuration so that the four squares do not meet side by side or on top of each other, but at their corners.

In the end, regardless of how Atwill deciphered the Gospels or how long it took him to do it, this author will forever be grateful to the man who gave us the "second Rosetta Stone."

## *Chapter Eleven*

### **Conclusion**

In Book III of *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus (Yosef) tells of a Jewish individual who could not only foretell the outcome (to the day) of a revolt, but could also foretell who God had ordained to rule when that Jew prophesied to the yet-to-be ruler: “Bind me now still faster, and keep me for thyself, for thou, O Caesar, are not only Lord over me, but over the land and the sea, and all humankind.”

Later, in Book VI of *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus (Yosef) tells of a group of Jewish individuals “from the other nobility” who also fled (defected) to the Romans where Vespasian “received these men very kindly in other respects, but knowing they would not willingly live after the customs of other nations.”

However, in that particular account, Josephus does not ascribe leadership of that group of men to a single individual. This account is crucial, because from other historical sources of the day, we can see that an individual from this group also (like Josephus), also ascribed the Jewish Star Prophecy to Vespasian.

Then, in Book XV of *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus (Yosef) tells of yet another Jewish individual who could foretell who God had “seen fit” to rule. The two passages mentioned above from *The Wars of the Jews* are shown below. As we can see from the first passage, the first Jewish individual is none other than Josephus (Yosef) himself:

Thou, O Vespasian, thinks no more than that thou hast taken Josephus himself captive; but I come to Thee as a messenger of greater tidings; for had not I been sent by God to Thee, I knew what was the law of the Jews in this case?<sup>1</sup> and how it becomes generals to die. Dost thou send me to Nero? For why? Are Nero's successors till they come to Thee still alive?

Thou, O Vespasian, art Caesar and emperor, thou, and this thy son. Bind me now still faster, and keep me for thyself, for thou, O Caesar, are not only Lord over me, but over the land and the sea, and all humankind; and certainly, I deserve to be kept in closer custody than I now am in, in order to be punished, if I rashly affirm anything of God."

When he had said this, Vespasian at present did not believe him, but supposed that Josephus said this as a cunning trick, in order to his own preservation; but in a little time, he was convinced, and believed what he said to be true, God himself erecting his expectations, so as to think of obtaining the empire, and by other signs fore-showing his advancement.

He also found Josephus to have spoken truth on other occasions; for one of those friends that were present at that secret conference said to Josephus, "I cannot but wonder how thou couldst not foretell to the people of Jotapata that they should be taken, nor couldst foretell this captivity which hath happened to thyself, unless what thou now sayest be a vain thing, in order to avoid the rage that is risen against thyself." To which Josephus replied, "I did foretell to the people of Jotapata that they would be taken on the forty-seventh day, and that I should be caught alive by the Romans."

Now when Vespasian had inquired of the captives privately about these predictions, he found them to be true, and then he began to believe those that concerned himself. Yet did he not set Josephus at liberty from his hands, but bestowed on him suits of clothes, and other precious gifts; he treated him also in a very obliging manner, and continued so to do, Titus still joining his interest ill the honors that were done him.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book III, Chapter 8.9)*

Some also there were who, watching a proper opportunity when they might quietly get away, fled to the Romans, of whom were the high priests Joseph and Jesus, and of the sons of high priests three, whose father was Ishmael, who was beheaded in Cyrene, and four sons of Matthias, as also one son of the other Matthias, who ran away after his father's death, and whose father was slain by Simon the son of Gioras, with three of his sons, as I have already related; many also of the other nobility went over to the Romans, together with the high priests.

Now Caesar not only received these men very kindly in other respects, but knowing they would not willingly live after the customs of other nations, he sent them to Gophna, and desired them to remain there for the present, and told

them, that when he was gotten clear of this war, he would restore each of them to their possessions again; so they cheerfully retired to that small city which was allotted them, without fear of any danger.

