

# **The New Testament and History**

**Volume 2**

**Kelly McDonald, Jr.**



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**By Kelly McDonald, Jr.**

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## **Introduction**

The New Testament is often viewed as a book of theology for the Christian faith. While this is certainly true, it is often overlooked as a book of history. Within it are found a treasure trove of references to ancient customs, people, places, and events.

This work is the second volume of a project to help people better appreciate the historical value of the New Testament. In this edition, we take certain passages from it and connect them to primary sources outside of the Bible and, at times, archaeological finds. Making these connections will deepen our understanding and appreciation of the New Testament text.

# Chapter 1

## The Ministry of John the Baptist

**Matthew 3:1-17, 9:14-17; Mark 1:1-11;  
Luke 3:1-18, 5:33-39, 11:1; John 1:19-28, John 3:23**

“3 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3 He came into all the region around the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for remission of sins...”

“7 He said therefore to the multitudes who went out to be baptized by him, ‘You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore produce fruits worthy of repentance, and don’t begin to say among yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father;’ for I tell you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones! 9 Even now the ax also lies at the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire.’ 10 The multitudes asked him, ‘What then must we do?’ 11 He answered them, ‘He who has two coats, let him give to him who has none. He who has food, let him do likewise.’ 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, ‘Teacher, what must we do?’ 13 He said to them, ‘Collect no more than that which is appointed to you.’ 14 Soldiers also asked him, saying, ‘What about us? What must we do?’ He said to them, ‘Extort from no one by violence, neither accuse anyone wrongfully. Be content with your wages’” (Luke 3:1-3, 7-14, WEB).

In all four gospels, we learn that John the Baptist was a crucial figure for early followers of Jesus. He was the one who prepared the way for Jesus’ ministry and baptized Him. Though limited, our knowledge of John’s teachings helps us understand that they were very similar to that of Jesus, especially concerning righteousness.

John drew Jewish people from all over Judea and Jerusalem to the wilderness. “All the country of Judea and all those of Jerusalem went out to him. They were baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:5, WEB). He called for people to repent or turn back to God through a change in their attitude and behavior. As part of his message, John baptized or fully immersed people in water.

The Jewish historian Josephus also wrote about him and the impact that he made upon the Jewish people of that time. We have an excerpt below.

“...John, who was called the Baptist... he was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to justice towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for baptism would be acceptable to God, if they made use of it, not in order to expiate some sins, but for the purification of the body, provided that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now, as many flocked to him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words...” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2).

In this account, we learn several details that corroborate with the gospel accounts. First, Josephus recorded that John was called the Baptist. Secondly, he was known as a good man who commanded people to honor God and others. One gospel account recorded that the ruler Herod knew John to be an upright man. “...Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man...” (Mark 6:20, ASV). Third, John called for people to be baptized in water as part of their repentance. Lastly, Josephus discussed how many people came to him. In other words, many people from the surrounding areas were drawn to Him.

The account of Josephus provides us with a primary source that corroborates with the New Testament record concerning John the Baptist’s ministry.

## **Chapter Appendix**

Another interesting piece of evidence for John’s ministry is the ‘John the Baptist Cave’ that was found in Israel. For more information see Shimon and Tabor’s article “John the Baptist’s Cave” (Bibliography).



## Chapter 2

### John's Popularity

**Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 7:24-26,  
20:1-8; Acts 10:37-38, 13:13-15, 23-25, 18:24-26,  
19:1-7**

In this chapter, we will discuss another way in which Josephus and the New Testament complement each other by discussing John's popularity. This does not mean that John tried to be popular, but that His ministry reached many people by word of mouth and through his disciples.

As reviewed in chapter one, both the New Testament and Josephus attest that many people flocked to John (see also Matthew 3:5, 11:7-9, Mark 1:5, Luke 3:7). He became very influential among common people. Even certain leaders, such as Herod, were concerned with his influence. Both sources discuss this detail.

"And when he [Herod] would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet" (Matthew 14:5, ASV; see also Matt. 11:7-9).

"...Now, **as many flocked to him**, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, fearing that the great influence John had over the people might lead to some rebellion, **(for the people seemed likely to do any thing he should advise,)** ..." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2, emphasis mine throughout).

Jesus utilized John's popularity to avoid traps of the chief priests and the elders. One story, repeated in three gospels, shows how Jesus carefully employed this tactic.

"23 When he had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you this authority?' 24 Jesus answered them, 'I also will ask you one question, which if you tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, where was it

from? From heaven or from men?’ They reasoned with themselves, saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 26 But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all hold John as a prophet.’ 27 They answered Jesus, and said, ‘We don’t know.’ He also said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things’” (Matthew 21:23-27, WEB; also found in Mk 11:27-33, Lk 7:24-26, 20:1-8).

The popularity of John the Baptist is given more depth in the book of Acts. As Jesus’ disciples traveled to cities farther from Jerusalem, John’s ministry remained very important. From time to time, they mentioned John with the expectation that others already knew about him. This is another compelling witness to his impact beyond Judea. We have some examples below.

In Acts 10, Peter traveled to Caesarea. While there, he spoke to Cornelius, a God-fearing centurion, and his family. This city was many miles from the area where John the Baptist ministered, yet Peter discussed John’s ministry with the assumption that they already knew about it.

“...that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:37-38, ASV).

A second example of John’s outreach is found in Acts chapter 13. In it, we learn that Paul traveled to Psidian Antioch, which is hundreds of miles from Judea. While there, Paul spoke to a congregation of Jewish people and God fearers. Among the topics he discussed was John’s ministry.

“Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, ‘Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say

on'...Of this man's seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus; when John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was fulfilling his course, he said, What suppose ye that I am? I am not he. But behold, there cometh one after me the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose" (Acts 13:13-15, 23-25, ASV).

In Acts 18:24-26, we discover that Apollos, an early Christian minister, knew about John's Baptism. In the next chapter, Paul traveled to Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). This city is over 1,000 miles from Jerusalem. While there, he found people who received John's baptism.

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples: and he said unto them, 'Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?' And they said unto him, 'Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given.' And he said, 'into what then were ye baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism'" (Acts 19:1-3, ASV).

From these excerpts, we are reminded that Jewish people in the ancient world were not confined just to Judea and Jerusalem. There were Jewish people scattered across the Mediterranean. There were Jewish communities with synagogues in numerous cities (a detail we discuss in a future volume). People from these areas would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the festivals throughout the year and then return home. They took back knowledge of John's ministry with them. John also had disciples who likely evangelized in areas where Jewish people were found. Considering these details, it would be hard to keep knowledge of John's ministry from spreading abroad.

The New Testament and Josephus both portray John as an influential and well-known preacher among Jewish people. In particular, the book of Acts provides specific examples of how far his influence traveled.

## Chapter 3

### John's Imprisonment and Death

**Matthew 4:12, 11:12, 14:1-12; Mark 1:14, 6:14-29;  
Luke 3:19-20,9:9; John 3:24**

“With many other exhortations therefore preached he [John] good tidings unto the people; but Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things which Herod had done, added this also to them all, that he shut up John in prison” (Luke 3:19-20, ASV).

“And Herod said, John I beheaded: but who is this, about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him...” (Luke 9:9, ASV).

“3 For Herod had arrested John, and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. 4 For John said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’ 5 When he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. 6 But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced among them and pleased Herod. 7 Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she should ask. 8 She, being prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptizer.’ 9 The king was grieved, but for the sake of his oaths and of those who sat at the table with him, he commanded it to be given, 10 and he sent and beheaded John in the prison. 11 His head was brought on a platter and given to the young lady; and she brought it to her mother. 12 His disciples came, took the body, and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus” (Matthew 14:3-12, WEB).

In some ways, John’s popularity helped him. The gospels inform us that Herod [Antipas] refused to hurt John because he was afraid of the people’s reaction. Despite the ruler’s concern, John was still put in prison. All four gospels attest to this detail, but three of them give us more details as to the circumstances which brought about his confinement.

Luke’s gospel mentions that John rebuked Herod for many evil actions. However, one specific rebuke caused his imprisonment.

Herod married his brother's wife, named Herodias. This contradicts the statutes on marriage in Leviticus chapter 18. John rebuked Herod for this action and was then placed in prison.

One year at Herod's birthday feast, Herodias' daughter, Salome, danced so well that he offered her a reward. Through the influence of her mother, Salome requested the beheading of John the Baptist. Because of his public promise, Herod complied.

Josephus discussed Herod's unlawful marriage to Herodias in addition to the imprisonment and death of John. We have two excerpts below:

“Herod the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas, and had lived with her a long time. But on his journey to Rome, he lodged with Herod, who was his brother indeed, but not by the same mother; for this Herod was the son of the high priest Simon's daughter. And he fell in love with Herodias, this last Herod's wife, (who was the daughter of Aristobulus their brother, and the sister of Agrippa the Great) and ventured to talk to her of marriage. And as she agreed to his proposal, it was arranged that she should change her habitation, and come to him as soon as he should return from Rome: it was also stipulated that he should divorce Aretas' daughter...” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.1).

“And Herodias, their sister, was married to Herod [Philip], the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne the daughter of Simeon the high priest, and they had a daughter Salome ; after her birth Herodias took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and married Herod [Antipas], (her husband's brother on the father's side,) who was tetrarch of Galilee...” (ibid, 18.5.4)

One of the details we learn from Josephus that is not mentioned in the gospels is that Herod Antipas was married to the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans. On one occasion, Herod Antipas visited Rome with his brother, who was also named Herod [also called Philip in the gospels]. While there, he became attracted to his brother's wife Herodias. He persuaded her to divorce his brother to marry him. Herod was asked to divorce his Nabataean wife as part of this agreement.

While Josephus does not describe John's rebuke of Herod's actions, it is fascinating that Josephus recounts John's imprisonment and death **immediately after** his mention of Herod's transgression.

"...Herod, fearing that the great influence John had over the people might lead to some rebellion, (for the people seemed likely to do anything he should advise,) thought it far best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of his leniency when it should be too late. Accordingly, he was sent a prisoner, in consequence of Herod's suspicious temper, to Machaerus, the fortress I before mentioned, and was there put to death...." (ibid, 18.5.2).

As discussed in the last chapter, Josephus recorded that John the Baptist had great influence over the people. He also wrote that Herod was afraid of him; Josephus attributes it to the fact that John might lead a revolt. He imprisoned John in the fortress of Machaerus; this is an important detail.

This specific fortress was located east of the Jordan, on the border of Herod's territory. It was in a high area and was considered a formidable military location. The fact that Herod placed John in Machaerus reinforces his influence.

Archaeologists have discovered that Herod Antipas also had a palace located at the fortress. This means that Herod's birthday party could have happened at Machaerus where John was imprisoned. This means Salome's request could be immediately fulfilled. To read more about the Archaeological connections between the birthday party and John's imprisonment and death, see Vörös' article "Machaerus: Where Salome Danced and John the Baptist Was Beheaded."

