

**THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME  
A HISTORICAL RATIONALE FOR THE AFTERLIFE OF THE  
UPRISING OF JESUS OF NAZARETH**

**JOHN ALBERT GUERRA  
BA( SAGU), MA (ALPHACRUCIS)**

**SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF RESEARCH  
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT HISTORY**

**7 APRIL 2017**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	4
ABSTRACT.....	5
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	6
LIST OF FIGURES.....	7
INTRODUCTION.....	8
The Sources	11
Methodology	14
CHAPTER 1: THE JEWISH UPRISINGS, 4 B.C.E. – 44 C.E.....	19
Introduction	19
Judas son of Hezekias, 4 B.C.E.	24
Simon of Peraea, 4 B.C.E.	26
Athronges the Shepherd, 4 B.C.E.	29
Judas the Galilean, 6 C.E.	32
John the Baptist, c. 30 C.E.	38
Theudas, 44 C.E.	41
CHAPTER 2: THE RULING PARTIES AND THE JEWISH UPRISINGS.....	45
Romans and Client Rulers	45
Jewish Rulers	51
CHAPTER 3: JESUS OF NAZARETH, C. 30 – 33 C.E.....	56
Introduction	56
The Characteristics	58
Jesus’ Objectives	63

A Threat to Rome?	65
A Threat to the Jewish Rulers?	69
CONCLUSION.....	72
APPENDIX: PRIMARY SOURCE TEXT .....	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	84

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following work in this thesis is my own, except where indicated through due referencing. This thesis has not, in full or part, been submitted for another class or course at Macquarie University or any other institution.

**Signed:**

**Date:** 7 April 2017

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine why the uprising of Jesus of Nazareth fostered an afterlife in spite of the fact that Jesus was executed. There were numerous uprisings at the turn of the Common Era in Palestine, and every uprising leader suffered the same fate, death, and every uprising subsequently desisted, except for Jesus'. The characteristics of the uprisings of Judas son of Hezekias, Simon of Peraea, Athronges the Shepherd, Judas the Galilean, John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and Theudas (4 B.C.E. – 44 C.E.) are analysed in order to discover reasons to explain this anomaly. The perceptions and actions of the three ruling parties of Palestine at the time (Romans, Herods, Jewish leadership) are investigated to determine what affect they had on each uprising. It is concluded that the reason Jesus' uprising had an afterlife was timing. It is proposed that Jesus' uprising occurred at a time of relative peace and stability in Palestine. It was also a time of political concern for Pilate in relation to his standing with Tiberius. This state of affairs contributed to Pilate allowing Jesus' followers to live and fostered an environment conducive to advancing the movement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge and express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Brent Nongbri, for the guidance and assistance provided in writing this thesis. You have been an invaluable source of knowledge and insight. Thank you for your expertise, input and patience. I really appreciate you. Hook'em!

I am deeply indebted to Hortencia Treviño Guerra for her unwavering support and encouragement throughout the process of writing this thesis. Thank you for releasing me to pursue this endeavour and for your steadfast confidence. Thank you for patiently listening to my ramblings and pretending to be interested and for reading my drafts and offering your suggestions. I love you.

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1. Timeline of the Major Jewish Uprisings in Palestine, 4 B.C.E. – 44 C.E.....	10
FIGURE 2. Map of the Loci of the Major Jewish Uprisings in Palestine.....	23

## INTRODUCTION

During the early 30 s C.E., an event of great historical importance occurred; Jesus of Nazareth “formed a group of followers which survived his crucifixion and became Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> The fact that Jesus’ group survived to form one of the major religions of the world generally has been analysed from two angles; as a supernatural phenomenon “which defies rational analysis” and as a phenomenon that has its roots in fusion with Graeco-Roman or Jewish cultures, or both.<sup>2</sup> This study will take a historical approach to this anomaly, focusing on the aspects of Jesus’ uprising in comparison to the other Jewish uprisings at the turn of the Common Era in an attempt to discover the reason for this aberration. I will examine the differences and similarities between the uprisings to ascertain the reason why Jesus’ uprising had an afterlife while the others desisted. My thesis is that the uprising led by Jesus of Nazareth arose at the right time for it to endure. The conditions were right because the interplay among the ruling factions at the time fostered a favourable political environment within which his uprising could endure and eventually flourish.

This topic both is interesting and important because there were several uprisings during this period, but only Jesus’ uprising endured. This occurred in spite of the fact that the leaders of each of these uprisings suffered the same fate, execution. This topic also merits

---

<sup>1</sup> Morton Smith, “The Troublemakers,” in *The Early Roman Period* (ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy; vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 501.

<sup>2</sup> W. D. Davies and E. P. Sanders, “Jesus: from the Jewish Point of View,” in *The Early Roman Period*, 618.



discussion because there is current debate as to what kind of leader Jesus was and what type of movement he led. The nature of Jesus' uprising has been understood variously as religious, political or social; as violent or pacifist, and as a conflict with the Romans or with the Jewish leadership. Questions surround the issue of Jesus' intentions. Did he want to reform Judaism or begin a new religious movement or neither? All these issues make this a fascinating topic.

I will confine my research to the major Jewish uprisings that arose beginning immediately after the death of Herod the Great (4 B.C.E.) and up to the uprising of Theudas (c. 44 C.E.), (Fig. 1). The death of Herod marked the beginning of a period of relative instability that saw the re-emergence of Jewish uprisings. I limit my survey to the uprising of Theudas because subsequent uprisings, during Tiberius Alexander's procuratorship (c. 46 - 48 C.E.) and beginning with the crucifixion of Judas the Galilean's two sons (c. 47 C.E.), were the initial agitations that directly led into the Great Revolt. In addition, I will limit myself to uprisings whose leader is named in the primary sources. This study will focus on the uprisings led by the following figures: Judas the son of Hezekias, Simon of Peraea, Athronges the Shepherd, Judas the Galilean, John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth<sup>3</sup> and Theudas. The ruling parties that I will treat are the Romans (consisting of the emperors and their procurators), the client kings (Herods), and the Jewish rulers (High Priest, the Sanhedrin and the two main sects, Sadducees and Pharisees).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> For the duration of this paper Jesus of Nazareth will be referred to only as "Jesus."

<sup>4</sup> I confine consideration to only the Sadducees and Pharisees because they were the two dominant sects and their activities appear to be organised to affect directly the religious/political landscape. The third major sect, the Essenes, for the most part, isolated themselves at Qumran and avoided relations with Jerusalem and the political activities of Palestine. The theory that there were two branches of Essenes, one at Qumran and one integrated into society is noted, but nonetheless, their influence was minimal. I also recognise the debate about the existence of such an institution as a Sanhedrin.

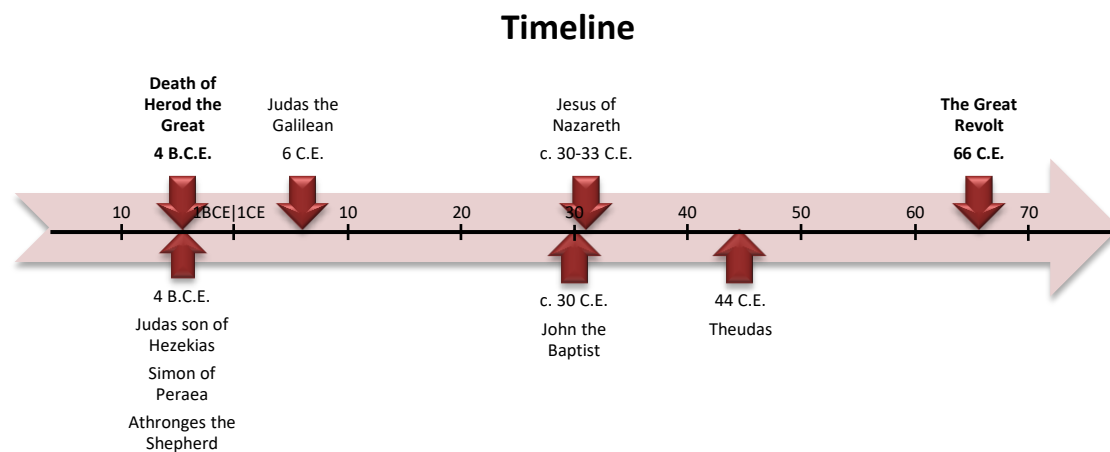


Figure 1. Timeline of the Major Jewish Uprisings in Palestine, 4 B.C.E. - 44 C.E.