But as they did not appear, the seditious gave out again that these deserters were slain by the Romans, which was done in order to deter the rest from running away, by fear of the like treatment. This trick of theirs succeeded now for a while, as did the like trick before; for the rest were hereby deterred from deserting, by fear of the like treatment.

*(The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter 2.2)*

The third passage from *The Antiquities of the Jews* is shown below, and gives Josephus' (Yosef's) account of a third Jewish individual, Menahem the Essene, with the last sentence of the passage highlighted in italics by this author.

Now there was one of these Essenes, whose name was Manahem, who had this testimony, that he not only conducted his life after an excellent manner, but had the foreknowledge of future events given him by God also.

This man once saw Herod when he was a child, and going to school, and saluted him as King of the Jews; but he, thinking that either he did not know him, or that he was in jest, put him in mind that he was but a private man; but Manahem smiled to himself, and clapped him on his backside with his hand, and said, "However that be, thou wilt be King, and wilt begin thy reign happily, for God finds Thee worthy of it. And do thou remember the blows that Manahem hath given Thee, as being a signal of the change of thy fortune. And truly this will be the best reasoning for Thee, that thou love justice [toward men], and piety toward God, and clemency toward thy citizens; yet do I know how thy whole conduct will be, that thou wilt not be such a one, for thou wilt excel all men in happiness, and obtain an everlasting reputation, but wilt forget piety and righteousness; and these crimes will not be concealed from God, at the conclusion of thy life, when thou wilt find that he will be mindful of them, and punish time for them."

Now at that time Herod did not at all attend to what Manahem said, as having

no hopes of such advancement; but a little afterward, when he was so fortunate as to be advanced to the dignity of King, and was in the height of his dominion, he sent for Manahem, and asked him how long he should reign.

Manahem did not tell him the full length of his reign; wherefore, upon that silence of his, he asked him further, whether he should reign ten years or not? He replied, "Yes, twenty, nay, thirty years;" but did not assign the just determinate limit of his reign.

Herod was satisfied with these replies, and gave Manahem his hand, and dismissed him; and from that time, he continued to honor all the Essen's. *We have thought it proper to relate these facts to our readers, how strange soever they be, and to declare what hath happened among us, because many of these Essenes have, by their excellent virtue, been thought worthy of this knowledge of divine revelations.*

*(The Antiquities of the Jews, Book XV, Chapter 10.5)*

In the second passage above from Book VI of *The Wars of the Jews*, although Josephus does not ascribe leadership of the group of men who fled over to the Romans to a single individual, in *Shakespeare's Secret Messiah*, Atwill shows how the Babylonian Talmud and other Rabbinical sources provide unmistakable references through the use of clever wordplay and other typological methods, that the leader of this group was the Rabbi, Johanan ben Zakkai.

According to legend and Rabbinical sources, during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, Yohanan ben Zakkai was smuggled out of Jerusalem to meet Vespasian, who was then only a general, but greeted Vespasian as the emperor he would become.

During their meeting, Zakkai requested Vespasian to spare the city of Yavneh as a home for scholars and to preserve the House of the Nasi by affording protection to the young Gamaliel, later to become the Nasi, Rabban Gamaliel II.

Given the similarities of the three stories, where a Jewish individual of esteem and virtue is shown "...by their excellent virtue, been thought worthy of this knowledge of divine revelations," it is this author's view that in *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus (Yosef) deliberately took the emphasis off a single individual by informing readers it was a *group* of men comprising nobility and high priests who went over to the Romans, and then used other Jewish literary sources to tell how Johanan ben Zakkai had prophesied that Vespasian would become Caesar, to make the parallel to himself less obvious.

To not do so would risk the two stories appearing too absurdly identical and improbable

(i.e., having two prominent Jews assigning the Jewish Messianic Star Prophecy to a non-Jew) and risk the author blowing his cover as a Roman propagandist.