John's rebuke of Herod is completely congruent with John's character and ministry provided by the New Testament and Josephus. We have no reason to doubt that it happened.

John was a good man who called the Jewish people to live in righteousness. Herod's actions were clearly unlawful according to the Torah. Therefore, John's rebuke of him should come as no

surprise.

The New Testament and Josephus both testify to many of the same details. Herod abandoned his wife to marry his half-brother's wife, Herodias. Herod was afraid of John, imprisoned him, and eventually put him to death.

Josephus gives us an added detail which is also important to these events. He shared that John was confined in Machaerus. Since the site contains both a palace and a fortress, this makes the story of Herod's birthday party and John's death come together as they likely happened at the same location.

In this chapter, we can see another way in which these sources come together to provide us with a historically accurate depiction of John. The account in the gospels is congruent with Josephus and archaeological finds.

### **Chapter Appendix**

Josephus also informs us that after Herod put John to death he went to war with Aretas and lost terribly. None of his allies, Roman and otherwise, were able to help him. He states that the people viewed this as a judgment from God for how Herod treated John.



**Machaerus fortress and palace remains (above) are in an elevated place in modern-day Jordan (public domain; Wikimedia commons).**

## Chapter 4

### “What Kind of Stones!”

#### **Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2, Luke 21:5**

“And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, ‘See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down’” (Matthew 24:1-2, ASV).

“As he went out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Teacher, see what kind of stones and what kind of buildings!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone on another, which will not be thrown down’” (Mark 13:1-2, WEB).

“As some were talking about the temple and how it was decorated with beautiful stones and gifts, he said, ‘As for these things which you see, the days will come, in which there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down’” (Luke 21:5-6, WEB).

Many students of the Bible are familiar with the prophetic chapter known as the Olivet discourse or prophecy. It is similarly recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. These chapters help us understand Jesus’ apocalyptic teachings concerning the end of this age.

Just before this pivotal teaching, Jesus’ disciples described the incredible appearance of the Herodian Temple complex. Specifically, the disciples drew attention to the stones, buildings (architecture), and gifts. While this statement may seem insignificant, it corroborates with history and archaeology.

Philo, a Jewish writer of the early to mid-first century AD, described the magnificent appearance of the Temple.



“Of this temple the outer circuit, being the most extensive both in length and width, was fortified by fortifications adorned in a most costly manner. And each of them is a double portico, built and adorned with the finest materials of wood and stone, and with abundant supplies of all kinds, and with the greatest skill of the workmen...And in the centre was the temple itself, beautiful beyond all possible description, as one may conjecture from what is now seen around on the outside...But, being very large and very lofty, although built in a very low situation, it is not inferior to any of the greatest mountains around. The buildings of it are of most exceeding beauty and magnificence, so as to be universal objects of admiration to all who behold them, and especially to all foreigners who travel to those parts, and who, comparing them with their own public edifices, marvel both at the beauty and sumptuousness of this one...” (Philo, *On Monarchy*, 2.2)

In the quote from Luke, we learn that there were gifts in the Temple. In another writing, Philo described the gifts that people brought to the Temple. These dedicated gifts were displayed for others to see. Well-known people in the ancient world contributed to these displays, such as the wife of Caesar Augustus.

“And your grandmother, Julia Augusta, following the example of so great a guide in the paths of piety, did also adorn the temple with some golden vials and censers, and with a great number of other offerings, of the most costly and magnificent description...” (*Embassy to Gaius*, 319).

Josephus also discussed the Herodian Temple in great detail. Below, we have some quotes from his works *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Wars of the Jews*.

“And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build at his own expense the temple of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent height, esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection; and that this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him...[he] got ready a thousand waggons, that were to bring stone for the building, and chose out ten thousand of the most skillful workmen...”

“So Herod took up the old foundations, and laid others, and erected the temple upon them, which was in length a hundred cubits, and in height twenty additional cubits...Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong, and each of the length of each was twenty-five cubits [37.5 feet], the height eight [12 ft], and the breadth twelve [18 ft]...”

“The temple had doors also at the entrance, and lintels over them, of the same height as the temple itself. They were adorned with embroidered veils, with flowers of purple, and pillars interwoven; and over these, but under the cornices, was spread out a golden vine, with its clusters hanging down from a great height, the size and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators to see, such vast materials were there, and with such great skill was the workmanship done. He also surrounded the entire temple with very large porticoes, contriving them all in due proportion, and he laid out larger sums of money than had ever been done before, till it seemed that no one else had so greatly adorned the temple as he did...”

“And there were pillars that stood in four rows one over-against the other all along (for the fourth row was interwoven into the wall, which was built of stone), and the thickness of each pillar was such, that three men might with their arms extended span it, and its length was twenty-seven feet, with a double spiral at its base. And the number of all the pillars was a hundred and sixty-two. Their capitors were made with sculptures in the Corinthian style, that caused amazement from the grandeur of the whole...” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.11.1-5).

“Now the outward front of the temple wanted nothing that could strike either men's minds or eyes. For it was covered all over with massive plates of gold, and reflected at the first rising of the sun a very fiery splendour, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun's own rays. But it appeared to strangers, when they were approaching it at some distance, like a mountain covered with snow, for where it was not gilt, it was exceeding white. On its top were spikes with sharp points, to prevent any pollution of it by birds sitting upon it. Of its stones some were forty-five cubits in length (67.5 ft), five in height (7.5 ft), and six in breadth (9 ft)” (*Wars of the Jews*, 5.5.6).