Some terminological issues relating to the events and figures in this thesis require clarification. I refer to the events in question as “uprisings.” Other terms that have been used to describe them include movement, revolt, insurgency, rebellion, revolution, insurrection, etc. I have chosen the term “uprising” because, in spite of the fact that all the terms are synonymous and carry a negative connotation, I believe “uprising” is the most neutral of the synonyms and best suits all the events in this study. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the term “uprising” is defined as “an act of opposition, sometimes using violence, by many people in one area of a country against those who are in power.”<sup>5</sup> Other definitions include, “an act or instance of rising up” and “an act of resistance or rebellion; a revolt.”<sup>6</sup> Uprising fits these events best because they were, or were perceived, as being acts of opposition or resistance of the ruling powers. Some were violent, some non-violent; some prolonged, some short-lived; some organized, some haphazard, but all were characterized by a rising up against the established order in pursuance of change. Similarly, I have chosen “leader” to

<sup>5</sup> *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary and Thesaurus* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> “Uprising.” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 27 June 2017. “Uprising.” *Oxford Dictionary.com*. Oxford, n.d. 27 June 2017.

refer to the person who instigated and guided the uprisings. Others have used troublemaker, revolutionary, bandit, brigand, messiah, king, etc. Again, I choose “leader” for its neutral tone.

### The Sources

The main primary source for Jewish history of my period is Josephus. His *Jewish War*, published in 75 C.E., surveys the events leading up to, and including, the war years of 66 - 74 C.E., while *Jewish Antiquities*, 93 C.E., covers Jewish history up to the Great Revolt. Each of these works was written with distinct purposes. *War* has traditionally been understood to have been written as official Roman propaganda with the purpose of discouraging any aspirations for independence.<sup>7</sup> More recently it has been viewed as an attempt to support the Jews against ill-treatment and oppression.<sup>8</sup> *Antiquities* has customarily been viewed as representing a new phase in Josephus’ life, “written in part to rehabilitate himself with his fellow Jews” and to provide an “apologetic history” of the Jews.<sup>9</sup> Lately the view has been to see it as written primarily for a Gentile audience with a view to correct misrepresentations of the Jews.<sup>10</sup> In both works Josephus provides information about the uprisings of my period, stating leaders’ motivations and characterising the uprisings as ill-conceived or outright seditious. He considered the leaders to be villains or magicians and their uprisings illegitimate attempts to gain personal power.<sup>11</sup> Josephus said very little about

---

<sup>7</sup> Steve Mason, *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 73; Henry St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: the Man and the Historian* (New York: Ktav, 1967 [1929]).

<sup>8</sup> Mason, *Understanding Josephus*, 73; Livia Capponi, “Josephus in Rome” (review of William den Hollander, *Josephus, the Emperors and the City of Rome*). *Histos* 9 (2015): xiv.

<sup>9</sup> Thackeray, *Josephus*; Mason, *Understanding Josephus*, 66.

<sup>10</sup> Mason, *Understanding Josephus*, 68.

Jesus and did not consider him in the same category as the other leaders. Josephus' reliability as an impartial historian has been called into question by some scholars.<sup>12</sup>

Another primary source is the New Testament. There is a large quantity of information, primarily within the Gospels and the book of Acts, about the history of Palestine, including all three ruling parties of my project. The gospels are also the main source for the life of Jesus, including his uprising from its inception until his death and beyond. The New Testament contains only incidental information about Judas the Galilean and Theudas and no reference to any of the other uprisings. Philo of Alexandria (*Embassy*) provides information about the history of Judaea, Pontius Pilate and the Jewish sects. There is a lack of primary source information from a Roman perspective, chiefly because Palestine was not central in the mind of the Roman historians.<sup>13</sup> In *Histories* Tacitus gives a brief overview of Judaea, including a sketch of the Jews (in which he makes reference to Simon of Peraea), before he recounts the quashing of the Jewish revolt in 70 C.E. His history of the Jews is considered inaccurate and arbitrary.<sup>14</sup> In *Annals* Tacitus makes an incidental remark about Jesus while discussing the great fire in Rome (64 C.E.) and the subsequent persecution of Christians.

Numerous secondary sources treat Jewish uprisings in Palestine in the first century C.E. These range from general overviews to detailed studies. *The Cambridge History of*

---

<sup>11</sup> Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 88.

<sup>12</sup> Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 185.

<sup>13</sup> Mary E. Smallwood, "Josephus as a Historian" in *Josephus: The Jewish War* (London: Penguin, 1981), 18, "Judaea was small, distant, and most of the time uninteresting and unimportant, becoming 'news' only in 66."

<sup>14</sup> F. F. Bruce, "Tacitus on Jewish History," *JSS* 29, no. 1 (1984): 33-44; Joan B. Gruen, in recognising Tacitus' hostility to the Jews, attributes it to "Tacitean irony" (*Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011], 179-96).

*Judaism* devotes a chapter to discussing the uprisings and their leaders.<sup>15</sup> In a separate chapter, Jesus is analysed as a leader of a Jewish sect, not as the leader of an uprising.<sup>16</sup> In *The Jews under Roman Rule: from Pompey to Diocletian* Mary E. Smallwood reviews the history of my period, including the uprisings and the political situation in Palestine.<sup>17</sup> These works and other general Jewish history volumes do not explicitly compare the uprisings in my study. They view Jesus not as an uprising leader, but as a character in the narrative of the political/religious happenings in Palestine.<sup>18</sup>

There are a few texts dedicated specifically to the uprisings and their leaders. Roland Worth, in *Messiahs and Messianic Movements through 1899*, discusses Josephus' references to the uprisings and provides detailed information.<sup>19</sup> Horsley and Hanson give a detailed breakdown of the uprisings under the designations of "bandits, prophets and messiahs."<sup>20</sup> Their focus is on the root cause of the uprisings and the method each leader took in the pursuit of their objectives. While this text does not directly compare the uprisings, it provides useful information for comparing the uprisings. Horsley dedicates various other works to the study of Jesus.<sup>21</sup> In *The Scepter and the Star*, John J. Collins analyses the concept of the messiah as found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and discusses a few of the uprising leaders whom he deems as prophetic and king type leaders.

---

<sup>15</sup> Smith, "The Troublemakers," 3:501-568.

<sup>16</sup> Davies and Sanders, "Jesus: from the Jewish Point of View," 3:618-677.

<sup>17</sup> Mary E. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: from Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

<sup>18</sup> Seth Schwartz, *The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishna* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006); James S. McLaren, *Power and Politics in Palestine the Jews: The Jews and the Governing of Their Land, 100 BC-AD 70* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Roland H. Worth Jr., *Messiahs and Messianic Movements through 1899* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); *Jesus and the Powers* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2011).

Information on the inner workings of politics in Palestine is well covered by several sources. Martin Goodman provides extensive data on the relationship between the Romans and the Jews.<sup>22</sup> He gives critical insight into the Roman practices in governing of its provinces in general and Palestine in particular. James S. McLaren has given a detailed account of direct Roman rule in Palestine, with specific reference to the Jewish power factions' influence in dealing with Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

The literature on the Jewish ruling parties is substantial. There are differing views as to which groups or persons were the ruling parties. Most view the High Priest as the real power broker among the Jewish factions. Others suggest that the Sanhedrin, with the High Priest as the head, was the seat of power. However, the existence of a Sanhedrin is also the subject of scholarly debate, as well as the role of the sects and the power they wielded. Cohen gives useful information on the Jewish sects, focusing on the different sources and the points of view of the three main sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes).<sup>24</sup>

A synthetic comparison of the uprisings that considers Jesus alongside the other leaders is lacking, and this is the gap the present project fills. I believe there is sufficient data to perform a satisfactory comparison of the uprisings and their leaders, as well as ample data to analyse the roles of the three ruling parties in relation to the uprisings and determine their influence and impact on those uprisings.

## Methodology

---

<sup>22</sup> Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Vintage, 2007); *The Roman World, 44 BC-AD 180* (London: Routledge, 1997); *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome, A.D. 66-70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> McLaren, *Power and Politics*.

<sup>24</sup> Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishna*, 138-157.

The historical data for my period, as with all ancient periods, poses significant challenges. First, there are limits to what we can know about the past because only “traces of the past” remain.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, these “traces” are contained in a limited number of sources, which raises the question as to their reliability due to the fact that they cannot be checked against other accounts. This means that we have only a very limited perspective of these events. A few of the matters that affect any ancient writer’s content, and consequently bring into question their reliability, are their bias, motivation, patronage and sources.

