More Evidence

Items 32–52: Further evidence for the late appearance of Christianity

Evidence from extra-canonical works

32 The Epistle of Barnabas

The Epistle of Barnabas is preserved complete in the 4th century Codex Sinaiticus where it appears at the end of the New Testament. There is evidence that the author was the notable companion and fellow of the apostle Paul, as we see for example in Galatians 2:1,9.[1]

Jerome testifies that:

Barnabas the Cyprian, also called Joseph the Levite, ordained apostle to the Gentiles with Paul, wrote one Epistle, valuable for the edification of the church, which is reckoned among the apocryphal writings.[2]

This letter was widely accepted as genuine by the early church fathers, for example Clement of Alexandria:

Barnabas, too, who in person preached the word along with the apostle in the ministry of the Gentiles, says, I write to you most simply, that you may understand.[3]

Furthermore, it is evident that Barnabas wrote his epistle after the year 70, because he talks about the destruction of the temple as a *fait accompli*. (16:3-4)

Barnabas' intention in the whole chapter [16] is to show that a transposition has taken place---from a literal Temple that has (rightfully, in his opinion) been destroyed to a spiritual temple that should be understood in Christian terms. The ideas of remission of sin, hope in the Name, and the new creation in which God dwells (xvi. 8, 9), show that Barnabas is speaking about a Christian replacement for the destroyed Temple.[4]

In his eschatology, Barnabas, referencing Daniel, speaks of three kings being subdued by one king. (4:4) This seems to indicate that he was writing in the time of the one king, that is Nerva, who succeeded the Flavian dynasty of the three kings, that is Vespasian, Titus and Domitian in the year 96.[5]

Notes

1. Also 1 Corinthians 9:6 and Colossians 4:10.

2. *De Viris Illustribus*, 6.

3. *Stromata*, Book 5.10.

4. Richardson & Shukster, 1983, p.34.

5. Ibid., p.53-55.

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This argument utilizes the Epistle of Barnabas to bridge the gap between the original Apostles and the post-AD 70 world. It suggests that a primary companion of Paul was still active and writing as late as the reign of Nerva (AD 96-98), fundamentally shifting the "Apostolic Age" into the late first century.

The strength of this argument is the explicit internal evidence regarding the Temple. Barnabas 16:3-4 refers to the Temple's destruction as a past event caused by "fighting" and "enemies," which perfectly matches the Roman siege of AD 70. Furthermore, the correlation of the "three kings being subdued by one" with the transition from the Flavian Dynasty (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian) to the emperor Nerva provides a precise chronological anchor. If the early church was correct in attributing this letter to the biblical Barnabas, it proves that Paul's inner circle lived through the war and developed "Replacement Theology" as a direct response to the Temple's ruins.

The weakness is the tension between tradition and modern scholarship. While Clement of Alexandria and Jerome accepted Barnabas as the author, most modern critics view the letter as "pseudonymous" (written by someone else using his name[1]). They argue the anti-Jewish tone of the letter is inconsistent with the Barnabas described in *Acts*. However, the revisionist view argues that the "Apostolic" label was only given to those who were present at the movement's inception---meaning if Barnabas is an Apostle, and Barnabas is writing in AD 96, the movement's "inception" cannot be AD 30.

If the orthodox thesis--that the Apostles died out in the 60s and the Temple was still standing during their ministry--were correct, we should see:

• Pre-War Pauline Letters: We should find early apostolic letters expressing concern for the Temple's daily rituals. Instead, the "Apostolic" Epistle of Barnabas argues that the physical Temple was a mistake from the beginning and that its destruction was a divine "remission of sin."

• Chronological Silences: We should see a 30-year "black hole" in Christian writing between AD 70 and AD 100. Instead, we have works like the Epistle of Barnabas, which link the two eras through a single historical figure (Barnabas the Levite).

• Clear Rejection by the Church: If this was a late forgery, the early Church should have rejected it as an anachronism. Instead, it was found at the end of the Codex Sinaiticus, effectively treated as the 28th book of the New Testament.

Notes

1. Metzger, 1987, p.56.

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Numismatic evidence

33 The redemption of Jerusalem

Coin minted at Gamla during the Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE), bearing the inscription “For the redemption of Jerusalem the Holy” in Aramaic script. The chalice and palm branch echo the symbols of Jewish resistance.[4]

The phrase "the redemption of Jerusalem", a catchcry during the revolt turns up in the gospel of Luke and also on a coin minted in Gamla, in northern Galilee, around 66 CE. The capture and destruction of Gamala/Gamla and its inhabitants is reported in great detail by Josephus.[1]

Luke says:

At that moment she [the prophetess Anna] came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child [Jesus] to all who were looking for the redemption[2] of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38)

At Gamla a rare bronze coin has been discovered. Nine specimens of the type are known, seven from the excavations of Gamla. The dies are very crudely cut, obviously done under improvised conditions and by an unskilled artisan. The obverse shows a chalice, in clear imitation of the Jerusalem *sheqels*, which are generally accepted as showing one of the Temple utensils. The inscription, mixing paleo-Hebrew and Aramaic script, encircles the cup and continues on the blank reverse: "For the redemption of Jerusalem the Holy."[3]

Notes

1. *Wars of the Jews* 4.1-83.

2. From the Greek: lutrósis (λύτρωσις) properly the payment of the *ransom-price* to free a slave, for example Leviticus 25:47-55. Also, deliverance or redemption in the theocratic sense, as per Hebrews 9:12. Only three instances of the word occur in the New Testament. Two are in Luke and the other is in Hebrews.

3. Syon, 2014, p.120-122.

4. Ibid., p.122.

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This argument identifies a specific political slogan-- "The Redemption of Jerusalem"-- and links its appearance in the Gospel of Luke to the literal propaganda of the First Jewish Revolt (AD 66-70). It suggests that the language used to describe the Messianic hope in the New Testament is identical to the revolutionary rhetoric found on insurgent coinage.

The strength of this argument lies in its archaeological and linguistic precision. The phrase *lytrosis Ierousalem* (λύτρωσιν Ἰερουσαλήμ) is not a common biblical phrase; it appears as a specific "state motto" on crudely struck coins in the besieged city of Gamla. Finding this exact phrase in Luke 2:38 anchors the text to a specific

historical crisis. When the prophetess Anna speaks of Jesus to those "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem," she is using the contemporary vernacular of a revolutionary movement. This implies that the Gospel writer was either writing during the war or was intentionally using the political language of the AD 60s to frame the significance of Jesus.

The weakness is that the concept of "redemption" (*lytrosis*) has deep roots in the Septuagint and Hebrew Bible (e.g., Psalm 130:8). Traditional scholars argue that the rebels in AD 66 simply adopted an existing religious concept for their coins, just as Luke used it to express spiritual salvation. In this view, the similarity is due to a shared religious vocabulary rather than the Gospel being a product of wartime propaganda.

If the orthodox thesis--that this was a peaceful religious hope in 4 BCE--were correct, we should see:

• Pre-War Precedent: The phrase "Redemption of Jerusalem" should appear on coins or inscriptions from the eras of Herod the Great or the Maccabees. Instead, it surfaces specifically and uniquely during the Great Revolt against Rome.

• Alternative Vocabulary: If the "redemption" was purely spiritual, we might expect terms for "salvation from sin" (*soteria*). Instead, Luke uses the exact political/ransom language (*lytrosis*) used by those fighting to liberate a city under Roman siege.

• Roman Indifference: If the term was harmlessly religious, the Romans would not have felt the need to counter it. Instead, they issued the "Judaea Capta" coins in AD 71, which served as a direct ideological rebuttal---showing the city not "redeemed," but conquered and enslaved.

34 Mary gives birth to Jesus under a date palm

Sestertius of Vespasian, struck in 71 CE to celebrate victory in the Jewish Revolt. The legend reads: IVDEA CAPTA — "Judaea conquered."

In the Koran at Surah 19 (Surah Maryam) we read:

19. (The angel) said [to Mary]: "I am only a Messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son."

20. She said: "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?"

21. He said: "So (it will be), your Lord said: 'That is easy for Me (Allah): And (We wish) to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (Allah), and it is a matter (already) decreed, (by Allah).'"

22. So she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place.

23. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said: "Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten and out of sight!"

24. Then [the babe 'Iesa (Jesus) or Jibrael (Gabriel)] cried unto her from below her, saying: "Grieve not! Your Lord has provided a water stream under you;

25. "And shake the trunk of date-palm towards you, it will let fall fresh ripe-dates upon you."

26. "So eat and drink and be glad, and if you see any human being, say: 'Verily! I have vowed a fast unto the Most Beneficent (Allah) so I shall not speak to any human being this day.'"

27. Then she brought him (the baby) to her people, carrying him. They said: "O Mary! Indeed you have brought a thing Fariya (an unheard mighty thing).[1]

As interpreted by Islam, the angel Gabriel, the date palm, the water stream and Mary the mother of Jesus are depicted on more than one series of Roman coins first minted in the year 71.