The Herodian Temple complex was built using massive stones and ornate porches with huge pillars. It took three men with extended arms to encompass one pillar! Many doors were made of silver and gold. From a distance, the reflection of the sun on the structure made it look like snow! It was also adorned with many gifts, including large golden vines. Some of these details are also described by Roman authors, such as Tacitus (*The Histories*, 5.5).

Archaeological architect Ritmeyer noted that some of the stones for this Temple structure weighed 160,000 pounds (80 tons). The stones were so large that when Titus besieged Jerusalem in 70 AD that six days of continuous battering did not affect them (*Wars of the Jews*, 6.4.1). Many of the stones thrown down by the Romans in 70 AD were 2-3 tons. David Jacobson wrote: “This was the largest temple complex built in classical antiquity.”

When we compare the historical and archaeological record, we can better understand that this one statement by the disciples contained a remarkable amount of depth.

**Below, we have a computer generated picture of Herod’s Temple based upon the descriptions given by history and archeology.**



**Dbachmann – Wikimedia commons, public domain**

## Chapter 5

### The Term Christian

#### Acts 11:25-26, 26:28

“And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians [Greek: Christianous] first in Antioch” (Acts 11:25-26, ASV).

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian [Greek: Christianon]?’” (Acts 26:28, ASV).

The followers of Jesus were given various designations in the New Testament. They were called followers of the Way (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22). At other times they were called Nazoreans or Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). Another name given to them is Christians, which derives from their belief that Jesus is the Christ or Messiah.

The term Christian is found three times in the New Testament. Two of them we have identified in this chapter (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28). In the next chapter, we will review the third reference (I Peter 4:15-16). The term Christian is also used in non-Biblical sources to identify the early followers of Jesus. Below, we have quotes from multiple ancient authors about this subject.

“Now about this time lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of men who receive truth with pleasure; and drew over to him many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. And When Pilate, at the information of the leading men among us, had him condemned to the cross, those who had loved him at first did not cease to do so. **And the tribe of Christians** [Greek: Christianon], **so named from him, are not extinct at this day**” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.3).

“...Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tor-

tures on a class hated for their abominations, **called Christians [Latin: Christianos]** by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus...” (Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44).

“...Having never been present at any trials of the **Christians [Latin: Christianos]**, I am unacquainted with the method and limits to be observed either in examining or punishing them...” (Pliny the Younger, Letter 96).

“...The method you have pursued my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those denounced to you as **Christians [Latin: Christiani]** is extremely proper...” (Emperor Trajan’s reply to Pliny; Letter 97).

“Punishment was inflicted on the **Christians [Latin: Christiani]**, a class of men [literally, humans] given to a new and mischievous superstition” (Suetonius, *Life of Nero*, 16.2).

“It was then that he learned the wondrous lore of the **Christians [Greek: Christianon]**, by associating with their priests and scribes in Palestine...next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world” (Lucian, *Passing of Peregrinus*, 11).

At least six ancient writers testify that the term Christian was a common name given to the early followers of Jesus: Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Emperor Trajan, Suetonius, and Lucian. Among these authors, those who wrote in Greek used similar language as was used in the New Testament.

These sources assist in refuting claims that the term Christian originated with the worship of other gods, that it was added centuries after the first disciples, or that it was conceived under the reign of Constantine.

We will continue to discuss this term in a different context in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Suffering As a Christian**

#### **I Peter 4:15-16**

“For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters: but if a man suffer as a Christian [Greek: Christianos], let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (I Peter 4:15-16, ASV).

In the last chapter, we discussed the term Christian. We discovered that is found in the Bible and several other historical sources. In Peter’s first letter, we find a curious reference to those who would “suffer as a Christian.” This verse helps us understand that certain consequences might befall someone who identified as a follower of Jesus’ teachings.

In the book of Acts, we learn that early believers suffered “for the name” (Acts 5:41, 9:16). We also learn of being persecuted because of the Way (Acts 22:4). As discussed in the last chapter, the Way was another designation for the followers of Jesus. I Peter 4:16 is the first New Testament reference to suffering “as a Christian.”

Ancient sources reveal that some believers were persecuted just because they identified as a Christian. In this chapter, we discuss two specific instances.

In about 64 AD, Nero sought to build a new city called Neronia (obviously named after himself). The problem is that he wanted to build it over an older part of Rome. About this same time, a fire was kindled in this section of the city, and it was destroyed. Some sources say that he purposefully set the fire to make room for his new project. It seemed very suspicious that his plans and the fire took place so close together.

The people of Rome demanded justice for this tremendous loss of property and life. Nero tried to make sacrifices to the gods and give out gifts to appease the people, but it did not work.

To divert the people's suspicion away from the emperor, Nero blamed Christians for the disaster. Believers were treated terribly and put to death. Tacitus, a Roman historian who lived near this time, wrote about these events:

“But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiation of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report [that Nero started the fire], Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate...”

“...Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed by the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed” (*The Annals*, 15.44).\*

\*The Roman historian Suetonius also briefly mentioned the Neronian persecution (*Life of Nero*, 16.2).

The Neronian persecution provides a historical example of people being persecuted because they identified as a Christian. It is very likely that the concept of suffering solely for being a Christian first arose during the Neronian persecution.

Moreover, it is entirely possible that Peter wrote his first letter from Rome during or after this persecution. “She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son” (I Peter 5:13). Babylon was a term used by early Christians

in reference to Rome (more on this subject in a future volume).