The issue of the author’s bias is a concern in the reliability of an account. Bias was inherent in ancient historiography. Tessa Rajak’s statement, “Josephus is not an objective writer,” could be said about any ancient historian.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Josephus and the New Testament had to rely on sources for their accounts, and each of these sources would have had their own biased perspective. The Gospels were written by followers of Jesus with the purpose of presenting Jesus as the Messiah; consequently, there obviously is bias. Bias, however, does not disqualify Josephus or the Gospels from being reliable in reconstructing the past as long as they are recognised as interpretations of the past and good historiographical methods are applied. Zeev Safrai offers two methods of determining the reliability of Josephus’ material, which can be equally applied to the New Testament; examining the internal logic of the material and the evaluating “internal parallels and the examination of details of an event related in different contexts.”<sup>27</sup>

As a leader of the Jews, Josephus’ motivation included presenting the Jews in the best light possible. Moreover, Josephus wrote under the patronage of General Titus Flavius Vespasianus, particularly the *Jewish War*. Morton Smith asserts that when *Jewish War* was

---

<sup>25</sup> Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991), 12.

<sup>26</sup> Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian*, 185.

<sup>27</sup> Zeev Safrai, “The Description of the Land of Israel in Josephus’ Works,” in *Josephus, the Bible and History*, ed. by L.H. Feldman and G. Hata (Tokyo: Yamamoto Shoten Publishing House, 1988), 295.

completed, it was presented to Titus and Vespasian for their approval, which it gained.<sup>28</sup>

However, recent opinion has questioned the degree of influence the Flavians had on Josephus and his writings.<sup>29</sup> The traditional view is that Josephus enjoyed a close relationship with the Flavians which had a direct affect upon the content of his work. Recent discussion has challenged this view, questioning whether Josephus had any relationship at all with the emperors.<sup>30</sup> Hollander posits that “Throughout his literary career in Rome, Josephus was writing for his own purposes, to his own readership, and on his own initiative.”<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, whether or not he was writing directly under the employ of the Flavians, it is reasonable to assume that Josephus would have been sensitive to their disposition and therefore have been influenced in framing his narrative. “History is never for itself; it is always for someone.”<sup>32</sup>

In addition, the two primary sources we have are dissimilar in various ways. In relation to the uprisings, Josephus was a chronological outsider. Josephus was born c. 37 C.E., so he writes of the events in my period that transpired prior to his birth and during his childhood. As such, he wrote from outside of the time and relied on sources that in turn may have relied on other sources. Furthermore, his sources were outsiders from the uprisings’ inner workings, as he does not seem to rely on first-hand accounts by participants in the uprisings. Josephus was also an ideological outsider in that he is critical of these uprisings and gives pejorative characterizations of the leaders.

---

<sup>28</sup> Smith, “The Troublemakers,” 3:502.

<sup>29</sup> William den Hollander, *Josephus, the Emperors and the City of Rome*, (Leiden: Brill Academic Press, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> For more discussion on Josephus’ sphere of influence in Rome see J. Sievers and G. Lembi, edd., *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond* (Leiden, 2005); J. Edmondson, S. Mason and J. Rives, edd., *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (Oxford, 2005); Steve Mason, *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Hollander, *Josephus, the Emperors and the City of Rome*, 251.

<sup>32</sup> Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*, 21.



The documents of the New Testament are written from an insider's perspective. The accounts of Jesus are given by his followers. Their perspective is from within the inner workings of the movement, albeit from later points in the history of the movement. As followers and advocates of Jesus, their version of the events are coloured by this insider position. This gave them information that outsiders would not have been privy to. The distinctive nature of the Gospels is also emphasised by Richard Horsley:

Biblical narratives and prophecies and the gospel traditions, of course, are highly unusual as historical documents because they contain so much from popular culture and express the concerns of ordinary, illiterate people – concerns that may well conflict with views expressed in other literary sources.<sup>33</sup>

This stands in contrast to the account of Josephus, a member of the Jewish elite.

Yet, it is not a simple situation of Josephus as an outsider and the gospel writers as insiders. In respect to the Jewish and Roman rulers, Josephus was an insider. As a Jewish leader, he would have been privy to information of dealings with the uprisings from the Jewish rulers. Moreover, Josephus lived in Rome from the end of the Great Revolt under the patronage of Titus and Vespasian as client of the Emperors.<sup>34</sup> For a long time, the consensus view was that Josephus “actively engaged with the Roman social and literary scene.”<sup>35</sup> From such a position he would have had access to the Roman perspective on the Jews. However, recent sentiment has cast doubt on Josephus’ integration within the Roman elite, suggesting that he was “a marginal figure in imperial Rome, isolated and lonely.”<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the very fact that Josephus resided in Rome would have given him at least a glimpse of the Roman point of view. The predominant view remains that Josephus had at least a degree of a Roman’s “insider” view. In this regard, the New Testament writers were outsiders. Since

---

<sup>33</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, 155.

<sup>34</sup> Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Capponi, “Josephus in Rome,” xii.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

both sources provide accounts of the rulers' activities, it is sometimes possible to check one against the other.

I proceed by examining the primary sources in order to gain a clear picture of each uprising and its leader, appraising their motives, characteristics and objectives. I will compare and contrast each uprising against the others. The objective is to ascertain how the character of each uprising dictated the response by the ruling parties and compare each to the uprising of Jesus. The role the ruling parties played in each uprising will be analysed in order to discover their impact. Regarding the Jewish rulers, my intention is to determine what actions they took with each uprising and whether those actions or lack thereof, aided or enabled the uprisings. The actions of the Romans will also be examined. Of special interest is their response in quashing the uprisings in order to determine whether they dealt with the individual uprisings differently.

I will analyse Jesus' uprising in the same manner as the other uprisings. The ruling parties' handling of Jesus' uprising will be of particular interest to ascertain their perceptions and whether he was treated differently than the other uprisings, which may have affected the outcome of his uprising. I will study the interplay between the ruling parties, focusing on any collusion between the Romans and Jewish rulers, to determine whether any of these actions were responsible for the continuation of Jesus' uprising. I will close with my conclusions.

## CHAPTER 1: THE JEWISH UPRISINGS, 4 B.C.E. - 44 C.E.

### Introduction

As stated above, I will examine the uprisings led by Judas the son of Hezekias, Simon of Peraea, Athronges the Shepherd, Judas the Galilean, John the Baptist, and Theudas. I will confine myself to these six because, although there were more uprisings, these seem to be the major ones and are the only leaders that the primary sources specify by name and for whom there is sufficient data to conduct at least a brief analysis. Josephus seems to indicate that uprisings were commonplace at the turn of the Common Era. After discussing in detail the sedition of the Jews against Sabinus, he states that “there were ἑτέρα μυρία θορύβων in Judea” (*Ant.* 17.10.4). This is not, of course, to be taken literally, as “ten thousand” is a favorite number used by Josephus to denote a large number.<sup>37</sup> He also states that there was trouble throughout the countryside (τὰ κατὰ τὴν χώραν πολλαχόθεν ἐταράσσετο, *J.W.* 2.4.1) and he claims that “as the several companies of the seditious lighted upon anyone to head them, he was created a king immediately” (*Ant.* 17.10.8), which gives the impression that many leaders were named kings by their followers.

In spite of there being many uprisings at the beginning of my period, Josephus only gives details of three uprisings and their leaders in 4 B.C.E. and discusses only two others that took place later, one in 6 C.E., and the other in 44 C.E. This leads to the question, if there were so many uprisings, especially immediately after the death of Herod the Great, why

---

<sup>37</sup> Smith, “The Troublemakers,” 3:505.

only detail so few? One can deduce that these were the most notable, the largest, the most successful, or perhaps he was limited by his sources. Nonetheless, we only have detail on these five. Josephus does not classify the uprisings of John the Baptist and Jesus with these uprisings, only mentioning them incidentally.

Josephus groups the first three uprisings together in *War* and *Antiquities* due to the fact that they broke out immediately after the death of Herod. This may also suggest that he considered them to be similar in nature. All the uprisings were led and supported by the peasantry. The ruling class, made up of the Priests, Sadducees and possibly some Pharisees, owed their positions to the Herodian and Roman regimes and the upper class had no vested interest in a change of government. The ruling class was also itself the target of some of the uprisings.<sup>38</sup>

Before I undertake an analysis of these uprisings, it will be helpful to clarify some potentially confusing issues with the names of various leaders. There is debate about whether Judas the son of Hezekias and Judas the Galilean were in fact the same person. I am convinced that they were two distinct persons. The only concrete reasons to believe that these two were the same person are that they both bear the same name and led uprisings. Some point to the fact that Josephus does not explicitly mention the death of Judas son of Hezekias as sufficient justification for considering him to be the same person as Judas the Galilean.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, there are good reasons to doubt this identification. There is a ten year gap between the two Judases' uprisings during which Josephus details Varus' systematic

---

<sup>38</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, XV.