Another version of this story, also based on the coin motifs, is found in The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. This Latin text originated in the sixth or seventh centuries, about the same time as the Koran was written. In this version Mary is escaping to Egypt with the baby Jesus and being "fatigued by the excessive heat of the sun in the desert" rests under a palm tree. The man in the scene is not an angel but this time it is Joseph. In the story, the child Jesus commands the palm tree to bend down and provide fruit for his mother. When the tree rises again it releases "a spring of water exceedingly clear and cool and sparkling."[2]

A *Judaea Capta* coin minted in 71 CE---showing a mourning woman beneath a date palm---could have acquired a counter-reading among post-war Jewish-Christian (possibly Ebionite) groups east of the Jordan.[3] In such circles, "the woman" becomes the mother of the Messiah. Once that symbolic reading takes hold, it can travel orally across the Decapolis--Nabataean corridor. These groups are insulated from the standard birth stories found in Matthew and Luke.

That coins were used to settle questions of doctrine is illustrated by Matthew's use of the Roman denarius in the teaching of Jesus about paying taxes. (22:17-21) In Lucian's study of the religion of Astarte-Europa in Sidon he calls as witness the coinage of the district.[4]

Notes

1. Accessed at 19. Surah Maryam — NobleQuran.com

2. *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, 20 accessed at www.gnosis.org/library/psudomat.htm

3. Puin & Ohlig, 2010, p.365ff.

4. *The Syrian Goddess*, 4.

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This argument connects the specific details of the Nativity in the Quran (Surah 19) and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* to the imperial iconography of the Judea Capta coins issued by Rome in AD 71. It suggests that the imagery of a defeated nation was subversively "re-coded" by fringe Christian groups into a story of divine birth and deliverance.

The strength of this argument lies in the uncanny visual match between the Roman coin and the Quranic text. In AD 71, the most common image in the Roman world was a mourning woman (representing Judaea) sitting in despair beneath a date palm, often with a spring of water or a victorious male figure nearby.

The Quranic account mirrors these exact components: Mary is in a "far place," in despair ("Would that I had died!"), beneath a date palm, with a stream of water provided at her feet. This theory suggests that groups like the Ebionites--isolated from the "manger" tradition of Matthew and Luke--used the omnipresent Roman coin as a visual aid to tell a new story: the woman is not "conquered Israel," but "Mary/Zion" giving birth to the Messiah despite Rome's power.

The weakness is the chronological gap between the 1st-century coins and the 7th-century Quran. While the theory of "catechetical icons" (using images to teach) explains how a visual motif survives, it requires us to view the Quranic narrative as the end-product of centuries of oral evolution within fringe, non-orthodox Christian circles in the Arabian and Syrian deserts.

If the orthodox thesis--that the Quranic story is an independent revelation of a historical event in 4 BCE--were correct, we should see:

• Consistency with Canonical Gospels: If the "palm tree" was the actual site of the birth, it should appear in the earlier accounts of Matthew or Luke. Its absence suggests it is a later development rooted in a different visual context.

• Lack of Despair Imagery: The Mary of the canonical Gospels is humble but not suicidal. The Mary of the Quran, who wishes she "had been forgotten," perfectly matches the "Mourning Judaea" (*Judaea Capta*) figure on the coins.

• Alternative Botanical Symbols: If the story were generic, any tree (oak, cedar, olive) would suffice. The specific insistence on the Date Palm---the Roman botanical shorthand for the province of Judaea---strongly suggests the story was "born" from Roman propaganda.

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Jewish evidence

35 The witness of the Jewish Aggadah, Part 1

Theological disputations between Christians and Jews took place in the Middle Ages and there are detailed records of three of these. The *Barcelona Disputation* of 1263 before King James of Aragon was recorded by Nahmanides, one of the greatest figures in the history of Jewish learning, and Jewish spokesman at the disputation. He reports as follows:

Fray Paul [the Christian disputant] now resumed, and argued that it is stated in the Talmud that the Messiah has already come. He cited the Aggadah in the Midrash of Lamentations [II:57]: A certain man was ploughing and his cow lowed. An Arab passed by and said to him, "Jew, Jew, untie your cow, untie your plough, untie your coulter, for the Temple has been destroyed." He untied his cow, he untied his plough, he untied his coulter. The cow lowed a second time. The Arab said to him, "Tie up your cow, tie up your plough, tie up your coulter, for your Messiah has been born."[1]

According to Yehiel another disputant from that era, the Aggadic parts of the Talmud were not regarded as having the same authority as the Halakhic parts. "You may believe them or disbelieve them as you wish, for no practical decision depends on them."[2] Nevertheless, the Midrash shows that a Jewish tradition was supported at some time that the coming (or birth) of Jesus was tied to the destruction of the Temple.

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1. Maccoby, 2006, p.110.

2. Ibid., p.37.

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This argument utilizes a specific Jewish Aggadah (homiletic story) from the *Midrash of Lamentations* to suggest that an ancient Jewish tradition explicitly synchronized the birth of the Messiah with the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70.

The strength of this argument is its historical symmetry. In the story of the ploughman, the destruction of the Temple and the birth of the Messiah are two sides of the same coin, occurring in the same narrative moment. For the Christian disputant Fray Paul, this was a "smoking gun" within Jewish literature proving that

the Messiah had already come (specifically at the time of the Temple's fall). If this Aggadah preserves a memory from the late 1st century, it supports the revisionist thesis that the "Jesus event" and the "Temple event" are chronologically fused.

The weakness, as pointed out by the Jewish scholar Yehiel, is the nature of Aggadah. Unlike *Halakha* (binding law), Aggadic stories are often metaphorical, poetic, or intended for comfort rather than historical record. Jewish tradition often uses the idea that "the Messiah was born on the day the Temple was destroyed" as a theological paradox---meaning that in the moment of Israel's greatest despair, the seeds of its future hope were planted. It does not necessarily mean a literal infant was born in AD 70.

If the orthodox thesis--that Jesus was born in 4 BCE and the Temple fell 74 years later--were the only tradition, we should see:

• A Temporal Gap in Tradition: Jewish legends should clearly separate the era of Jesus (the time of Pilate) from the era of the Revolt (the time of Titus). Instead, this Midrash collapses the two into a single day of "untying and tying the plough."

• Messianic Silence in AD 70: If the Messiah had already come and gone decades earlier, the "Arab" in the story would have no reason to announce a *new* birth at the moment of the Temple's smoke.

• The "Arab" as a Messenger: In the 1st century, "Arabs" (Nabataeans) were often allied with Rome or present during the siege. The choice of an outsider to announce the Messianic birth suggests the news was breaking in the context of the Roman military environment.

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36 The witness of the Jewish Aggadah, Part 2

A Jewish tradition has Jesus invisibly present in Rome, until he has caused its ruin. In the *Vikuah* of Nahmanides we read,

Fray Paul asked me [Nahmanides] whether the Messiah of whom the prophets spoke has come, and I said that he has not come. And he cited an Aggadic book in which it is stated that on the day that the Temple was destroyed, on that very day, the Messiah was born.

Nahmanides admits this is true but goes on to say that he does not believe this. After some discussion the King asks; "Where is the Messiah at present?" And after

further discussion, "But have you not said, in the Aggadah, that he is in Rome?" Nahmanides replies,

I said to him, 'I did not say that he was permanently in Rome, but that he appeared in Rome on a certain day, for Elijah told that Sage that he would find him there on that particular day, and he did appear there; and his appearance there was for the reason mentioned in the Aggadah, but I prefer not to mention it before such throngs of people.' The matter which I did not wish to reveal to them was what is said in the Aggadah: that the Messiah would remain in Rome until he brought about its ruin. This is just as we find with Moses our teacher, on him be peace, that he grew in the household of Pharaoh until he called him to account and drowned all his people in the sea.[1]

The ruin of Rome is to be brought about by the Messiah as an act of revenge for the Roman treatment of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem. The appearance of the Messiah in Rome occurs after the Jewish revolt.

Notes

1. Maccoby, 2006, p.117.

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This argument concludes the witness of the Jewish Aggadah, shifting the focus from the *timing* of the Messiah's birth to his location and purpose. It suggests that the Messiah's "entry" into Rome is a deliberate infiltration designed to bring about the empire's downfall from within.

The strength of this argument lies in the Moses parallel. In Jewish thought, the redeemer often emerges from the heart of the oppressor's household (as Moses did in Pharaoh's palace). If the Messiah is born in Jerusalem in AD 70 and then "appears" in Rome shortly thereafter, it creates a striking parallel with the Flavian hypothesis: that the "Christian" movement was nurtured within the Roman administrative and imperial structure before eventually "overturning" the pagan Roman state. The Aggadah effectively captures the historical irony that the religion born from a Roman victory (AD 70) would eventually become the religion that replaced Rome's gods.

The weakness is the apocalyptic nature of the text. In the Talmud (Sanhedrin 98a), the Messiah is often depicted sitting at the gates of Rome among the poor and the lepers. This is usually interpreted as a sign of the Messiah's humility or his shared suffering with the exiled Jewish people. Nahmanides' interpretation--that he is there to "bring about its ruin"--reflects the defensive and defiant posture of a 13th-century

Jewish scholar under pressure from Christian inquisitors, rather than necessarily a literal 1st-century military strategy.