Another historical reference pertaining to this subject is found in a letter exchange between Pliny the Younger and the Roman Emperor Trajan. Pliny served the Emperor in Asia Minor and wrote to him to receive advice concerning trials which involved Christians. One modern researcher dates the letter exchange to about 111 AD (Cook, p 146). We have included excerpts from this letter exchange below:

“Letter 96 to the Emperor Trajan...‘Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity...In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished...”

“An anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances: I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them...”

“Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, uttering imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ...” (emphasis mine)

“Letter 97: Trajan to Pliny...You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus...Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it



evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance..." (emphasis mine).

In this letter exchange, we learn that trials were held to determine if a person was guilty of being a Christian. If they persisted in their confession, then they were punished. This situation presented a nuanced application of Roman law.

Usually pain was inflicted on criminals to bring forth a confession of a crime that was done in the past. In this instance, being a Christian in the present, not the past, was the crime. Those who had already left the faith were left alone.

This new legal precedent punished people for their present status as a Christian, but released them if at any point they denounced the faith. Their past affiliation was then forgiven. They were asked to perform certain actions, such as invoking the Greco-Roman gods, as a demonstration of their renunciation.

In his first letter, Peter made it clear that believers should not suffer because of a crime such as murder, stealing, etc. He went on to write that believers should only suffer for being a Christian. The persecutions under Nero and Pliny remind us that people were persecuted for simply being a Christian and not for breaking any law. Peter's exhortation corroborates with the historical record.

Numerous instances of persecution from the second, third, and fourth centuries could be added to this chapter to further deepen this historical detail.

## Chapter 7

### “Many ‘lords’, but only one Lord”

**Acts 25:26, I Cor. 8:5-6, Eph. 4:4-5,  
Phil. 2:10-11, Jude 1:4**

“For though there are things that are called “gods”, whether in the heavens or on earth; as there are many “gods” and many “lords”; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we live through him” (I Corinthians 8:5-6, WEB).

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4-5, ASV).

“...that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11, ASV).

“For there are certain men who crept in secretly, even those who were long ago written about for this condemnation: ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into indecency, and denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:4, WEB).

In the New Testament, we are informed that there are many lords, but only one true Lord—Jesus. These statements are made against a historical backdrop. Other rulers in the ancient world were addressed using the title ‘lord.’

Primary sources inform us that it was common to address the Pharaoh of Egypt with the term lord. The Greek Egyptian kings leading up to the time of Jesus also used this title (Deissmann, pp 352-353). Other leaders in the east, such as Herod the Great and Herod Antipas, were called lord (*Oriens Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* [OGI], nos. 414, 418). As Roman leaders were increasingly involved in the eastern Mediterranean world, they too were called by the same term.

Octavian Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, was sometimes addressed as ‘the god and lord emperor’ (Deissmann, p 353). The title of lord was also applied sometimes to the rulers immediately following him (ibid). From the reign of Nero (54-68) forward, the title began was used more frequently.

An inscription in Greece records a speech given by Nero in the city of Corinth where he was called ‘lord of the whole world’ (ibid, 354). Archaeological finds in Egypt show that references to Nero as lord were used by common people (ibid, pp 105, 173). These include papyri and ostraca. Papyri was paper used in Egypt and ostraca are shards of pottery. Both were used to write messages on in the ancient world.

*The Theban Ostraca* is a work from the early 1900s which lists numerous ostraca found in and near Thebes, Egypt. Many ostraca found discussed emperors. Nearly all the finds from Nero’s time forward addresses emperors with the title of lord (*Theban Ostraca*, p 163). Below, we have included two examples from his reign.

‘Horos son of Pasemis son of Labais has paid into the granary of the temples of the Lower toparchy from the produce of the seventh year on account of the Memnonia seven-twelfths of an artaba of sifted corn =  $\frac{7}{12}$  art. corn. Year 8 of Nero our lord, Phaophi 30.’ (ibid, no. 116, p 140 [61 AD])

‘Pikos son of Pamonthes and his colleagues to Senphaeris, greeting. We have received for salt four drachmae = 4 dr., for the eleventh year of Nero our lord’ (ibid, no. 41, p 98 [64/65 AD]).

These archaeological finds remind us that common people addressed Nero as “our lord.” These details corroborate with other verses in the New Testament—one of them is in the book of Acts.

One of the procurators of Judea during the reign of Nero was Festus (approximately 60-62 AD). In Acts 25, Festus discussed Paul’s situation with Agrippa and Bernice. He said the following:

“But I found that he [Paul] had committed nothing worthy of death: and as he himself appealed to the emperor I determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord

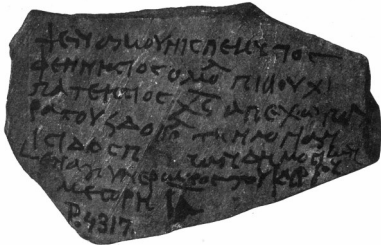
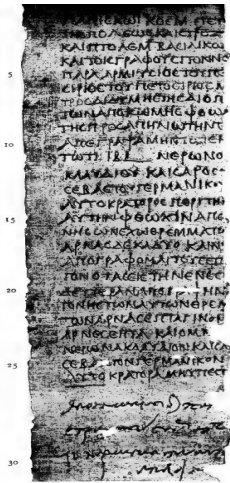
[*kyrio*]. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I may have somewhat to write” (Acts 25:26, ASV).