Therefore, Josephus placed the name of the second man (a practice Josephus uses throughout *The Wars of the Jews* to hide or conceal identities) in his other works. Here, since the leader of this group of men was not relevant to the Roman invention of Christianity but relevant to its invention of Rabbinic Judaism, it is logical that they would implant the name and identity of the “father” of that offshoot religion (Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai) in early Rabbinical writings that were surely conceived and controlled by the Romans.

Considering all the above, in this author’s view, this confirms beyond the shadow of all doubt (as Atwill deciphered in *Shakespeare’s Secret Messiah*) that Rome also created and controlled *all* of what later became known as the Rabbinical sources of Judaism.

### **The Virtuous Prophet**

In this author’s view, Josephus’ (Yosef’s) portrayal of two and possibly three of the individual men mentioned above and their ability to foretell who was ordained to rule, was no whimsical accident and contains several points or truths that the Romans wished to convey.

The first point is made in the story of Menahem the Essene, who, when Herod was still a child, prophesied that he would one day be “King of the Jews.” However, unlike the stories of Josephus and Johanan ben Zakkai, who both applied the Messianic Star Prophecy to Vespasian in his presence, Menahem also issues Herod a warning and prophesies that Herod “... wilt forget piety and righteousness; and these crimes will not be concealed from God, at the conclusion of thy life, when thou wilt find that he will be mindful of them, and punish time for them.”

To this author, the first subtle point the Roman authors are making is distancing themselves from the appointment of all the formerly hated and “unrighteous rulers” that the Julio-Claudian emperors had appointed before “God’s favor had gone over to the Romans,” under the Flavians. Thus, for those not of Vespasian’s line, while God could ordain any man to rule who God “saw fit,” God could also revoke his appointment to those rulers who would “forget piety and righteousness.”

In this author’s view, the second subtle point the Romans are making is how a true prophet responds when such a prophet is set before those rulers and fools that had “forgotten piety and righteousness.” This is shown in the second part of the story of Menahem the Essene, where years later, Herod sends for Menahem to ask him how much longer he had to rule, and Menahem is silent. When Herod pressed Menahem a second time,

Menahem responds with what is clearly a dismissive, sarcastic answer.

Likewise, and again by no accident, the Roman authors show the same response when, years later, Jesus is taken before Herod's son, Herod Antipas, before his crucifixion and is silent before Herod's request that he be shown "a sign."

Like Menahem, Jesus also remains silent in the face of accusations that Jewish chief priests and scribes (who served Herod) levied against him. (Luke 23: 7-15).

The third point is not subtle and is outlined in Josephus' (Yosef's) last sentence concerning Menahem:

We have thought it proper to relate these facts to our readers, how strange soever they be, and to declare what hath happened among us, because many of these Essenes have, by their excellent virtue, been thought worthy of this knowledge of divine revelations.

*(The Antiquities of the Jews, Book XV, Chapter 10.5)*

In this author's view, this part of the passage about Menahem is perhaps the most important point the Romans are making as it provides "the standard" for a prophet's conduct and credentials, and shows why God considers some men worthy of being given the gift of "divine revelations."

This is crucial, because this qualifier is telling the reader that since Josephus (Yosef) was also a man of virtue, the truth of his works can be also be trusted. This point also sets apart the company of virtuous men and prophets such as Josephus, (Johanan ben Zakkai) and Menahem, who were ordained by God to serve Gentile kings, and those righteous and virtuous prophets and teachers such as Matthias and Jesus, who were willingly martyred by rulers who had "forgotten piety and righteousness," from all the "false prophets."

Therefore, in this author's view, the authors show that it is the quality of virtue that separates the true prophet from all the unvirtuous kings, false prophets and false Messianic claimants mentioned by Josephus (Yosef) throughout *The Wars of the Jews*.

False prophets who are often described by Josephus (Yosef) with contempt and disdain, as cowards who the Romans felt used and hid behind the religion to further their own political ambitions.