If the orthodox thesis--that Jesus's ministry was entirely completed and he ascended to heaven in AD 33--were the only narrative, we should see:

• A Lack of "Roman" Origins: Jewish tradition should have no reason to place the Messiah in the city of Rome during the 1st century. Instead, we find a persistent Aggadic tradition that he is physically present in the capital of the enemy.

• No Synchronization with the Revolt: If Jesus was the Messiah, his story should be anchored to the time of Pilate. However, the Aggadah insists the Messiah's "Roman" phase begins specifically after the destruction of the Temple (AD 70).

• The "Moses" Model: If the Messiah was purely a victim of Rome, he wouldn't be depicted as a guest in its "household." The Aggadah's insistence on the Moses/Pharaoh parallel suggests the Messiah is a "sleeper agent" within the Roman system.

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Evidence from Roman historians

37 Messianic hopes highest just prior to 66

Bust of Vespasian — the Roman general who crushed the Jewish revolt and was proclaimed emperor in 69 CE, fulfilling the Flavian dynasty's role in the destruction of Jerusalem. Pushkin Museum, Moscow. Wikimedia Commons.

Messianic hopes were highest just prior to the year 66, NOT during the reign of Tiberius. The destruction of the temples in Rome in the great fire of 64 would have been seen as paving the way for a new religion.[1]

Suetonius records a fervent Messianic expectation during the reign of Vespasian.

A firm persuasion had long prevailed through all the East, that it was fated for the empire of the world, at that time, to devolve on some who should go forth from Judea. This prediction referred to a Roman emperor, as the event shewed; but the Jews, applying it to themselves, broke out into rebellion.[2] [italics added]

Also noteworthy is the fact that the prophecy recorded by Suetonius had traction with Gentiles as well as Jews. This would explain the appeal of Christianity to

Gentiles who had absorbed these expectations; hence fertile ground for the preaching of Paul and others at that time.

Notes

1. "Nero is thus doubly bad: he does not know how to do religious ritual properly, as we shall see in his handling of the aftermath of the fire, nor can he preserve the temples that are reminders of how to do religious ritual properly." Shannon, 2012, p. 750.

2. Suetonius, *Vespasian*.

The strength of this argument is its alignment with the verified "Persuasion of the East" recorded by Roman historians. While the Gospels place the Messianic climax in the 30s CE, Suetonius and Tacitus both confirm that the "firm persuasion" of a Judean world-ruler reached its fever pitch in the 60s CE. The weakness is the orthodox pushback that the 60s were merely a *political* manifestation of a *spiritual* movement started decades earlier. However, the Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE, which destroyed the ancient pagan temples, provided the perfect psychological "clearing" for a new, universal religion to take root among Gentiles already primed by Eastern prophecy.

If the orthodox thesis were correct, we should see a massive Messianic wake following the crucifixion of Jesus in 33 CE. Instead, history shows a "prophetic vacuum" during the reign of Tiberius, with the real explosion of Messianic fervour--and the subsequent rebellion--igniting only as the Roman world began to fracture under Nero and Vespasian.

This timeline suggests Christianity didn't emerge in a corner of Galilee during a time of peace, but was the theological byproduct of the most intense period of apocalyptic expectation in the ancient world. The "fertile ground" Paul supposedly found in the diaspora was actually a population reeling from the fire of 64 and the omen of the Judean star (Point 13).

The transition of the "Messiah" from a Jewish rebel to a Roman-sponsored saviour explains why Vespasian was eventually seen as the prophecy's fulfillment.

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38 Titus, the destruction of the Temple, Judaism and Christianity

A fragment (probably) from Tacitus links the destruction of the temple with the attempted annihilation of the religions of the Jews and the Christians.

It is said that Titus first called a council and deliberated whether he should destroy such a mighty temple. For some thought that a consecrated shrine, which was famous beyond all other works of men, ought not to be razed, arguing that its preservation would bear witness to the moderation of Rome, while its destruction would for ever brand her cruelty. Yet others, including Titus himself, opposed, holding the destruction of this temple to be a prime necessity in order to wipe out more completely the religion of the Jews and the Christians; for they urged that these religions, although hostile to each other, nevertheless sprang from the same sources; the Christians had grown out of the Jews: if the root were destroyed, the stock would easily perish.[1]

This account would appear to be another example of the kind of scuttlebutt that Tacitus was apt to repeat[2] as there is no other evidence that the Christians were persecuted by Titus, or that he regarded them as a threat. The Christians for their part would have had no interest in the Temple as a place of worship as the church we are told had replaced it. (see Item 47) But the passage does show that the emergence of both Rabbinical Judaism and Christianity were linked to the same event, the destruction of the Temple.

Notes

1. Tacitus, *Fragments* 2.1 quoted in Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* (also known as *Sacred History*), Book 2.30. This directly contradicts Josephus' claim (*Jewish Wars* 6.241--266) that Titus tried to save the Temple and that it was burned unintentionally.

2. "... I have given the version of the most numerous and trustworthy authorities; but I am reluctant to omit a contemporary rumour, so strong that it persists today..." *(Annals* 4.10ff) "While I must hold it inconsistent with the dignity of the work I have undertaken to collect fabulous tales and to delight my readers with fictitious stories, I cannot, however, dare to deny the truth of common tradition." *(Histories* 2.50)

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This argument centres on a fragment from Tacitus (preserved by Sulpicius Severus) which claims that Titus intentionally destroyed the Temple to eradicate both Judaism and Christianity. Titus allegedly argued that because Christianity "sprang from the same sources" as Judaism, destroying the "root" (the Temple) would cause

the "stock" (both religions) to perish. This directly contradicts Josephus, who portrayed Titus as a reluctant conqueror who tried to save the sanctuary.

The argument's strength lies in its exposure of the shared DNA of post-70 CE religions. By linking the "root" and "stock", Tacitus inadvertently reveals that Roman intelligence in the late 1st century viewed these groups as a single, hydra-headed threat. It highlights the historical reality that both Rabbinical Judaism and Christianity were forced to redefine themselves in the exact same moment of architectural vacuum. For the Revisionist, this is the "Big Bang" of Christian origins: the religion didn't emerge from a peaceful 30s CE, but was born from the debris of a Roman attempt at cultural genocide.

The primary weakness is the reliability of the source. Sulpicius Severus was a 4th-century Christian writer; critics argue he may have "Christianized" Tacitus's lost text to give the Church a more prominent role in the war than it actually had. Furthermore, if Titus's goal was to destroy Christianity, he failed spectacularly, as the religion flourished in the very Empire that supposedly tried to pull it up by the roots.

If the orthodox thesis--that Christianity was already a distinct, thriving global entity by 70 CE--were correct, we should see:

• Roman Distinction: Titus's council should have discussed Christians as a separate group of "loyalists" or a distinct Greek-speaking sect, rather than a "stock" emerging from the Jewish "root."

• Josephus's Confirmation: If Christians were significant enough for a military council to debate their annihilation, Josephus (the "Apostle to the Romans") would have been forced to mention them in his account of the siege. Instead, we see the "prophetic vacuum" (Item 48), suggesting that the "Christianity" Titus was worried about was actually the revolutionary Messianic spirit of the Jews themselves.

The fact that both religions "emerged" from the ashes of the Temple suggests they were the two competing survival strategies for the same displaced people.

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39 Paul, circumcision and the poll tax

Coin of Nerva (96–98 CE) bearing the legend FISCI IVDAICI CALUMNIA SUBLATA — "The malicious accusation of the Jewish tax removed" — formally exempting Christians from the Fiscus Judaicus.

Paul disavows the Jewish custom of circumcision and sides with the Romans under Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, thus creating a theologically acceptable way for his Gentile followers to avoid paying the poll tax.

The Jewish poll tax was instituted by Vespasian to replace the temple tax after the temple was destroyed. Proceeds went instead to the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter in Rome.[1] It seems to have continued until the year 362 when it was abolished by the emperor Julian.[2]

Suetonius reports that under Domitian, the scope of the tax was broadened.

Besides the exactions from others, the poll-tax on the Jews was levied with extreme rigour, both on those who lived after the manner of Jews in the city, without publicly professing themselves to be such, and on those who, by concealing their origin, avoided paying the tribute imposed upon that people. I remember, when I was a youth, to have been present, when an old man, ninety years of age, had his person exposed to view in a very crowded court, in order that, on inspection, the procurator might satisfy himself whether he was circumcised.[3]

Those who lived after the manner of the Jews would be God-fearers (Gentiles sympathetic to Judaism) or Jewish proselytes and could also be Jewish Christians or just ethnic Jews who didn't want to pay the tax. The distinguishing mark was physical circumcision. Gentile Christians who followed Paul would have been exempt. Paul says,

A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. (Romans 2:28-29)

Promoting a promising sect that avoided a tax while reaping all the benefits of its parent religion would have suited the apostles to the Gentiles and their followers.

Berger and Lukmann in the Social Construction of Reality explain how this works at the group level.