<sup>39</sup> Kennard, "Judas of Galilee and His Clan," *JQR* 2/36, no.3 (1946): 283, "The silence of Josephus concerning his death is nevertheless evidence that the Judas of 4 B.C.E. is the same as the Judas of 6 C.E." Martin Hengel, *Die Zeloten* 2d ed.; AGJU 1; (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 298-299, 337-339; William Farmer, S. G. F. Brandon, are of the opinion that Judas son of Hezekias and Judas the Galilean are the same person. Kennard, Richard Horsley, E.P Sanders, E. Mary Smallwood, Steve Mason, et. al. hold the position that they were two distinct persons.

sweeping of the region, eliminating all vestiges of revolt. One must ask how Judas son of Hezekias survived when all the others did not. Also, when Josephus introduces Judas the Galilean in *Ant.* 18.1.1 he does not identify him as the son of Hezekias. Why the change in identification when he related the son of Hezekias' activities just three short chapters earlier (*Ant.* 17.10.5)?<sup>40</sup> Another issue is the description of Judas the son of Hezekias as a violent man, intent more on personal ambition than on Jewish concerns (*Ant.* 17.10.5). Judas the Galilean is described as a man who was the instigator and leader of a sect parallel to the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees; Josephus considered Judas' "school" to be in agreement in many respects with the opinions of the Pharisees (*Ant.* 18.1.6); he was a man with a philosophical viewpoint based on reason, a man who had "devised a distinctive theology to justify his behaviour," a sort of "intellectual revolutionary."<sup>41</sup> One may argue that the ten years between uprisings could have changed his perspective, perhaps due to aging or the fact that the first uprising failed, but such a change would have been extraordinary. There is also the suggestion that the two Judases had support from two opposing powers, "Sadducees perhaps for Hezekias and for his son in 4 B.C.E., and Pharisees for Judas in 6 C.E."<sup>42</sup> In both *Antiquities* and *War*, Josephus describes the two men as two different people, and there is no compelling reason to doubt Josephus on this point.

Another issue of identification concerns whether there were two Jewish uprising leaders by the name of Theudas. Josephus situates a Theudas c. 44 C.E., and in the Book of Acts Gamaliel mentions Theudas in the period before Judas the Galilean (6 C.E.; Acts 5).

---

<sup>40</sup> The discrepancy in Josephus' description of Judas as "a Gaulanite from a city named Gamala" (*Ant.* 18.1.2) and "a Galilaean," (*J.W.* 2.8.1; *Ant.* 18.1.6; 20.5.3) has been explained variously; "authorial incompetence" (Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, "Are Judas the Galilean and the 'Fourth Philosophy' Mere Concoctions? The Limits of Josephus' Inventiveness," *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 81 [2016]: 96); "as Gamala was part of Galilee a person could be called by both bynames" (Uriel Rappaport, "Who Were the Sicarii?," *The Jewish Revolt Against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. M. Popović [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 331); Judas the Galilean was "the name by which he was best known" (Steve Mason, ed., *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary* [vol. 1b of *Judean War* 2; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2008], 81).

<sup>41</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Kennard, "Judas of Galilee," 282-283.

Thus, there may have been two persons by the name of Theudas, who both led uprisings, one c. 44 C.E. and another among those “countless new tumults” that Josephus mentions in *Ant.*

17.10.4. Worth, who believes that there were two Theudas, notes Glen Miller’s rationale for two distinct men by looking at the differences in the two accounts. In Miller’s words:

- Josephus depicts the insurrection as so large that 20,000 die, while Gamaliel only mentions 400 supporters
- Gamaliel speaks of the followers being dispersed, while Josephus hits hard upon many of them being captured
- Gamaliel speaks only of a vague death of the insurrectionists, while Josephus speaks of a more dramatic arrest and beheading.<sup>43</sup>

In advocating two Theudas, Whiston proposes that Theudas, Thaddeus, and Judas differ little in the original language, therefore making confusion in identification a real possibility.<sup>44</sup>

It is possible that the author of Acts was simply mistaken in portraying Gamaliel as mentioning Theudas in his speech.<sup>45</sup> The writing of Acts probably took place between twenty and seventy years after the activities of the Theudas mentioned in Josephus.<sup>46</sup> This would provide ample opportunity for the name Theudas to become confused with that of another leader or for the precise chronology of his uprising to be forgotten.

Whether the name Theudas differs little or much in the original language from others, as Whiston puts forward, the name was not a common name in first century Palestine and this heavily favours one Theudas. Worth concedes this fact, admitting that it is “unlikely (though not impossible) that two rebel leaders would bear the same name.”<sup>47</sup> Smallwood states that “confusion between Theudas’ minor disturbance and one of the risings in 4 B.C.E., involving

---

<sup>43</sup> Glen Miller as quoted by Worth, *Messiahs*, 27.

<sup>44</sup> William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition*, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), 469.

<sup>45</sup> Gamaliel’s speech was c. 30 C.E., fourteen years before Josephus’ Theudas.

<sup>46</sup> I favour an early date for the composition of Acts (c. 62 C.E.). A later date would only increase the likelihood of an error in naming Theudas.

<sup>47</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 27

much larger numbers, is unlikely.”<sup>48</sup> The differences in both accounts can be easily accounted for, as Josephus was prone to exaggerate numbers (“the majority of the masses”) and was scant on details. I will take the predominant view that both Josephus and Acts refer to the same Theudas from c. 44 C.E.<sup>49</sup>

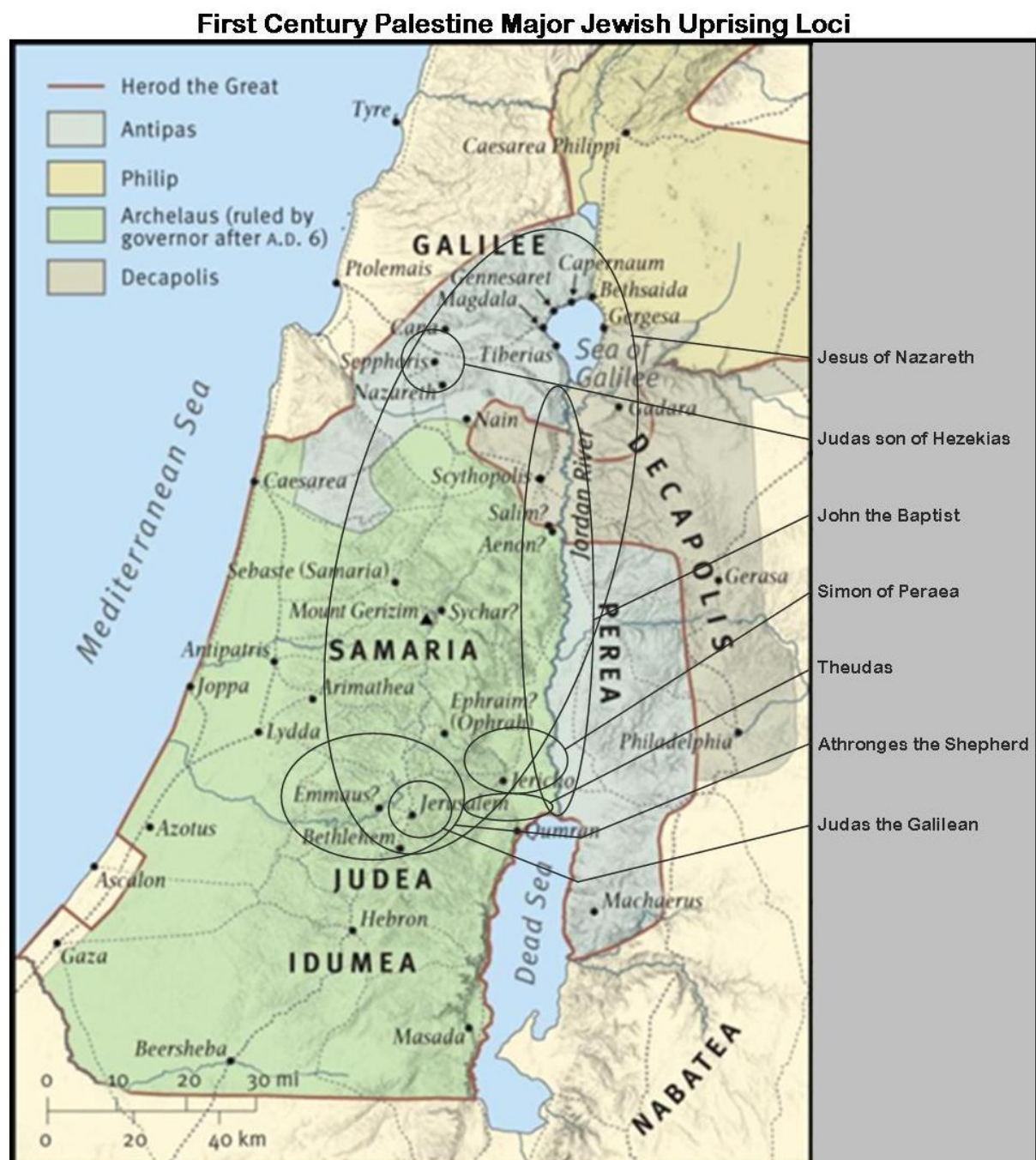


Figure 2. Map of the Loci of the Major Jewish Uprisings in Palestine. Adapted from <http://cdn-ak.f.st-hatena.com/images/fotolife/e/eastwindow18/20151115/20151115004256.png>

<sup>48</sup> Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman*, 260.