For example, Josephus' (Yosef's) account of how the Jewish rebel leader John put a trick on Titus by appealing to him not to attack the small city of Gischala on the Sabbath, telling Titus:

“... it was unlawful not only to remove their arms, but even to treat of peace,” and that Titus too would be guilty of violating this law if he attacked on the Sabbath.

Whereupon, after Titus agreed not to attack, John took advantage of the truce and escaped that night with his men and supporters to Jerusalem. As Josephus (Yosef) writes: “Not so much out of regard to the seventh day as to his own preservation, for he was afraid lest he should be quite deserted if the city should be taken, and had his hopes of life in that night, and in his flight therein.”

*(The Wars of the Jews Book IV, Chapter 2.3)*

### **Author's Summary**

Besides all that is covered in *Caesar's Messiah*, *Shakespeare's Secret Messiah*, and the many “codes” that both works have amazingly deciphered, it is this author's view that if there is a hidden lesson or point the Romans sought to make with their literary masterpiece, it is to show that “divine revelations” can be a slippery slope.

If this author had to pick out one theme or message that the authors of all of Josephus' (Yosef's) works strive to make, it is perhaps to show Roman contempt for “prophecy” (beyond that used for public displays of religious and military ceremony), by showing how easy any literary text can be taken out of context and used and manipulated by those with a political agenda. Then, to further drive home the point, compose the literary masterpiece *Gospels / The Wars of the Jews*, as an example to prove and illustrate the fact.

As we come to the close of this work, it is unfortunate that so many in the twenty-first century have still not caught on to this truth and continue to follow the lead of those who forever have a self-serving political or financial agenda that is wrapped in lofty claims of “divine revelations.”

### **Epilogue**

In closing, regardless of the reader's religious background or faith, now that we know a group of Roman Caesars invented both Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism to transform and supplant first century CE militant Messianic Judaism, this author urges all people everywhere of other religious faiths and denominations to ask themselves the following question.

“If Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism were both created in the first century CE by a

group of ruthless oligarchs as a mind control political weapon, why should anyone assume (no matter how well educated or informed) that all other faiths, religions and their respective bodies of literature were not created by other such men for the same reasons?"

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In 2005, Joseph Atwill published *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus*. As a follow-up work, in 2014, Atwill published *Shakespeare's Secret Messiah*.

The main thesis of *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus* is that the Gospels were created by a group of Roman Caesars, the Flavians, and that the character of Jesus is a fictional, mythological character, like Hercules. In the two works, Atwill shows that the Gospels were created because Rome had been engaged in a decades-long battle against a Jewish Messianic movement and the new Flavian dynasty wanted to create an alternative pacifistic version of Judaism that would cooperate with the Roman Empire.

For those who have already read one or both of Atwill's books, or, those who have not yet read either work, the aim of *The Second Rosetta Stone* is to provide additional historical context and other information about the Messianic movement (over and above what Atwill covers) that the Greco-Romans faced in Judea in the first century, and the century before that, to lend further support, proof and validation of Atwill's thesis.

In support of Atwill's thesis, the work also shows some of the interesting source material that the Romans' likely co-opted from Jewish sources to construct the Gospels' storyline, and also shows how the literary significance of at least three well-known names in the Gospels (Matthew, Judas and Jesus) including that of Josephus himself, have become "lost in translation," thus diluting the names' original meaning and satirical significance to the story.

*The Second Rosetta Stone*, shows not only the significance of Atwill's discovery, which Dr. Clearsky feels is as significant and important a find as the Egyptian Rosetta Stone, the work also provides additional information and context (over and above what Atwill covers) that will hopefully help readers come to see and appreciate the absolute literary MASTERPIECE that is the combined intertextual works of the Gospels and *The Wars of the Jews*.

A masterpiece filled with clever wordplay and puns; a masterpiece filled with name and character identification puzzles; a masterpiece that puts the reader's memory to the test, and a masterpiece that is chocked full of lampoons and black humor. A masterpiece that Atwill's *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Invention to Invent Jesus*, has helped reveal and decipher in all its masterful splendor.