Frequently an ideology is taken on by a group because of specific theoretical elements that are conducive to its interests. For example, when an impoverished peasant group struggles against an urban merchant group that has financially enslaved it, it may rally around a religious doctrine that upholds the virtues of agrarian life, condemns the money economy and its credit system as immoral, and generally decries the luxuries of urban living. The ideological 'gain' of such a doctrine for the peasants is obvious. Good illustrations of this may be found in the history of ancient Israel.[4]

Nerva (96-98CE) reduced the severity of the tax collection under Domitian which had the effect of formally exempting Christians.

Notes

1. *Wars of the Jews* 7.218.

2. Julian, *To the Community of the Jews*, letter 51.

3. Suetonius, *Domitian* 12.

4. Berger & Lukmann, 1966, p.141.

This argument posits that Paul's radical rejection of physical circumcision was a pragmatic response to the *Fiscus Judaicus*---the punitive tax imposed by Vespasian after 70 CE. By redefining Jewishness as an "inward" spiritual state (Romans 2:28-29), Paul provided a legal loophole for his followers. In the eyes of Roman tax procurators, the lack of a physical mark allowed Gentile Christians to retain the prestige of "Ancient Israel's" heritage while avoiding the financial burden of the tax, which funded the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.

The argument aligns perfectly with the sociological principle of "ideological gain". Suetonius records the invasive, humiliating physical inspections used by Domitian's officers to identify tax-evaders. Paul's theology of "circumcision of the heart" isn't just abstract mysticism; it is a defensive shield against the Roman state. It explains why a movement deeply rooted in Jewish scripture would so aggressively discard the primary sign of the Covenant: it was a matter of economic and social survival under the Flavians.

The primary weakness is the traditional dating of the Epistles to the 50s CE. If Paul wrote before the war, the Temple Tax was still going to Jerusalem, and the *Fiscus*

Judaicus didn't exist. To accept this theory, one must view the Pauline corpus as a post-70 CE product or heavily redacted to address the new Roman reality.

If the orthodox thesis--that Paul's anti-circumcision stance was purely a pre-war theological debate--were correct, we should see:

• Neutrality toward the State: Paul's letters should ignore the financial consequences of Jewish identity. Instead, we see an obsession with "freedom" from the Law precisely when the Law became a taxable liability.

• Continued Circumcision among Gentile Converts: If there were no tax penalty, more "God-fearers" would likely have fully converted to Judaism. Instead, history shows a massive "pivot" toward Paul's uncircumcised model exactly when being "outwardly" Jewish became expensive.

The anomaly of a "circumcision-free" Judaism makes little sense in the 50s but is an inevitable "social construction" of the 80s.

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Evidence from Josephus

40 A new Roman religion predicted by the high priest Ananus in 69 CE

After robbers, zealots and renegades plundered Jerusalem, dishonoured the temple and killed the eminent citizens, the high priest Ananus (69 CE) predicted the emergence of a new, better religion with Roman sensibilities. Josephus, the Jewish historian, reports that Ananus said,

How then can we avoid shedding of tears, when we see the Roman donations in our temple, while we withal see those of our own nation taking our spoils, and plundering our glorious metropolis, and slaughtering our men, from which enormities those Romans themselves would have abstained? to see those Romans never going beyond the bounds allotted to profane persons, nor venturing to break in upon any of our sacred customs; nay, having a horror on their minds when they view at a distance those sacred walls; while some that have been born in this very country, and brought up in our customs, and called Jews, do walk about in the midst of the holy places, at the very time when their hands are still warm with the slaughter of their own countrymen. For truly, if we may suit our words to the things they represent, it is probable one may hereafter find the Romans to be the supporters of our laws, and those within ourselves the subverters of them.[1]

Notes

1. *Wars of the Jews* 4.180--192.

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This argument identifies a specific historical shift recorded by Josephus, where the High Priest Ananus--amidst the chaos of the Jewish Civil War in AD 69--contrasts the "impious" Jewish rebels with the "orderly" Romans. It suggests that the ideological foundation for a pro-Roman version of Judaism (Christianity) was articulated by the Jewish elite during the war.

The strength of this argument lies in its historical irony. Ananus, the leader of the Jewish provisional government, explicitly suggests that the Romans might eventually become the "supporters of our laws" while the Jewish Zealots are their "subverters." This mirrors the narrative shift found in the New Testament, where Jewish authorities and rebels are depicted as the primary antagonists of the "righteous," while Roman centurions and governors (like Pilate or Cornelius) are often portrayed as sympathetic, disciplined, or recognizing Jesus's divinity. If Ananus spoke these words in AD 69, he was essentially predicting the emergence of a Roman-compatible religion that would preserve Jewish ethics while rejecting Jewish nationalism.

The weakness is that Ananus was likely speaking rhetorically to shame the Zealots, not literally proposing a new religion. His goal was to rally the citizens of Jerusalem to take back the Temple from the "robbers." To see this as a "prediction of Christianity" requires the assumption that the authors of the Gospels--writing after the war--shared Ananus's pro-Roman/anti-Zealot bias and used his logic to frame the life of Jesus.

If the orthodox thesis--that Christianity was a distinct, pro-peace movement founded in AD 30--were correct, we should see:

• A Distinction in Ananus's Speech: If a group of "peace-loving" Christians already existed in Jerusalem in AD 69, Ananus should have pointed to them as the model of piety. Instead, he points to the Romans as the only example of respect for the law.

• Pre-War Roman Sympathy: The Gospels should reflect the political tensions of the 30s. Instead, they reflect the specific post-70 trauma where "the Jews" (as a collective) are blamed for the Messiah's death, while the Roman executioner (Pilate) is depicted as washing his hands of the matter---a narrative that fits the "Romans as supporters of our laws" theme perfectly.

• Ananus as a Character: Interestingly, an "Annas" appears in the Gospels as a villain who judges Jesus. Revisionists might argue this is a literary "payback" or a way to distance the movement from the very elite class that initially shared its pro-Roman sentiments.

✦

41 Praying for those in authority

Paul's instruction to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2) echoes the moral imperative that Josephus stated in his history of the Jewish Wars.[1] It was during that time that certain of the seditious including Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, "persuaded those that officiated in the Divine service to receive no gift or sacrifice *for any foreigner*." According to Josephus this affront was "the true beginning of our war with the Romans; for they rejected the sacrifice of Caesar." This prohibition was seen as the highest form of impiety. Paul's instruction to the church to pray for Caesar makes more sense if given after the War. He didn't want the church to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Notes

1.*Wars of the Jews* 2.409.

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This argument connects the Pauline exhortation to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2) with the specific catalyst of the First Jewish-Roman War: the cessation of sacrifices for the Roman Emperor in AD 66.

The strength of this argument lies in its historical causality. Josephus explicitly identifies the rejection of Caesar's sacrifice by Eleazar and the temple priests as the "true beginning of our war." By refusing to acknowledge the Roman authority through traditional religious ritual, the Jewish state effectively declared war. If the instructions in 1 Timothy (traditionally dated to the early 60s) were actually written after AD 70, they serve as a corrective survival strategy. The author--witnessing the total annihilation of Jerusalem due to this "impiety"--would naturally command the church to pray for kings and authorities to ensure they could lead "a quiet and peaceable life." This transforms a generic moral platitude into an urgent, post-war lesson in political survival.

The weakness is that the pastoral epistles (like 1 Timothy) are often considered by many scholars to be "pseudonymous" (written by a follower of Paul) regardless of

the specific "revolt" context. Furthermore, praying for rulers was a common Jewish practice long before the war, as seen in Jeremiah 29:7. A traditionalist would argue Paul was simply maintaining a standard Jewish diaspora ethic to keep the peace in a Roman world.

If the orthodox thesis--that this was written in the early 60s without the war in mind--were correct, we should see:

• A Focus on Persecution: If Paul were writing under Nero's early years, he might be more concerned with specific legal defences. Instead, the focus is on a general liturgical duty to Caesar, which mirrors the very temple service that was halted in AD 66.

• The Absence of "Impiety" Rhetoric: Josephus uses the term "impiety" to describe the rebels' actions. 1 Timothy uses similar language (*eusebeia*), emphasizing that praying for rulers is "right and is acceptable in the sight of God." This suggests a direct counter argument to the Zealot claim that honouring a foreign king was a sin.

• Contextual Necessity: In the 50s, the "mistake" of the Zealots hadn't happened yet. By placing this instruction in a post-70 setting, the "mistake" is a vivid, horrifying memory of smoking ruins that the Church must avoid repeating.

✦

42 No mention of Paul in Josephus' histories

There is no mention of Paul in Josephus' histories of the Jews. The book *Wars of the Jews* ends in 75 CE with the death of Catullus, the governor of the Libyan Pentapolis. The book *Antiquities of the Jews* ends in the 13th year of Domitian or 93 CE.