<sup>49</sup> This is the view of Horsley, Morton Smith, Smallwood, to name just three.

### **Judas the son of Hezekias, 4 B.C.E.<sup>50</sup>**

The first leader of a “disorder” (θόρυβος) that Josephus describes is Judas the son of Hezekias (*Ant.* 17.10.4-5). As his name states, he was the son of the famous figure in Jewish history of 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E. Palestine, Hezekias. Josephus characterizes Hezekias as a “bandit leader” (ἀρχιληστής, *Ant.* 14.9.2; *W.J.* 1.10.5; 2.4.1). Most scholars consider Judas to be a commoner of humble beginnings who had gained a following based on his descent and ruthless character.<sup>51</sup> Some have cast doubt on this portrayal, drawing attention to the reaction of “the leading Jews” to Hezekias’ execution (*Ant.* 14.9.3). Why would the leading Jews (priests, aristocracy, etc.) object to the execution of a common criminal? William Farmer posits that this “incident suggests the possibility that Hezekias was a man of some importance for the Jerusalem aristocracy.”<sup>52</sup> He goes as far as to suggest that Hezekias, and therefore Judas, is from the royal line of the Maccabaeans. The incident may be more related to the “chief Jews” dislike of Herod than any standing Hezekias had with them. Morton Smith claims that Judas may have “had some connection with the royal line,” since Josephus says he “desired royal rank.”<sup>53</sup>

Josephus states that Judas was “an object of terror to all men” (*Ant.* 17.10.5), which indicates that he was indiscriminate in his attacks and terrorizing the general populace was part of his strategy to gain power.<sup>54</sup> Whoever stood in his path, whether the Jewish peasantry, Jewish elites, client king’s forces or Romans, bore the brunt of his brutal conduct.

---

<sup>50</sup> The relevant primary source text for each uprising is provided in the Appendix for the convenience of the reader.

<sup>51</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> William Farmer, “Judas, Simon and Athronges,” *NTS* 4, no. 2 (1958): 150.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, “The Troublemakers,” 3:505.

<sup>54</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 15-16.



Josephus characterizes his followers as a “crowd of desperate men” (πλῆθος ἀνδρῶν ἄπονενοημένων), signifying that they were just as ruthless as he and contributing to the image of this uprising as especially violent and vicious.

According to Josephus, Judas was motivated by personal ambition, having as his objective the “desire for great possessions.” This characterization (avarice) is ascribed to all the uprisings that occurred at the time (“in many quarters many men rose in arms...in hope of personal gain,” *Ant.* 17.10.4). Judas’ desire to raise himself to “royal rank,” situates him among the many who endeavoured to set up as king (*Ant.* 17.10.5; *J.W.* 2.4.1). Judas’ uprising was a violent uprising. He began with the sacking of the palace in Sepphoris, raiding the armoury in order to arm his followers and stealing the treasury. A variation to the other uprising leaders is that it seems Judas not only attacked the king’s forces and the Romans, but he also “attacked the other aspirants to power” (*J.W.* 2.4.1).

Josephus claims that Judas was able to gather a “large number” and a “considerable body of followers,” suggesting that his uprising enjoyed a degree of popularity. Worth writes that “the fact that the Romans burned Sepphoris, at least to some extent, would most naturally imply that they knew – or suspected – that a significant body of local support remained for Judas.”<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the uprising was short lived as Josephus only mentions one attack. The small amount of information about Judas’ uprising may be a further indication of it being of short duration as well as of limited advancement. It may also point to a smaller following than what Josephus claims. Josephus gives considerably more detail of Simon’s uprising and Athronges’ receives greater still, perhaps an indication that their uprisings were more significant and of longer duration. Alternately, this may be an indication of Josephus’ limited sources for Judas’ uprising.

---

<sup>55</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 16; Steve Mason, *Judean War*, 48.

Josephus' narrative suggests that the uprisings of Judas, Simon and Athronges occurred almost simultaneously. In *Antiquities* 17.10.9-10, he relates Varus coming through Palestine with his army and systematically putting down each uprising, hunting down the instigators and venting his wrath on the greater populace. Josephus gives the account of the destruction of Sepphoris by Varus' subordinates, the execution of many of the population and enslavement of the remainder, which can reasonably be considered retaliation for the sacking of the palace and the putting down of Judas' uprising.

Josephus does not narrate Judas' fate as he does that of Simon of Peraea (execution by Gratus). Judas may have escaped, which is the belief of those who consider Judas son of Hezekias and Judas the Galilean to be the same person. This seems highly unlikely as Varus specifically tasked his army with searching "for those who were responsible for the revolt" (*Ant.* 17.10.10). Josephus states that "when they were discovered he punished those who were most guilty but some he released;" Judas, Simon and Athronges should be considered among "those who were most guilty" and consequently executed.

### **Simon of Peraea, 4 B.C.E.**

Simon of Peraea, a former slave (δοῦλος) of King Herod, led the second disorder recorded by Josephus c. 4 B.C.E. Horsley speculates that the description (slave) could mean that he was "a lower-level Herodian official but more likely a tenant-farmer on the royal estates east of the Jordan."<sup>56</sup> The fact that Simon was a former slave should not make us doubt that he would aspire to kingship, as slaves could be highly educated. Josephus characterizes Simon as one who "was expected to go farther" (*Ant.* 17.10.6) and may have had a position of great

---

<sup>56</sup> Richard A. Horsley, "Messianic Figures and Movements in First-Century Palestine," in *The Messiah: Development in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1992), 286.

responsibility within Herod's household due to his exceptional abilities. Worth suggests that based on his position within the palace, Simon thought "he should be regarded as Herod's proper successor."<sup>57</sup> The fact that he was "bold enough to place the diadem on his head" (*Ant.* 17.10.6) implies that he was claiming to be the rightful successor to Herod or even the messiah. Simon is also the only uprising leader during my period that Tacitus mentions in his brief survey of Judaea, noting that he was a self-appointed king and was killed, which confirms the narrative of Josephus.<sup>58</sup>

Josephus also describes Simon's physical appearance. Among the other leaders, he only mentions Athronges' height and physical strength (*Ant.* 17.10.7). He depicts Simon as being handsome and taking "pre-eminence by size and bodily strength" (*Ant.* 17.10.6); this perhaps is an indication that Simon's ascent was not unilateral but that his appearance held sway with the people, reminiscent of the description of King Saul and his rise in the Old Testament.<sup>59</sup>

Simon took advantage of the chaos that ensued after the death of Herod to launch his uprising; Josephus describes the situation as ἀκρισίᾳ τῶν πραγμάτων (*Ant.* 17.10.6). The only motivation given is Simon's desire to be king. Josephus states that Simon "rated himself worthy of this [being king] beyond anyone else" (*Ant.* 17.10.6). It seems that Simon believed he was the only one who could lead the Jews to freedom from Roman oppression. Simon did not share the vicious nature of Judas son of Hezekias, at least in regard to the general populace, as his attacks were specifically on Herodian and aristocratic interests (*War* 2.4.2).

---

<sup>57</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 13-14.

<sup>58</sup> Tacitus, *Histories* 5.9.

<sup>59</sup> 1 Samuel 9:2 (NIV), "Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else."

Simon and many of his followers were from Peraea, from where he launched his first attack on Jericho, burning the royal palace as well as many other royal residences and plundering what was left. This may be an indication that Simon was not motivated by greed. Whereas Judas son of Hezekias raided the palace of its arms and booty, there is no mention of destruction. Simon, on the other hand, destroyed the palace and its contents first, then, salvaged what was left. In subsequent attacks he allowed his followers to plunder what they could from the remains. These actions may signify that his intentions were directed primarily at an overthrow of the Romans and not on avarice. Alternately, it may only indicate poor strategy and disorganization, as Josephus does characterize Simon's followers as "ᾠσύντακτος" (*Ant.* 17.10.6).