Festus mentioned Paul’s appeal to Caesar and called Nero by the term lord. This reference corroborates with the sources we have reviewed thus far.

According to the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Philippians date to the reign of Nero (idem, 1773, 1829, 1839). Paul’s journey to Rome at the end of Acts happened during Nero’s reign. Jude’s letter was written in the latter half of the first century and is usually dated to 65-80 AD (ibid, 1958).

Archaeological evidence helps us understand that before, during, and after Paul’s time various rulers were called ‘lord’, including Roman Emperors. The term’s use among emperors increased greatly during the reign of Nero. Many letters of the New Testament were written during his reign. This chapter also provides the evidence to confirm Acts 25:26.

These sources help us understand the need for Christian writers to reiterate that Jesus is the one Lord of Christians and that He is supreme above anyone else who might be called by that title.



A papyri (left) and an ostraca (right) from the time of Nero that call him by the title of lord (public domain).

## Chapter 8

### Confessing Jesus as Lord

#### Romans 10:9

“...because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved...” (Romans 10:9, ASV)

In modern times, confessing Jesus is Lord is viewed as important profession of one's faith. While this is true, this confession had a much deeper meaning to early Christians.

As reviewed in the last chapter, Roman emperors were at times addressed using the title lord. This trend greatly increased during the reign of Nero. Some primary sources indicate that at times people were required to confess that Caesar as lord. Those who refused could be severely punished.

Josephus records an event from about 70 AD where some Jewish people died simply for refusing to call Caesar their lord. We have a quote below:

“Moreover, it came to pass that many Jews were slain at Alexandria in Egypt after this...For though all sorts of torture and ill-treatment of their bodies were devised, they could not get any of them to confess or be willing to say that the emperor was their lord, though that was all that was required of them, but they maintained their own opinion in spite of all the distress they were brought to, as if they received these torments and fire itself with bodies insensible of pain, and with a soul that all but rejoiced under them. But what was most of all astonishing to the spectators was the courage of the children; for not one of these children was so far overcome as to call the emperor lord” (*Jewish Wars*, 7.10.1).

While Jewish people were punished for not confessing Caesar as lord, so did early Christians. Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John, is one early believer who suffered in this manner. He was martyred around 155-157 AD during the reign of the Emperor

Antoninus. Papyri and ostraca from his reign show that he was also called lord by people (P. Oxy. 4.724; *Theban Ostraca*, p 163). A brief account of Polycarp's death is given below:

“...the day being that of the great Sabbath. And the Irenarch Herod, accompanied by his father Nicetes (both riding in a chariot), met him, and taking him up into the chariot, they seated themselves beside him, and tried to persuade him, saying, ‘What harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar, and in sacrificing, with the other ceremonies observed on such occasions, and so make sure of safety?’...But he [Polycarp] at first gave them no answer; and when they continued to urge him, he said, ‘I shall not do as you advise me.’...”

“...Then the proconsul urging him, and saying, ‘Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ.’ Polycarp declared: ‘Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?’...”

“...The proconsul then said to him: ‘I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast thee, except you repent.’ But he [Polycarp] answered: ‘Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous.’ But again the proconsul said to him: ‘I will cause you to be consumed by fire, since you despise the wild beasts, if you will not repent.’ But Polycarp said: ‘You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why delay? Bring forth what you will...’” (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 8-11)

In this account, the rulers tried to force Polycarp to denounce his faith. As part of that process, they wanted him to confess that Caesar was his lord.

The Sillitan Martyrs are another historical example of this persecution. They were put to death in about 180 AD in part because they refused to swear Caesar was their lord. At that time, Saturninus was the Roman proconsul of Africa. He interrogated a group of Christians and tried to dissuade them from the faith. We have an excerpt below:

“Saturninus, the [Roman] proconsul, said: ‘We, too, are religious, and our religion is simple; and we swear by the genius of our lord the Emperor, and pray for his welfare, which also ye, too, ought to do.’

Speratus said: ‘If thou wilt peaceably lend me thine ears, I will tell thee the mystery of simplicity.’

Saturninus said: ‘I will not lend my ears to thee, when thou beginnest to speak evil things of our sacred rites; but rather do thou swear by the genius of our lord the Emperor?’

Speratus said: ‘The empire of this world I know not; but rather I serve that God whom no man hath seen nor with these eyes can see. [I Tim. 6:16.] I have committed no theft; but if I have bought anything I pay the tax; because I know my Lord, the King of kings and Emperor of all nations...’ (Ayer, pp 66-68).

When we look at these sources, we can see that Paul’s exhortation in Romans 10:9 has a more profound meaning that the modern reader may overlook. To the early Christians, the confession of Jesus as Lord was more than just a saying. It was the confession that you only acknowledged one Lord – not those who ruled in Rome. It was a confession that you were willing to suffer and even die for the faith.

## Chapter 9

### The Politarch Inscriptions

#### Acts 17:1-10

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. Paul, as was his custom, went in to them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’ Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and not a few of the chief women...”

“...but the unpersuaded Jews took along some wicked men from the marketplace, and gathering a crowd [*ochlopoiēsantes*], set the city in an uproar. Assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them out to the people [*demon*; a form of *demos*]. 6 When they didn’t find them, they dragged Jason and certain brothers before the rulers of the city [*politarchas*], crying, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 whom Jason has received. These all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus!” 8 The multitude [*ochlon*] and the rulers of the city [*politarchas*] were troubled when they heard these things. 9 When they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. 10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea. When they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue...” (WEB)

In Acts 17:1-10, we learn about Paul and Silas’ missionary work in the region of Macedonia with a special emphasis on the city of Thessalonica. While there, they found many Jews and Greeks who were interested in the gospel message. As was common during these missionary journeys, they also faced much opposition.