Josephus was a friend of Herod Agrippa II (c. 28 --c. 95) who was the last client ruler of Rome from the Herodian dynasty. Josephus says that Agrippa wrote 62 letters to him, and "attested to the truth of what I [Josephus] had therein delivered" and that he, Josephus, used this information to compile his history of the Jews. Apparently in one of these letters, Agrippa wrote that he would inform Josephus of a great many things which he didn't know. The emperor Titus as the patron of Josephus also took a keen interest in the contents of the histories.[1]

In the Acts of the Apostles there is a long interview between this king and the apostle in which Paul is given every opportunity to defend himself and the new religion. (Acts 25:13, 26:32) The date of this interview must have been close to the

year 59 when the Roman governor, Porcius Festus arrived in Caesarea to take over as the new procurator of Judea. According to the account in Acts the king expressed a great deal of interest in the philosophy of Paul and the career of Jesus, and Paul in the presence of the king and Festus is alleged to have said:

Indeed the king [Agrippa] knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. (Acts 26:26)

Despite the alleged clear interest shown by the king in Paul and his theology, and his apparent prior knowledge of the new religion, none of this appears in the history of Josephus, who was the king's friend and confidante.

Despite the silence of Josephus, the Babylonian Talmud, specifically b. Sotah 47, retells the Gehazi story (2 Kings 5) in ways that appear to allude to Paul. Gehazi, the servant of the prophet Elisha, the renegade disciple, traveller to Damascus, the one who "caused the multitude to sin" --maps closely onto Paul, himself a renegade disciple of Gamaliel. The curious linkage of Gehazi's punishment to the laws of unclean food gains polemical force as a reference to Paul's repudiation of Jewish dietary law. Where Josephus may have been silent, the Rabbis of the Babylonian academies seem to have encoded their critique in a biblical narrative.

Notes

1. Josephus, *Vita* 361--367; *Against Apion* 1.50--52.

2. Herford, 2006, p.97-103.

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This argument highlights a profound "conspicuous silence" in the historical record. It contrasts the narrative of Acts of the Apostles, where Paul's trial is a high-profile state event involving the top tier of Roman and Herodian leadership, with the meticulous histories of Flavius Josephus, who fails to mention Paul entirely despite being the close friend and biographer of the very people involved.

The strength of this argument lies in the social proximity of the parties involved. Josephus was not just a distant historian; he was a contemporary and a confidant of Herod Agrippa II. Josephus explicitly states that Agrippa reviewed his work and wrote 62 letters providing insider details for the *Antiquities*. In Acts, Paul's encounter with Agrippa is portrayed as a pivotal moment where Paul declares that "none of these things has escaped his [the king's] notice." If a charismatic leader of a new religion had indeed stood before the King and the Roman Procurator in a

public trial that "was not done in a corner," it is historically improbable that Josephus---writing for a Roman audience about the exact religious tensions of that era---would omit it.

The weakness is the "Argument from Silence." Traditional historians suggest that Paul may have been seen as a minor nuisance or one of many "superstitious" agitators whom Josephus chose to ignore to keep his history focused on political and military figures. However, Revisionists point out that Josephus found space to mention minor rebels, obscure prophets, and even John the Baptist, making his total silence on Paul--the "Apostle to the Gentiles"--highly suspicious.

If the orthodox thesis--that Paul was a famous prisoner of the Roman state in the late 50s CE--were correct, we should see:

• Agrippa's Testimony: In the 62 letters to Josephus, Agrippa should have mentioned the man who almost "persuaded him to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

• Roman Legal Records: Josephus, who had access to imperial records through his patrons Vespasian and Titus, should have found mention of a Roman citizen named Paul who appealed to Caesar.

• A Contextual Fit: Josephus details the Jewish-Roman tensions leading up to the war. A movement that claimed a "New King" and was causing riots in Jerusalem (Acts 21) would be central to Josephus's narrative of how the war started.

✦

43 The Father and the Son

Jesus says,

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:53)

The father-son motif, which is so strong in Christianity, was exemplified for all to see in the Vespasian-Titus partnership.

Church historian Orosius (4th century) declares:

The emperors Vespasian and Titus celebrated their victory over the Jews by a magnificent triumphal entry into Rome. Of all the three hundred and twenty triumphs that had been held from the founding of the City until that time, so fair and strange a sight had not been seen by man---father and son riding in the same

triumphal chariot after their glorious victory over those who had offended the Father and the Son.[1]

The son basks in the glory of the father

... of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father (Mark 8:38)

At the victory parade in Rome,

At daybreak Vespasian and Titus came forth crowned with laurel and clad in the ancient purple robes proper to their family. Next passed a great multitude bearing the representations of Victory, all wrought either in ivory or in gold. After them Vespasian advanced, and Titus followed.[2]

The son hands out punishments and blessings

For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. (Matthew 16:27)

--The Jews are punished by Titus, the son.

Vespasian now turned his attention to what still remained unsubdued in Judaea. He himself, however, hastened to Rome, as winter was now drawing to a close; and, after settling affairs in Alexandria with all speed, he dispatched his son Titus, with a picked force, to the task of crushing Jerusalem.[3]

--Josephus, the righteous one, receives his reward from Titus, the son.

Titus, who was present with his father, said: 'It is only right, father, that the disgrace attaching to Josephus should be removed together with his chain. For if, instead of loosing, we cut his bonds to pieces, he will be as though he had never been in fetters at all.' Such is the customary treatment of one who has been unjustly bound. Vespasian approving, an attendant came forward and severed the chain with an axe. Josephus, having thus obtained his liberty as the reward of his merits, was now also believed to be a person of credit in his predictions of the future.[4]

The son copies the father

... the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. (John 5:19)

Vespasian accepted their acclamations; but, as they were still eager to prolong them, he made a sign for silence. When complete quiet had been obtained, he rose,

drew his cloak over the greater part of his head, and offered up the customary solemn prayers; and the same prayers were offered by Titus.[5]

The Holy Trinity

Josephus records,

But what, in his [Titus's] own judgment, made the most brilliant spectacle of all was his meeting with his father and the welcome he received from him; yet the citizens as a body felt their keenest delight when they beheld all three together. For not many days later they went forth to meet him, and the city was filled with joy at the sight of the emperor and his two sons.[6]

And Jesus proclaims,

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

Notes

1. Orosius, *Historiae Adversus Paganos*, Book 7.9.

2. *Wars of the Jews* 7.122-124.

3. Ibid., 4.656-658.

4. Josephus, *Vita* 428-431.

5. *Wars of the Jews*, 7.124.

6. Ibid., 7.117.

This argument explores the potential for typological mimesis (imitation) between the Flavian imperial family and the theological structure of the New Testament. It suggests that the Father-Son relationship--the cornerstone of Christian dogma--was physically and politically manifested in the unique co-regency of Vespasian and Titus following their victory in the Jewish War.

The strength of this argument lies in the synchronicity of the imagery. Historical records from Josephus and Orosius emphasize that the Flavian triumph was unique because it featured a father and son sharing the same glory, the same prayers, and the same victory. To a 1st-century subject of the Roman Empire, the most visible "Father and Son" who "repaid everyone for what had been done" (Matthew 16:27) were Vespasian and Titus. The Son (Titus) literally acted as the arm of the Father (Vespasian), doing "whatever the Father does" (John 5:19) in the Judean campaign.

Finding these exact motifs in the Gospels suggests that the New Testament writers may have been "Romanizing" the Messianic concept to align with the power structure of the new Flavian dynasty.

The weakness is the theological depth of the Trinity. Orthodox scholars argue that the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son is rooted in much older Jewish concepts of the "Word" (*Logos*) and "Wisdom" (*Sophia*), which predate the Flavians. They would view the Flavian triumph as a worldly "parody" or a coincidental shadow of a spiritual reality. However, Revisionists argue that the *timing* is too perfect: the Flavian cult and the Christian cult emerged from the same geographical soil (the Judean War) at the same time.

If the orthodox thesis--that the "Father-Son" theology was fully formed in AD 30--were correct, we should see:

• Resistance to Imperial Language: The early Church should have avoided language that so closely mirrored the specific propaganda of the Flavian "Saviors." Instead, we see the Gospels use terms like *Evangelion* (Good News), *Soter* (Savior), and *Kyrios* (Lord)---all standard titles for the Flavian emperors.

• Separation of Judgment: In a pre-war context, the "judgment" of the Son would be abstract. In the post-70 context, the judgment of the Son (Titus) upon the Jews was a physical, historical fact.

• A Non-Flavian Trinity: If the Trinity was independent, why does Josephus emphasize the "brilliant spectacle" of the three together (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian) as the specific source of the city's joy, mirroring the baptismal formula of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

✦

44 Pentecost in Josephus

Josephus says,

A further multitude of about six thousand, consisting of a miscellaneous crowd of women and children and a mixed body of others, had fled for refuge to the last surviving portico of the outer court. Before the Caesar [Titus] had reached any decision or given any orders to the officers concerning these people, the soldiers, carried away by their fury, set fire to the portico[1] from below; with the result that some in their attempts to escape the flames were killed by leaping out, while others were consumed in the fire; of all that multitude not a soul escaped. The cause of

their destruction was a certain false prophet, who had on that day made a public proclamation in the city, that God commanded them to go up to the Temple, there to receive the signs of their deliverance.[2]

In Acts we read:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (2:1-4)

If Josephus, being a devout Jew, mentioned Christians at all we would expect him to describe them as following *a false prophet* and this is what we find. Note the elements common to each narrative: an ethnically diverse multitude, a charismatic leader, a house, a fire, prophecy, "deliverance"---remarkably in Josephus as the source of a myth. This, *the defining moment when Christianity was energised*, the primitive Christians recast as triumph, denied their agony and reimagined the horror as the manifest outpouring of God's spirit. The unnamed *false prophet* who survived the catastrophe was Cephas, alias Peter.