Simon's uprising was a military campaign, as opposed to a non-violent movement, with attacks against the royal palace in Jericho and other royal residences, and it extended to "many parts of the country" (*Ant.* 17.10.6). Josephus only describes Simon's followers as being "a body of men" but the fact that he singled Simon out (with Judas and Athronges) from among the "countless" uprisings indicates that his following must have been considerable. His fighters were not trained fighters, "fighting with more recklessness than science," but they were determined, as Gratus was able to defeat them only with great difficulty ("A long and heavy battle was fought between them," *Ant.* 17.10.6). After a brief pursuit, Simon was caught and beheaded. His uprising had promise, as Josephus suggests that Simon was a force to be reckoned with and posed a legitimate threat to the ruling authorities ("he would have done something still more serious if attention had not quickly been turned to him," (*Ant.* 17.10.6). There is a reference by Josephus to Simon's uprising spawning other attacks, specifically in Betharamptha and Amathus (*J.W.* 2.4.2), which may indicate that Simon's influence was greater than his brief campaign.

### **Athronges the Shepherd, 4 B.C.E.**

The third uprising narrated by Josephus is that of Athronges the Shepherd (4 B.C.E.). Of the four uprisings at the turn of the Common Era, Josephus gives the most detail of Athronges'. There is speculation about his name being a moniker rather than a proper name, as is the case with Judas Maccabaeus<sup>60</sup> ("He was called [καλέω] Athrongaeus," *J.W.* 2.4.3). Little is known of Athronges before his uprising. Josephus presents him as a person who, had it not been for his uprising, would have gone unnoticed. He describes him as not having the expected pedigree of someone who should rise to power; he had no ancestry, no wealth, no position and no influence. According to Josephus, Athronges was "merely" a shepherd (*Ant.* 17.10.7). Of course, Athronges' relative anonymity and vocation made for an easy connection to King David and was advantageous to his rise, as "the shepherding background of Athronges fit perfectly with messianic aspirations. The prototype/ideal king of Israel was David, who had come from exactly that environment."<sup>61</sup> The fact that Athronges was able to gain a significant following and lead a prolonged campaign indicates that Josephus' characterization of Athronges as a nonentity without heritage and influence was only an attempt to discredit him.

Just as Josephus described Simon of Peraea's physical attributes, he also outlines Athronges' physical qualities ("he was remarkable for his great stature and feats of strength"). Josephus' reference to Athronges' indifference to death ("contemptuous of death," καταφρονοῦσα) and his audacity in daring (τολμάω) to proclaim himself king show qualities of inner strength and boldness; traits advantageous to his ambitions (*J.W.* 2.4.3; *Ant.* 17.10.7).

---

<sup>60</sup> Farmer, "Judas, Simon and Athronges," 152.

<sup>61</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 15.

Athronges' uprising was significantly different from the first two that Josephus narrates. He presided over an organized and effective military outfit that developed into a form of government. Aided by his four brothers, Athronges organized his force into four divisions, each headed by one of his brothers. Whereas Judas and Simon led unilaterally, Athronges was a leader who sought the input of those he led, as he "held a council to discuss what things were to be done" (*Ant.* 17.10.7). This indicates that he was not just a ruffian as Judas and Simon were purported to have been by Josephus but that he employed some form of strategy and delegated authority. Athronges' council confirms Josephus' statement that his followers were "a large number of people" (*Ant.* 17.10.7), as the size of an effective organisation's leadership can be indicative of its size. Additionally, "a fundamental demand of any numerically substantial body would be the division of it into smaller units for the purpose of effectively utilizing the available manpower."<sup>62</sup> Another difference from prior leaders is the comportment of Athronges. Josephus recognised Athronges as carrying on as a king, ("he himself, *like a king*, handled matters of graver moment" [*emphasis mine*] *J.W.* 2.4.3). This may have only been intended to be in reference to organizational matters but no such recognition is given to the former two.

Athronges' uprising was more comprehensive than those of Judas son of Hezekias and Simon. Whereas they attacked royal assets and properties, Athronges took on royal forces and the Romans ("He and his brothers also applied themselves vigorously to slaughtering the Romans and the king's men," *Ant.* 17.10.7). It seems that the other uprisings fought against the Romans when the Romans brought the fight to them in response to their attacks on the royal residences, while Athronges had the audacity to take the fight to the Romans ("they *even* attacked a company of Romans," [*emphasis mine*] *Ant.* 17.10.7; "Their principal object was to kill Romans and royalists," *J.W.* 2.4.3). It was more comprehensive

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 14.

in that, although his uprising was centred in Judaea, the “whole of Judaea” was a place of guerrilla warfare with attacks in the country and at Emmaus.

Initially, Josephus depicts Athronges as being motivated by mindless barbarianism by stating that his desire in the kingship was the “freedom to act more outrageously” (ὕβριζω). This behaviour included killing “from the habit of killing.” But Josephus also presents at least two other motivations. As with Judas son of Hezekias, selfish ambition was an incentive for Athronges’ uprising. He posits that Athronges thought that as king he would have the power to do as he wanted (*Ant.* 17.10.7). Athronges’ ambition was such that even fellow Jews were attacked in pursuit of gain. Another motive was vengeance. Josephus states that Athronges attacked the king’s forces “because of the arrogance that they had shown during the reign of Herod.” This “arrogance” (ὑβρις) could have entailed insult or mistreatment during the stronghold of Herod the Great. Josephus details many accusations against Herod (and his surrogates) by the Jewish delegation to Caesar during the deliberation on whom to place in control of Judaea after Herod’s death. These range from demanding “lavish extra contributions” of tribute to “drunken violence” (“the corrupting of their virgin daughters and the debauching of their wives,” *Ant.* 17.11.2). Vengeance was also taken out on the Romans for the physical abuse endured at their hands during their occupation.

Athronges actually ruled as a king. Judas the son of Hezekias had “ambition for royal rank” but nothing is said about his attaining such a position or of being considered a king by his followers. Simon took for himself the position of king by placing a “diadem on his head.” Athronges also placed a diadem upon his head but also “had the title of king” (καλέω), indicating that there were those, and perhaps not only among his followers, who considered him to be king. In addition, Josephus states that he acted like a king, and retained the “kingdom” (*Ant.* 17.10.7).

The effectiveness of Athronges' uprising can be seen in its duration. Whereas Judas' and Simon's uprisings were put down rather quickly, Athronges' uprising lasted "for a long time," possibly between two and four years.<sup>63</sup> This is further evidenced in the fact that even after his capture and execution his brothers continued the uprising "a long while." The duration was directly related to the difficulty with which the Romans had in putting down the uprising, Josephus stating that their kind of warfare "caused the Romans no little trouble" (*Ant.* 17.10.7). It may have also been facilitated by the organization and plurality of leadership.

### **Judas the Galilean, 6 C.E.**

The next uprising Josephus presents is that of Judas the Galilean. Ten years have passed since the first three uprisings detailed by Josephus; he presents no uprisings in the intervening years. In fact he skips the period entirely, going from the quashing of the first three uprisings by Varus, straight to the summons of Archelaus to Rome (6 C.E.). Archelaus is subsequently removed from his domain by Rome due to his incompetence and Judaea is annexed to Syria. Augustus placed Quirnius in Syria as the new governor and Coponius was made procurator over Judaea. Thus Judaea came under direct rule of an occupying power; the first time in 170 years.

For an uprising that purportedly had ripple effects that stretched to the Great Revolt, Josephus gives relatively little information. He gives no background on Judas, aside from the unclear reference to him being "a Gaulanite from a city named Gamala" (*Ant.* 18.1.2) and "a Galilaean," (*J.W.* 2.8.1; *Ant.* 18.1.6; 20.5.3). The Book of Acts also states that he was "the Galilean" (Acts 5:37).

---

<sup>63</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 14; Farmer, "Judas, Simon and Athronges," 52.



The uprising of Judas the Galilean took place in Judaea. His uprising was different in several aspects to the preceding ones. This uprising is the only one with a possible direct connection to the Jewish ruling elite, although to what extent is unclear. Judas' accomplice Saddok was a Pharisee. Whether he acted independently from the sect is uncertain. Josephus gives no indication of any direct connection to the sect, but as Josephus was opposed to the uprising and he was a Pharisee, he may have omitted any link.