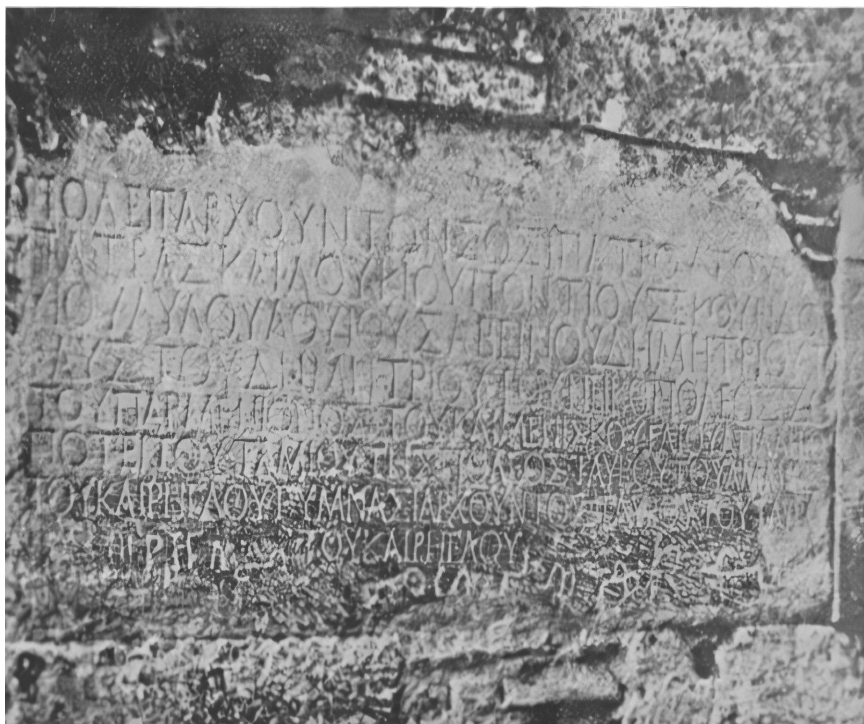
The Jewish people who disagreed with the message sought to bring Paul and Silas out before the *demos* or assembly of the people. *Demos* is a general Greek term meaning ‘people.’ However, it is also a specific term referring to a local assembly which had



decision-making authority. In this excerpt from Acts, the *demos* is contrasted with the mob of idlers looking for trouble.

After the crowd was stirred up, the people took the Christian leaders with their sponsor, Jason, to the ‘rulers of the city.’ This Greek word is *politarchas*, and it is only used twice in the New Testament (both in Acts 17).

The term *politarch* was not found among other Greek literature in this period. However, there are plenteous inscriptions mentioning them. The most famous *politarch* inscription was found at the Vardar Gate in Thessaloniki (pictured below). Below, we review findings on this subject over the years.



**A picture of a politarch inscriptions found in Thessalonica (public domain). It was among the first discovered.**

The first compilation of archaeological discoveries using the term *politarch* was published by Burton in 1898. He introduced 19 findings on the subject. Many contemporary researchers still reference this groundbreaking work, but more evidence has been unearthed since then. In 1960, Schuler's work increased the number of findings to 32 and by 1994, Horsley's research increased it to 72.

Most of the items discussed by Horsely were inscriptions. 58 of them were found in the region of Macedonia. 28 of those were found in Thessalonica. At least three of them date to the first century AD.

### **What was a Politarch?**

In about 167/168 BC, the Romans gained controlled Macedonia and Greece. At that time, the Romans either reformed an existing office called *politarch* or they established a new one. While the term is not directly used by either Greek or Roman writers of the time, at least two writers close to the period indirectly reference it.

“The terms were: first of all the Macedonians were given their freedom; they were to keep their own cities and lands, to use their own laws, and **to elect annual magistrates**; they were to pay to the Roman People half the tax which they had paid to their kings” (Livy, 45.29.4; emphasis mine).

“Macedonia, from the time of Caranus, who was the first that reigned in it, to Perseus, had thirty kings; under whose government it continued for nine hundred and twenty-three years, but possessed supreme power for only a hundred and ninety-two. When it fell under the power of the Romans, **it was left free, magistrates being appointed in every city**; and it received laws from Paulus Aemilius, which it still uses” (Pompeius Trogus, 33.2; emphasis mine).

The term ‘magistrates’ in these quotes likely refers to the office of *politarch* in the cities of Macedonia. As aforementioned, the greatest number of *politarch* inscriptions were found in Macedonian cities, such as Amphipolis, Thessalonica, Beroea (Berea), etc. Several of these cities are referenced in Acts chapter 17.

From inscriptions, we learn that politarchs served yearly terms and were allowed to hold other offices (Schuler, p 91). The number of them varied from city to city and from year to year. Most likely, these magistrates helped to keep civil peace in a city and owed some degree of allegiance to the Roman government. In Acts 17 they were charged with following the decrees of Caesar.

The use of the word *demos* close to *politarch* in Acts 17 is fascinating. term *demos* was also used on at least three of the *politarch* inscriptions.\* More may exist, but my access to the inscriptions is limited.

In one of these three inscriptions, we learn that financial sanctions could be levied against the *politarchs* who introduced measures contrary to decrees already passed by the *demos* (Horsley, p 117). This means that these magistrates were held accountable by local people.