Notes

1. The Portico of the Temple is also recorded in Acts as being the favourite haunt of Peter and the new sect of the Christians. (3:11, 5:12)

2. *Wars of the Jews* 6.280-283.

This argument proposes a radical re-contextualization of Pentecost, suggesting that the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2 is a sanitized, theological reimagining of a horrific event recorded by Josephus. It posits that the "tongues of fire" were not divine gifts, but the literal flames of the Roman siege.

The strength of this argument lies in the striking parallels in imagery and setting. Both accounts feature a "multitude" of diverse people gathered in a single "house" (or portico) in Jerusalem, awaiting a divine sign of deliverance. Josephus specifically mentions a "false prophet" who led 6,000 people to the Temple to "receive the signs of their deliverance," only for them to be consumed by fire. Revisionists argue that the "Divided tongues, as of fire" in Acts is a poetic transformation of the "fury" of the Roman soldiers setting the structure ablaze. By turning a literal catastrophe into a spiritual triumph, the early Church could

maintain that their "deliverance" had occurred, even as their physical headquarters was reduced to ash.

The weakness is the Traditionalist Chronology. Acts places Pentecost in the year 33 CE, while the massacre at the Temple portico occurred in 70 CE. To accept this theory, one must believe that the author of Acts (writing decades later) deliberately "backdated" the defining trauma of the Jewish War to the beginning of the movement to create a foundation myth. Traditionalists also point out that Pentecost is a Jewish harvest festival (*Shavuot*), providing a natural liturgical context for the Acts narrative that predates the Roman war.

If the orthodox thesis--that Pentecost was a peaceful spiritual event in 33 CE--were correct, we should see:

• A Lack of Fire Imagery elsewhere: Why use the specific, terrifying imagery of "tongues of fire" resting on people? In the ancient world, fire in a crowded building almost always signalled a death sentence.

• A Flourishing "Holy Spirit" movement before 70 CE: If the Spirit was poured out in 33 CE, the movement should have been "energized" and highly visible for the next 40 years. Yet, as noted in the "Prophetic Vacuum" (Point 48), there is a strange silence in history regarding this movement until after the war.

• Josephus mentioning a different "Spirit" event: Josephus is meticulous about Jewish religious phenomena. If a massive, public miracle involving thousands of people speaking in tongues happened in 33 CE, it is odd that he ignores it but records a strikingly similar *fiery* event in 70 CE.

Evidence from Theology

45 Domitian hates the shedding of sacrificial blood

Suetonius says that Domitian,

Upon his first succeeding to power, he felt such an abhorrence for the shedding of blood, that, before his father's arrival in Rome, calling to mind the verse of Virgil, 'Began to feast on flesh of bullocks slain,' he designed to have published a proclamation, 'to forbid the sacrifice of oxen.'[1]

The teachers of the new religion had said that Jesus's death put an end to the Temple sacrifices. Paul says,

They [the believers] are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood. (Romans 3:24-25)

The writer to the Hebrews declared that the cult of temple animal sacrifices had been discharged in the shedding of the blood of one man, Jesus. "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Hebrews 10:4)

The Old Testament prophets could also be quoted to support this idea.

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. (Amos 5:21-22)

It is significant that the opinion of the emperor agreed with a basic tenet of the new religion. No doubt there were others in the empire who shared the views of the emperor. Whatever the extent of the feeling or the changes in sacrificial procedures, Christianity would benefit; the arguments of the apostles would make more sense in this new social environment. Note that Domitian had this proclamation in mind before his father Vespasian came to Rome. That would have been in the year 70.

Notes

1. Virgil, *Georgics* 2.537; Suetonius, *Domitian* 9.

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This argument identifies a surprising alignment between the personal ethics of the Emperor Domitian (reigned 81-96 CE) and the core theology of Christianity. It suggests that the Christian rejection of animal sacrifice was not an isolated Jewish heresy, but part of a broader "spirit of the age" in Rome that favoured a more "bloodless" or spiritualized form of worship--a sentiment shared by the head of the Roman state himself.

The strength of this argument lies in the chronological and cultural proximity. Suetonius records that Domitian, as early as 70 CE (the same year the Temple was destroyed), contemplated a ban on the sacrifice of oxen because he found the shedding of blood abhorrent. This "abhorrence" perfectly mirrors the arguments in the Book of Hebrews, which claims that the blood of bulls and goats is ineffective and has been superseded by a single, final sacrifice. If the Roman Emperor was moving toward a ban on animal sacrifice at the exact moment the Jewish Temple was burned, the Christian argument for a "Bloodless Sacrifice" (the Eucharist)

would have found a highly receptive audience within the Roman aristocracy and the imperial household.

The weakness is that Domitian's ban was motivated by agrarian economics and Virgil's poetry, not necessarily a theological shift toward Messianism. He wanted to preserve the population of working oxen for farming. Furthermore, despite his early hesitation, Domitian eventually embraced the traditional Roman cult, including sacrifices, to bolster his image as *Dominus et Deus* (Lord and God).

If the orthodox thesis--that the end of sacrifice was a purely internal Jewish-Christian revelation from 30 CE--were correct, we should see:

• Roman Resistance: The Romans, who viewed animal sacrifice as the "glue" of the state, should have been outraged by Christian anti-sacrifice rhetoric. Instead, we find the future Emperor (Domitian) having the exact same "anti-blood" impulses in 70 CE.

• Theology Detached from Events: The anti-sacrifice theology of Hebrews and Paul should appear in the 30s or 40s. However, the most sophisticated arguments against sacrifice (Hebrews) appear in a text most scholars agree was written in the shadow of the Temple's 70 CE destruction — exactly when Domitian was considering his ban.

• A "Non-Roman" Gospel: The Gospels would likely emphasize a return to the Temple if they were written in the 30s. Instead, they emphasize a "Temple of the Spirit," which conveniently aligns with a Roman world that was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the gore of the slaughter-altar.

✦

46 Paul wrote after the law was ended

Paul's attitude to the Mosaic Law is more easily understood if we suppose that it was shaped by the events of 66-70.

Paul says that:

--those under the Law lack freedom (Romans 7:25);

--those under the Law are under a curse (Galatians 3:10);

--the Law brings the wrath of God (Romans 4:15);

--the Law brings death (2 Corinthians 3:7);

--the Law provokes sin (Romans 5:20);

--the Law locks people up (Galatians 3:23).

These things happened in the seminal period of the insurrection due to the Jew's stubborn insistence on keeping the letter of the Law. The Christian texts say that God "abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances" (Ephesians 2:14). Furthermore, says Paul:

... Christ is *the end of the law* (τέλος νόμου) so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. (10:4)

By an act of God through the agency of the Romans, any possibility of the fulfillment of the ritual requirements of the Law ended dramatically in 70 CE. Christ as the *telos* (goal/culmination/endpoint) of the Law explained why faith succeeded where works failed---especially poignant when sacrifices ceased. Early church readings (e.g., patristic echoes in Augustine and others) emphasized this as righteousness by faith alone, free from obsolete rituals.

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This argument proposes that the radical "Anti-Law" theology of the Apostle Paul is not a theoretical debate about legalism, but a post-war rationalization of a historical reality. It suggests that Paul's letters describe the Law as a "curse" and a source of "death" because he witnessed the Law's final, violent collision with the Roman Empire in 70 CE.

The strength of this argument is its explanatory power regarding Paul's extreme rhetoric. For a Jew in the 30s CE, the Law was "light" and "life" (as seen in the Psalms). Why would Paul suddenly call it a "ministry of death" (2 Corinthians 3:7) unless the Law had literally led the nation to its doom? In the years 66--70, it was the "stubborn insistence" on the letter of the Law (Sabbath laws, Temple purity, refusal of Roman imagery) that fuelled the zealotry that led to the total massacre of the Jewish people. When Paul says Christ is the *telos* (endpoint) of the Law, he is providing a theological escape hatch for survivors: the Law didn't just "fail"---it *finished*, replaced by a "righteousness of faith" that didn't require a physical Temple or a political state.

The weakness is the internal timeline of the Epistles. Paul often discusses the Law in relation to circumcision and dietary habits, which were still very much a part of Jewish life after 70 CE. Traditionalists argue that Paul's conflict was with "Judaizers" within the church, not a reaction to the Roman siege. However, Revisionists note

that the *emotional weight* Paul gives to the Law's failure matches the national trauma of 70 CE far better than a local argument over food.

If the orthodox thesis--that Paul wrote in the 50s CE while the Temple was standing and the Law was flourishing--were correct, we should see:

• A Hope for Temple Reform: Paul should discuss the Temple as a place for potential renewal. Instead, he treats the "old covenant" as something obsolete and "vanishing away" (Hebrews 8:13), language that fits a post-70 reality.