Another difference is the manner in which Josephus refers to Judas; he uses the ambiguous word σοφιστής two times to describe Judas (*Wars* 2.8.1; 2.17.8). This stands in contrast to his clearly negative characterizations of the other uprising leaders.<sup>64</sup> Some read the use of σοφιστής here as disparaging while others view it as complimentary.<sup>65</sup> Mason considers the use of the term to be pejorative, stating that Josephus only uses this term in reference to teachers whom he considers to be “inciters, trouble-makers, or disturbers of the peace,” among whom he includes Judas and his son, Menachem.<sup>66</sup> Josephus does use the term δεινός (*W.J.* 2.8.1) as an adjective of σοφιστής further confirming the derogatory connotation.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, Brandon points out that Josephus “says nothing overly hostile or condemnatory” about Judas and considers it remarkable that he uses σοφιστής in the first place, as he considers the proper translation to be “learned man or teacher.”<sup>68</sup> Horsley interprets the word as “a scholar-teacher trained in interpretation of the Torah, like

---

<sup>64</sup> Judas son of Hezekiah, “He became an object of terror to all men by plundering those he came across in his desire for great possessions and his ambition for royal rank” (*Ant.* 17.10. 5); Simon of Peraea, “Perambulating the country with the brigands whom he had collected” (*J.W.* 2.4.2); Athronges, “Athronges, a man distinguished neither for the position of his ancestors nor by the excellence of his character” (*Ant.* 17.10.7).

<sup>65</sup> Disparagingly: Steve Mason. Complimentary: R.A. Horsley, R. Worth, S.G.F. Brandon, Seth Schwartz.

<sup>66</sup> Mason, *Judean War*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (New York: Charles Scribner' Sons, 1967), 32, “terrible, strange, powerful or clever.”

<sup>68</sup> Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 32.

Judas and Matthias” (*Ant.* 17.6.2) and considers Judas to be a “sage” and an “intellectual.”<sup>69</sup> He also notes that Josephus does not disparage Judas and Saddok as brigands.<sup>70</sup> Worth posits that by using this term, Josephus characterizes Judas as the “intellectual rationalizer for all Jewish revolutionary movements that came afterwards.”<sup>71</sup> The point is that Josephus uses a potentially respectable term (σοφιστής) to characterize Judas, which deviates from his descriptions of the earlier uprising leaders. This is remarkable, as Josephus blames Judas for initiating the movement (Fourth Philosophy) that instigated the Great Revolt, to which Josephus was opposed. Additionally, both references are made in *Wars*, which was written immediately after the Great War and under the patronage of Vespasian and Titus. One would expect Josephus to be more scathing in his characterization of Judas, given his disposition towards him and the proximity to the Flavians.

The nature of the uprising is another difference. Josephus narrates no violent confrontation with the Romans, only a campaign of resistance. One cannot say with unquestionable certainty that there was no military action, but the fact that Josephus gives no indication of any military attacks does give that impression. Whereas the previous uprisings were characterized by attacks on royal assets and Roman soldiers, Judas is portrayed as inciting a revolt, although the nature of that revolt is not defined. That Judas and Saddok moved quickly with “the plot to strike boldly” (*Ant.* 18.1.6) and that they were prepared to engage in “the bloodshed that might be necessary” (*Ant.* 18.1.1) may indicate an armed uprising. But what if the blood to be shed was their own? Is this in armed engagement or in non-violent resistance? Josephus goes on to claim that Judas and Saddok sowed the “seed” that produced “butchery of each other [fellow Jews]” (*Ant.* 18.1.1). Josephus writes about the

---

<sup>69</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, 81; “Popular Messianic Movements around the Time of Jesus,” *CBQ*, 46/3 (1984): 485; *Jesus and the Powers*, 75.

<sup>70</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “Josephus and the Bandits,” *JSJ* 10, no. 1 (1976): 39-40.

<sup>71</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 12.

results of rebellion (“the seed”) in a philosophical interlude (*Ant.* 18.1.7-8) but it is in relation to the revolt that led to the Great Revolt and not specific to Judas’ initial activities. Horsley posits that Judas and Saddok’s “seeds and tumult...far from being any sort of ‘armed rebellion,’ are their ideas: ‘the novelty’ of their philosophy, which Josephus claims was ‘an innovation and reform in [the Jewish] ancestral traditions (*Ant.* 18.9).”<sup>72</sup> Goodman considers Judas’ uprising to be of little consequence, as a “brief flurry of resistance to taxation” and not military in nature as he considers the years from Archelaus’ rule until 66 C.E. to be “a long period of stability and peace.”<sup>73</sup>

Additionally, whereas the first three uprisings are characterized as violent armed disturbances, Josephus does not refer to them as revolts or rebellions as he does with Judas the Galilean. In two of six references to Judas, Josephus claims he led the people to ἀπόστασις (“rebellion” *Ant.* 18.1.1; “revolt” *J.W.* 2.8.1). The book of Acts uses the term ἀφίστημι to characterize the activities of Judas (Acts 5:37, NIV: “led a band of people in revolt”). This is significant, since Judas’ uprising is not portrayed as a violent confrontation with Roman or royal troops. The uprising of Judas son of Hezekias is described as attacks and plundering of royal and other’s assets in his “ambition for royal rank” (*Ant.* 17.10.5). Simon is also said to have attacked royal and elite residences, and to have διάδημά τε ἐτόλμησε περιθέσθαι.<sup>74</sup> Neither of the two directly confronted the Romans. Athronges, as stated above, led a more complete uprising that could be construed as a rebellion but Josephus only details his military strategies and declares that ἐτόλμησεν ἐπὶ βασιλείᾳ φρονῆσαι τῷ κτώμενος<sup>75</sup> and does not use ἀπόστασις.

---

<sup>72</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, 78-79.

<sup>73</sup> Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 382-383.

<sup>74</sup> “he was bold enough to place the diadem on his head.”

<sup>75</sup> “This man had the temerity to aspire to the kingship.”

There is also a difference in motivation. Whereas the uprising of Athronges had been driven by the desire for vengeance and power, and Simon and Judas son of Hezekias were motivated by royal ambition, Judas' ambition was primarily based on philosophical and theological precepts. Josephus states that the census of Judaea ordered by Cesar to facilitate the collection of taxes was the stimulus for Judas' uprising. There appears to be indignation in Judas' response that the census would amount to "downright slavery" (*Ant.* 18.1.7). Judas considered that to pay tribute to Cesar was to submit to him as sovereign, which he thought contravened the biblical principal of God as the only sovereign of the Jews. His motivation can be considered noble and pious. Josephus makes what can be interpreted as a veiled reference to Judas when he makes a blanket statement as to the motivation of those involved in rebellion in the middle of his discourse on what led to the Great Revolt (*Ant.* 18.1.7-10), claiming that the supposed motivation of those in rebellion is "the common welfare" of the people but in reality their "motive is private gain" (*Ant.* 18.1.7). Nonetheless, there is no indication that Judas desired a royal title, power or monetary gain and without direct evidence in reference to Judas, one must assume Judas' motives were noble.

Judas' principled motivation and character is also evident in his objectives. Judas' ultimate objective was independence from Roman occupation for the Jewish nation, which he considered would have "laid the foundation of prosperity" for the people (*Ant.* 18.1.7). In the case of falling short of his principle objective he states that the honour and renown won would be worth the attempt, even if their cause cost them their lives. He also considered his objective to have the support of God himself.

Judas' uprising "made serious progress." According to Josephus he was the founder of a fourth sect (parallel to the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes), which Josephus calls "an intrusive fourth school of philosophy," although he does not give it a specific name. The predominant characteristic was "an overpowering passion for freedom and a refusal to call

any man master.”<sup>76</sup> This sect is widely held to have spawned the Zealots and/or Sicarii years later, although Josephus does not make a direct connection.<sup>77</sup> Josephus does place direct blame for the disastrous Great Revolt squarely on the “seeds” sown by Judas and Saddok.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that, at least in the narrative of Josephus, the uprising of Judas had a more long-lasting and significant impact compared to the other uprisings. The book of Acts claims that Judas was killed and his followers dispersed (Acts 5:37), but the account in Acts is jumbled and anachronistic, and possibly dependent upon Josephus.<sup>79</sup>

The uprising of Judas the Galilean poses interesting and significant differences with the previous ones, as well as seemingly revealing a development in leadership. Judas’ takes a different tack, basing his uprising on principle and causing his followers to take a philosophical stand. I see a definite shift from hostile confrontation to a nonviolent campaign in his uprising. The use of ἀπόστασις to describe Judas’ uprising does not necessarily mean a violent rebellion; it has a range of meanings, among them; defection, separation, and desisting from, which all refer to some form of dissent but do not have violent connotations.<sup>80</sup> Also, the phrase προύκοπτεν ἐπὶ μέγα ἢ ἐπιβολὴ τοῦ τολμήματος<sup>81</sup> does not necessarily have a violent implication. Josephus asserts that Judas and Saddok “sowed the seeds” that led to the violence that befell the nation, not that they necessarily engaged in violence. Josephus also seems to change the manner in which he narrates Judas’ uprising as there is none of the disparaging characterization that there is with the others. I propose that despite

---

<sup>76</sup> Smith, “The Troublemakers,” 3:154.