Initially, the mob wanted to bring Paul and Silas before the *demos*. Since the preachers could not be found, they forced Jason to stand before the *politarchas* of the city for a final decision. If these officials did not act, then the mob could have appealed to the *demos* to punish the *politarchas* for a lack of action, or they could have accused them of treason against Caesar. Jason gave them ‘security’ which is thought of as bail or bond money to release them from custody so they could be free to leave.

This passage from Acts is another tremendous example of the New Testament corroborating with history and archaeology. Luke utilized the historically accurate title *politarch* to refer to the authorities in Thessalonica. By far, this city had the greatest number of politarch inscriptions. Luke is the first ancient writer to use this technical term. He also used other verifiable words, such as *demos*, and thus conveyed proper usage of technical terms in the first century AD.

\*Schuler no. 1 in Amphipolis (mid-second century BC), Burton no. 3 in Thessalonica (mid-second century AD), and Burton no. 12 in Western Macedonia (second century AD).

## Chapter 10

### A Sabbath Day's Journey

#### Acts 1:12

“Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey off” (Acts 1:12, ASV).

In Acts chapter one, Jesus gave instructions to the disciples before His ascension. After this event, the disciples walked from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. In verse 12, we learn that the mount was ‘a sabbath day's journey’ from the city. What exactly does this mean?

In chapters three and four of the last volume, we discussed how Jewish teachers by the first century AD had a developed code of oral laws. Many of these rules added extra requirements to something the commandments of God in the Torah, usually to clarify their intended meaning. Pertaining to the fourth commandment, the Jewish teachers developed rules about how far a person could walk on the Sabbath without transgressing the day. Josephus makes brief mention of this in his work *Antiquities of the Jews*, which we have quoted below:

““When Antiochus had erected a trophy at the river Lycus, upon his conquest of Indates, the general of the Parthians, he stayed there two days. It was at the desire of Hyrcanus the Jew, because it was such a festival derived to them from their forefathers, whereon the law of the Jews did not allow them to travel.’ And truly he did not speak falsely in saying so; for that festival, which we call Pentecost, was the next day to the Sabbath. Nor is it lawful for us to journey, either on the Sabbath-days, or on a festival day” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.8.4).

What exactly did Josephus mean when he stated that it was not lawful for them to journey on the Sabbath? Another primary source that will clarify this issue is the Mishnah. It codified the oral laws of the Jewish people starting in the late second century AD.

In it, there is an entire section called Eruvin or Erubin, which means boundary in Hebrew. It spelled out the rules which established the starting point from which a person's boundary for Sabbath travel was determined. Below, we have some quotes from this section of the Mishnah.

“A person may make a condition with regard to his eiruv of Shabbat borders. In other words, he need not decide in advance in which direction his eiruv should take effect. For example, he may deposit an eiruv on each of two opposite sides of his town, and say: If gentiles come from the east, my eiruv is in the west, so that I can escape in that direction; and if they come from the west, my eiruv is in the east. If they come from here and from there, i.e., from both directions, I will go wherever I wish, and my eiruv will retroactively take effect in that direction; and if they do not come at all, neither from here nor from there, I will be like the rest of the inhabitants of my town and give up both eiruvim that I deposited, leaving me with two thousand cubits in all directions from the town...” (idem, 3.5).

“With regard to one who was permitted to leave his Shabbat limit, i.e., he went out to testify that he had seen the new moon or for some life-saving purpose, and they said to him along the way: The action has already been performed, and there is no need for you to travel for that purpose, he has two thousand cubits in each direction from the location where he was standing when this was told to him” (ibid, 4.3).

“With regard to one who was sleeping along the road on Shabbat eve and did not know that night had fallen, he has two thousand cubits in each direction...” (ibid, 4.5).

“With regard to one who was coming along the way on Shabbat eve, and it grew dark while he was traveling, and he was familiar with a tree or a fence located two thousand cubits from his current location, and two thousand cubits from his house, and he said: My residence is beneath that tree, rather than in his present location, he has not said anything, as he did not establish a fixed location as his residence. If, however, he said: My residence is at the tree's trunk, he acquired residence there, and he may therefore walk from the place he is standing to the trunk of the tree two

thousand cubits away, and from the trunk of the tree to his house, an additional two thousand cubits. Consequently, he walks after nightfall a total of four thousand cubits” (ibid, 4.7).

“The prohibition to walk more than two thousand cubits is rabbinic in origin and is therefore interpreted leniently” (ibid, 5.5).

“The residents of a large city may walk through an entire small city, and the residents of a small city may walk through an entire large city, even if part of it is located more than two thousand cubits from their city. How so? One who was in a large city and placed his *eiruv* in a small city, or one who was in a small city and placed his *eiruv* in a large city, may walk through the entire city in which he placed his *eiruv* and another two thousand cubits beyond it, as the entire city is considered as though it were only four cubits” (ibid, 5.8).

These excerpts provide some examples of the types of rabbinical rules governing Sabbath travel. The general guideline for Sabbath travel seems to be 2,000 cubits. Different circumstances determined the starting place for this distance. Moreover, there were situations in which this distance was lengthened, such as in life-saving situations.

Acts 1:12 provides us with another historically accurate example of a practice that existed in the first century.

## **Conclusion**

This work has presented numerous verses from the New Testament that corroborate with the historical and archaeological record. Rather than being tales fabricated by the human imagination, the New Testament accurately describes the world of Jesus and His earliest disciples. In future volumes, we hope to deepen the connections between the New Testament and history.

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