• Milder Language: If the Law hadn't yet led to 1.1 million deaths (per Josephus), calling it a "curse" would be an incomprehensible insult to his audience. After the war, that "curse" was visible in every charred stone of Jerusalem.

• No Link to "Wrath": Paul says the Law "brings wrath" (Romans 4:15). In the 1st century, "The Wrath" was a specific technical term used by Jews and Christians alike to describe the Roman destruction of Judea.

✦

47 The believers are the spiritual stones of a new Temple

Excavated stones from the walls of the Jewish Temple, lying where they fell on the 9th of Av, 70 CE. The physical ruin that gave rise to Paul's metaphor of believers as living stones of a new, spiritual temple.

Peter says:

. . . like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)

Paul says:

Do you not know that you [plural] are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you [plural]? (1 Corinthians 3:16)

... and

So then you [Gentiles] are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. (Ephesians 2:20-21)

The idea that the believers metaphorically fulfilled the functions of stones in a new temple would have more easily arisen after the stones of the physical temple had been thrown down in the year 70.

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This argument identifies a specific shift from physical architecture to human metaphor. It suggests that the New Testament's insistence that believers are "living stones" in a "spiritual temple" is not a mystical abstraction, but a direct response to the literal destruction of the Herodian Temple in 70 CE.

The strength of this argument lies in the psychological necessity of the metaphor. For hundreds of years, the Jewish relationship with God was mediated by a physical building of stone and mortar. When Titus's legions literally left "not one stone upon another" (Matthew 24:2), the religion faced an existential crisis. The theology of 1 Peter and Ephesians provides the solution: the Temple isn't gone; it has merely changed its "state of matter" from mineral to human. By calling Christ the "cornerstone" and believers the "living stones," the authors provide a way for the religion to survive without a geographic center. This move from a localized Temple to a portable, human Temple is the precise innovation needed to transition from a national cult to a global Roman religion.

The weakness is that similar "spiritual temple" language appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran), written before the Temple was destroyed. The Essenes viewed their community as a "holy house" because they believed the current Jerusalem priesthood was corrupt. Traditionalists argue that the early Church simply adopted this existing sectarian language. However, Revisionists point out that what was a *fringe metaphor* for the Essenes became the *central pillar* of Christianity only after the physical Temple ceased to exist.

If the orthodox thesis--that this "spiritual temple" was fully conceptualized while the physical one was still standing--were correct, we should see:

• Temple-Centric Rituals: Early Christian letters should include instructions on how to behave at the physical Temple in Jerusalem. Instead, the New Testament focuses almost exclusively on the "Body of Christ" as the only relevant sacred space.

• A Co-existence Plan: There would be a theological "blueprint" for how the spiritual temple and the physical temple work together. Instead, the New Testament treats the physical stones as obsolete, "shadowy" things that are "fading away" (Hebrews 8:13).

• Archaeological Context: If this was a pre-70 idea, why did it only become the dominant identity of the movement *after* the Roman "Spirit of Burning" (Point 55) cleared the site? The metaphor is an obituary for the stones of Herod.

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48 The destruction of the temple in 70 CE left a prophetic vacuum

The destruction of the temple and the Sanhedrin in 70 CE left a prophetic vacuum that needed to be filled. Ananus, the good high priest had been murdered. The prophetic vacuum was filled *theologically* by "Jesus."

Justin Martyr in his argument with the Jews asserts that,

But after the manifestation and death of our Jesus Christ in your nation, there was and is nowhere any prophet: nay, further, you ceased to exist under your own king, your land was laid waste, and forsaken like a lodge in a vineyard.[1]

A parallel situation had occurred 200 years before. In the first Book of Maccabees, we read,

So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them. (4:46)

The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise. (14:41)

Notes

1. *Dialogue with Trypho* 52.

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This argument identifies the destruction of the Temple and the Sanhedrin in AD 70 as a catastrophic rupture in Jewish religious authority--a "prophetic vacuum" that left the nation without a divine voice or legal center. It suggests that the figure of "Jesus" was theologically constructed to fill this void, providing a permanent high priest and prophet when the earthly ones were gone.

The strength of this argument lies in its historical typology. As seen in the Maccabean era (c. 164 BCE), Judaism had a precedent for "holding patterns": when the Temple was defiled and the true priesthood was in doubt, the people operated under temporary leadership "until a trustworthy prophet should arise." In AD 70, the crisis was even more absolute--the High Priest Ananus was murdered, and the

physical altar was not just defiled, but erased. Justin Martyr captures this reality perfectly by noting that after the "death of Jesus," prophecy ceased in Israel and the nation was "laid waste." From a revisionist perspective, Jesus is the "trustworthy prophet" who finally "arrived" in the mid-to-late first century to provide a theological solution for why the Temple was gone and why no new prophets were appearing.

The weakness is the causal direction. Traditional scholars argue that the "prophetic vacuum" was recognized by Christians because Jesus had *already* replaced the Law and Prophets decades earlier. In this view, AD 70 was merely the physical confirmation of a spiritual transition that began in AD 30. However, the revisionist view holds that the "vacuum" of AD 70 was the *cause*, and the high-priestly theology of Jesus (especially in the Book of Hebrews) was the *effect*.

If the orthodox thesis--that Jesus fulfilled the prophetic office in AD 30--were correct, we should see:

• Overlap of Authority: There should be a period where Jesus's "new" prophecy and the "old" Temple prophecy functioned alongside each other without conflict. Instead, Justin Martyr explicitly links the disappearance of Jewish prophets to the specific moment the land was "laid waste" (AD 70).

• Earlier High-Priestly Theology: If Jesus was the "Permanent High Priest," this doctrine should be the cornerstone of the earliest layers of the faith. Instead, we see it fully developed in the Book of Hebrews, a text that most scholars agree was written specifically to address the trauma of a disappearing or recently destroyed Temple.

• Maccabean Resolution: If the "Trustworthy Prophet" predicted in 1 Maccabees appeared in AD 30, the Jewish nation should have transitioned then. Instead, the "holding pattern" of the Maccabees seems to have continued until the total collapse of AD 70 forced a new theological invention.

✦

49 The punishment of the Jews not delayed

Was there a forty-year delay between the killing of Christ and the punishment of the Jews? The writer of the second book of Maccabees says this is not how God deals with his people. In referencing recent events in the second century BCE, he says,

Now I urge those who read this book not to be depressed by such calamities, but to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our

people. In fact, it is a sign of great kindness not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately. For in the case of the other nations the Lord waits patiently to punish them until they have reached the full measure of their sins; but he does not deal in this way with us, in order that he may not take vengeance on us afterward when our sins have reached their height. (6:12-15)

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This argument challenges the traditional 40-year gap between the death of Jesus (c. AD 30) and the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70). It uses the theological logic of 2 Maccabees to suggest that in the Jewish worldview, divine punishment for the "Holy People" is immediate, not delayed.

The strength of this argument lies in its cultural and theological consistency. The author of 2 Maccabees explicitly states that while God is patient with "other nations," He punishes Israel immediately to prevent their sins from reaching an irredeemable height. If the killing of the Messiah was the ultimate "stumbling block" (as per Maimonides in Point 42), the Jewish theological expectation would be an immediate strike from heaven. A 40-year delay (nearly two generations) contradicts the "great kindness" described in Maccabees. From a Revisionist perspective, this implies that the "sin" (the death of Jesus) and the "punishment" (the War of 70 CE) were likely the same historical event, later separated by decades in the canonical timeline to fit a prophetic scheme.

The weakness is the counter-example of the Wilderness. Traditionalists point to the Exodus, where Israel was forced to wander for exactly 40 years before entering the land as punishment for their lack of faith. They argue that the 40-year gap between AD 30 and AD 70 was a deliberate "New Exodus" period, giving the nation a generation to repent. However, the Maccabean text suggests a different tradition--one where delayed punishment is a sign of God's abandonment, not his mercy.

If the orthodox thesis--that there was a 40-year window of grace--were correct, we should see:

• A Consistent "Grace Period" Theology: The New Testament writers should highlight the delay as a sign of God's patience. Instead, Jesus in the Gospels often warns that "this generation" (*genea*) will not pass away before these things happen, implying a sense of imminence that matches the Maccabean "immediate punishment" model.

• A Historical Precedent for Delayed Vengeance: In most Judean historiography, national calamities (like the Babylonian exile or the Hellenistic persecution) are

linked directly to the immediate sins of the current leadership, not the sins of their grandfathers.

• The Absence of a 40-Year Schema: If the gap were a historical reality, it wouldn't match the "40-year" biblical trope so perfectly. The precision of the 40-year wait (AD 30 to 70) looks more like a literary construction designed to mirror the Wilderness wandering than a chronological fact.

✦

50 The Jerusalem survivors are called by God

There was not a total massacre of the besieged in Jerusalem as Titus sold many into slavery and spared some 40,000 "whom Caesar let go whither every one of them pleased."[1]

In the continuation of the passage from the prophet Joel quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17-20, we read,

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. (Joel 2:32)

The Jewish believers naturally would have read themselves into the prophecy as the survivors whom the Lord had called, and their physical baptism by fire did indeed empower the new religion. As Isaiah prophesied,

Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. (Isaiah 4:3-4)

Notes

1. *The Jewish War* 6.403--406.

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This argument connects the specific survival of the 70 CE siege to the prophetic expectations of the early Church. It suggests that the "Jewish Christians" were not a pre-war sect, but rather the literal survivors of the Roman massacre who interpreted their escape as a divine calling.

The strength of this argument lies in its historical and scriptural alignment. Josephus records a specific group of 40,000 survivors whom Titus allowed to go "whither every one of them pleased." These individuals would have been in a state of profound psychological and religious shock. By looking at Joel 2:32--the very passage Peter quotes at Pentecost in Acts 2--we find a promise that "in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape... among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls." The revisionist thesis suggests that the "baptism by fire" mentioned in the Gospels was not a metaphor for the Holy Spirit, but the literal "spirit of burning" (Isaiah 4:4) that consumed Jerusalem in 70 CE.

The weakness is the orthodox chronological framework. Traditional scholarship insists that the "survivors" in Joel were interpreted by Christians as those "saved from sin" decades before the war. To accept this point, one must view the Book of Acts not as a history of the 30s, but as a post-war narrative where the "Pentecost" experience is a theological processing of the survival of the Roman war.

If the orthodox thesis--that the Church was fully formed by AD 33--were correct, we should see:

• Separation of "Salvation" and "Siege": The early believers would not need to anchor their identity in the "remnant" that escaped a burning city. Yet the New Testament is saturated with the language of a "remnant" saved out of a larger destruction.

• Incongruent Prophecy: If the "Day of the Lord" happened in AD 30, why does the prophecy in Joel 2:32 specifically emphasize survival *in* Mount Zion after a "spirit of judgment"? This fits a post-70 context where a small group of Jews survived the total annihilation of their peers.

• A Non-Violent Baptism: If "baptism with fire" was purely spiritual, why did it coincide with the literal "cleansing of bloodstains... by a spirit of burning" described in Isaiah 4:4? The revisionist view sees the fire of 70 CE as the "womb" of the new religion.

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51 Jerusalem enslaved: Galatians 4:25

The earliest and most reliable sources---*Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*---omit the name "Hagar". The verse then reads:

For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

Both words, Sinai and Jerusalem, represent actual geographical localities. Paul's argument relies on a direct conceptual link between the literal mountain of the Law (Sinai) and the literal beloved city set on a hill (Jerusalem). If we accept that the letter was written post AD 70 then by that time Jerusalem had been reduced to a Roman military outpost. The "slavery" Paul mentions is not just spiritual; it refers directly to the 97,000 Josephus records being led away in chains.[1] The passage has echoes in Matthew 23:37-38, where Jesus is made to say:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather *your children* together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you, desolate.

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."[2]

Notes

1. *Wars of the Jews* 6.420.

2. "Rule 3: The Golden Rule of Interpretation" in *The Science of Interpreting Scripture* (Biblical Research Society publications) accessed at [Biblical Research Studies Group-The Golden Rule of Interpretation](https://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

This argument utilizes the "Golden Rule of Interpretation"--taking the text at its primary, literal meaning--to anchor the Epistle to the Galatians in the post-70 CE landscape. By following the superior manuscript evidence of Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, which omit the allegorical name "Hagar", the verse links the physical desolation of Mount Sinai in the Arabian desert directly to the "present Jerusalem." The "slavery" described is not merely a theological metaphor for the Law, but a literal reference to the 97,000 Jewish captives Josephus records being led away in Roman chains after the city's fall.

The strength of this view is its historical realism. It transforms a difficult Pauline metaphor into a sharp, contemporary observation. In the 50s CE, Jerusalem was a thriving, sovereign-leaning metropolis; describing it as "in slavery with her children"

would have seemed like an eccentric exaggeration. However, after 70 CE, with the city transformed into a camp for Legio X Fretensis and its population sold into the slave markets of the Empire, the description becomes a literal, heartbreaking fact. The linguistic "correspondence" (*systoichei*) between a desert mountain (Sinai) and a ruined city (Jerusalem) perfectly captures the "topographical obituary" of the Jewish state.

The primary weakness is the traditional reliance on the "Hagar/Sarah" allegory. If "Hagar" is included (as in later manuscripts), the text remains firmly in the realm of Rabbinic-style midrash rather than political commentary. Critics also argue that Paul uses "slavery" throughout his letters to describe the spiritual yoke of the Mosaic Law, making a literal reference to Roman prisoners unnecessary to his theological point.

What we should see If the orthodox thesis--that Paul wrote this in the 50s CE--were correct, we should see:

• Political Nuance: Paul would likely distinguish between the spiritual "bondage" of the Law and the physical "freedom" of the then-prosperous Jerusalem.

• A Different "Present Jerusalem": The text would likely refer to the "present Jerusalem" as a seat of power or a source of persecution (as it is in Acts), rather than a site of total, pathetic enslavement.

• Manuscript Uniformity: We would expect the earliest manuscripts to include "Hagar" to make the allegory work; instead, the most authoritative codices present a stark, literal comparison between two desolate locations.

If the Law was given at Sinai and its final execution centred in Jerusalem, the destruction of the city proved that the "mountain" of the Law led only to bondage and death. Paul identifies the "present Jerusalem" as a desolate ruin, identifying it with the desert mountain of Sinai to tell the survivors that they must look "above" for their citizenship (v.26). The earthly city has been "cast out" like Hagar leaving the People of the Way to find their spiritual identity in a new dispensation.

✦

52 The Way

According to the Acts of the Apostles early Christians called themselves people of *the Way*. Regarding the use of the term, Skarsaune and Hvalvik make the following observations:

The way (ἡ ὁδός): This was evidently the term the first Jewish Christians used for their form of Judaism. The absolute usage occurs five times in Acts (9:2[1]; 19:9,23; 24:14,22; cf. 22:4: "this Way") where we also find "the Way of the Lord" (18:25) and "the Way of God" (18:26).[2]

It seems likely that this term would have gained currency in the aftermath of the War as it could be linked to key prophecies which cited Jerusalem's punishment and its conclusion. Isaiah, for example, proclaims:

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare *the way of the Lord*[3], make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' (40:2-3)

Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher[4]. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.' (30:19-21)

The affliction of the Jews ended in the year 70. *The Teacher* who appeared was imagined to be Jesus,[5] and the new religion based on his teaching was called *the Way*.

Notes

1. For example; "...any who belonged to *the Way*..."

2. Skarsaune & Hvalvik, 2007, p.56.

3. τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου in the LXX.

4. The Masoretic Text reads a singular "teacher" (מוריך môreykā) not the plural "those who mislead" found in the LXX.

5. For example: Matthew 23:8, "But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher (διδάσκαλος) and you are all brothers."

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This argument examines the earliest self-designation of the Jesus movement--- "The Way" (*hē hodos*)---and suggests that this title was not a generic metaphor for a lifestyle, but a specific theological claim born from the aftermath of the 70 CE destruction.

The strength of this argument is its exegetical grounding in the Hebrew Bible. For a Jew living in the ruins of post-70 Jerusalem, the "Way of the Lord" from Isaiah 40 was not an abstract concept; it was a promise that began *only after* Jerusalem had "served her term" and "her penalty is paid." The penalty was the destruction of the city. Therefore, the "Way" could only truly be prepared once the "spirit of burning" (Point 55) had completed its work. By calling themselves "People of the Way," the early believers were identifying as the "remnant" for whom the desert highway was finally being opened.

The weakness is the New Testament chronology. The book of Acts places the use of "The Way" in the 30s and 40s CE (Acts 9:2). Traditionalists argue that the "penalty" Isaiah spoke of was the Babylonian Exile, and the "Way" was the spiritual path opened by Jesus's ministry. However, the Revisionist view notes that the language of Isaiah 30:20--linking the "bread of adversity" and "water of affliction" to the sudden appearance of a Teacher--matches the specific experience of the 70 CE survivors far more closely than the relatively stable period of the 30s CE.

If the orthodox thesis--that "The Way" was a pre-war title--were correct, we should see:

• Alternative Prophetic Anchors: The movement might have called itself "The Kingdom" or "The New Covenant" primarily. Instead, they chose a term (*hē hodos*) that is explicitly tied in Isaiah to the comfort of Zion after a great catastrophe.

• Consistency in the LXX: The Greek term used in Acts is the exact phrase used in the Septuagint (LXX) for the "Way of the Lord" in Isaiah 40. This suggests the title was adopted by people specifically looking for the "comfort" promised after Jerusalem's ruin.

• A Hidden Teacher: Isaiah 30 promises that "your Teacher will not hide himself anymore." If Jesus was public and famous in the 30s, this prophecy makes little sense. But if "Jesus" was a theological figure emerging from a "prophetic vacuum" (Item 48) after the war, then the "Teacher" appearing to the eyes of the survivors is a perfect fit.

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