<sup>77</sup> Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, Hengel, *Zealots*.

<sup>78</sup> I note the opposing arguments such as, Smith, “The Troublemakers,” 3:508-9.

<sup>79</sup> Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologist* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> *LSJ*.

<sup>81</sup> “the plot to strike boldly made serious progress.”

Josephus' connection of Judas the Galilean to the later events of the Jewish revolt, Josephus almost grudgingly acknowledges the principled character of Judas and his uprising.

### **John the Baptist, c. 30 C.E.**

Both the synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel provide a good deal of information about John the Baptist, but we still lack many important details about his life and work. Josephus adds a brief reference to John in the context of Herod Antipas' defeat by King Aretas. These two primary sources, the Gospels and Josephus, agree in most aspects except for a discrepancy as to the reason for Herod's execution of John. Josephus states that Herod was concerned with the possibility of John leading a revolt based on what he perceived to be John's eloquent and persuasive speech and large following. Therefore, Herod took pre-emptive action and had him executed. The Gospel of Mark confirms Herod's fear of John (Mark 6). The Gospels of Matthew and Mark credit John's rebuke of Herod, in response to his marriage to his sister-in-law, Herodias, for Herod's arrest of John and a foolish vow to Herodias' daughter for his subsequent execution.

According to the Gospel of Luke, John was from a priestly family.<sup>82</sup> He conducted most of his activities in the vicinity of the wilderness along the Jordan (Matt. 3:1 and parallels) and was arrested by Herod Antipas, whose tetrarchy included Peraea. There is some debate as to the possibility of John having been part of the Essene sect. His wilderness motif, message, clothing and diet have all been used to point to an Essene connection.<sup>83</sup>

Daniel Schwartz points out some specific similarities:

---

<sup>82</sup> Luke 1:5.

<sup>83</sup> See Joan E. Taylor, "John the Baptist and the Essenes," *JJS* 47, no. 2 (1996): 256-285, for a comprehensive discussion on John the Baptist and the Essenes. See also Otto Betz, "Was John the Baptist an Essene?" *BRev* VI, no. 6, (1990); D. R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tubingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1992); James A. Kelhoffer, "Did John the Baptist Eat Like a Former Essene? Locust-Eating in the

[T]hey shared the same desert (Luke 1:80; Mark 1:4-5 parr.) and a special interest in Isaiah 40:3 in connection with it; ascetism and a concern for ritual purity and immersion ('baptism'); priestly background (Luke 1:5); a call for sharing of property (Luke 3:11); and a special sensitivity to incest (Mark 6:17-18 parr.).<sup>84</sup>

While these aspects of John's life are similar to the Essenes there are also some glaring differences between John and the sect. For instance, he did not live among the Essenes, at Qumran or elsewhere. John roamed up and down the region around the Jordan River and was not tied down to any one location.<sup>85</sup> The differences have been explained by suggesting that he had once been part of the sect but went his own way later in pursuit of his own objectives or the proposal that he was a non-orthodox member of the sect.<sup>86</sup> As none of the sources make an explicit or even a veiled connection between the two, most scholars agree that the affiliation is overly speculative.

In comparison with the preceding uprisings I have discussed, John's differs significantly in at least two respects. First, he was a reluctant leader, reluctant not in his mission but in assuming the title of messiah.<sup>87</sup> Jewish messianic hopes in the first century usually focused on a Davidic messiah who would "restore the fortunes of Israel to the imagined conditions of Israel's ideal past."<sup>88</sup> But there were "messianic strands which envisaged a priestly messiah, or an anointed prophet or a heavenly Son of Man."<sup>89</sup> John fit the anointed prophet messianic motif. Therefore, at least some Jews seem to have speculated

---

Ancient Near East and at Qumran" *DSD* 11, no. 3, (2004): 293-314; Alan Taylor Farnes, "John the Baptist and the Qumran Connection" *Studia Antiqua* 9, no.1 (2011): 39-45.

<sup>84</sup> Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background*, 3.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, "John the Baptist and the Essenes," 274.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 257.

<sup>87</sup> This is the term used in the Gospels. I use it here simply to mean the leader of the movement. I am aware of the issue of whether the term was contemporary to the time I am dealing with and whether there was a heightened expectancy of "the Messiah".

<sup>88</sup> John G. Gager, "Messiahs and Their Followers," in *Toward the Millennium. Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (ed. Peter Schafer and Mark Cohen; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 38.

<sup>89</sup> John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 237.

that he might be the Messiah (Mark 11:32; John 1:19, 22). All the Gospels portray him deflecting attention away from himself and toward Jesus (Mark 1:7-8 and parallels). In spite of this, John gathered a large and loyal following who continued to believe he was a prophet or the expected Prophet from Old Testament prophecy (Mark 1:5).<sup>90</sup> His conduct and appearance draw parallels with the Old Testament prophets, (his dress, behaviour and locale) and he was associated with the prophet Elijah (Luke 3). Such was the loyalty of his followers that his death did not put an immediate end to his movement.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, the leaders of the other uprisings were self-promoted and, with the exception of Judas the Galilean, one of their principal motivations was ambition for “royal rank”.

The second difference is that John’s uprising is best viewed as being of wilderness centred moral character. While the first three uprisings were predominately violent, there is no reference to any hostility or violence with John the Baptist. Gager characterizes John’s undertaking as “messianic” but there is no confrontation with or resistance to the Romans or the tetrarchs.<sup>92</sup> His confrontation was with the Jewish rulers and was not an attempt to overthrow their power but a challenge to what he perceived to be their ethical and religious shortcomings.<sup>93</sup> I concur with Horsley’s position that John was challenging the priestly aristocracy’s authority and power, but I would argue that he was advocating change in behaviour, not change in ruling powers.<sup>94</sup> His uprising was completely ideological/religious, although it was not perceived as such by Herod Antipas, who feared that John would lead an insurrection. His self-confessed purpose had the potential to be interpreted as insurrectionist

---

<sup>90</sup> On the Eschatological Prophet see John Collins, *The Star and the Scepter*, 128-130; Morris Faierstein, “Why Do the Scribes Say That Elijah Must Come First,” *JBL* 100, no. 1, (1981): 75-86.

<sup>91</sup> Gager, “Messiahs and Their Followers,” 39.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> I use the term “religious” for the lack of a more appropriate term. I am aware of its anachronistic deficiencies.

<sup>94</sup> Horsley, *Bandits*, 179.



by the Romans, as he was preparing the way for the κύριος (Mark 1:3). Nevertheless, there is no indication in either Josephus or the New Testament that violent insurrection was a real possibility.

The first three uprisings were predominantly violent encounters. The previous leaders were actively pursuing military conflict with the Romans and/or Herods and, according to Josephus, with the Jewish rulers only (and Jews in general) if they crossed their paths (*Ant.* 17.1.7).

John's uprising was short lived. Although the primary sources advance different motivations for John's execution by Herod, both agree that he had John executed. Gager notes that John's death failed to put an end to the movement and "that his followers believed that he had been raised from the dead, and for a period of time thereafter the John-movement flourished as a dangerous rival to the Jesus-movement."<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, the "uprising" came to an end.<sup>96</sup>

### **Theudas, 44 C.E.**

The uprising of Theudas is perhaps the most puzzling of all the uprisings I am analysing. His uprising arose at a time of transition for the Jewish people, similar to the death of Herod the Great (4 B.C.E) and the exile of Archelaus (6 C.E.); the unexpected death of King Agrippa I and the return to direct Roman rule under Fadus the procurator (*Ant.* 19.9.2).<sup>97</sup> Josephus gives no background information on Theudas, unlike the previous leaders for whom he at

---

<sup>95</sup> Gager, "Messiahs and Their Followers," 39.

<sup>96</sup> The claim that the Mandaean religion is a continuation of John the Baptist's movement is rejected by most scholars. In fact some Mandaean's claim to pre-date John the Baptist. See Kurt Rudolf, Dennis C. Duling and John Modschiedler, "Problems of a History of the Development of the Mandaean Religion," *HR* 8, no. 3 (1969): 210-235; Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>97</sup> P. W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets -A.D. 40-70 Their Intentions and Origin," *NTS* 27, no. 5 (1981): 681; Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman*, 257.

least gives a designation. He also gives very little detail on his activities and the little he does give makes them more ambiguous. He describes Theudas as a γόης, translated “impostor” by Feldman. Morton Smith states that the term “primarily meant a singer of spells who enchanted and might deceive his hearers” but came to represent a deceiver of the soul.<sup>98</sup> This is significant, as Josephus uses the term for none of the other uprising leaders of my period.<sup>99</sup> Smallwood refers to Theudas as the “first of the crop of pseudo-messiahs and false prophets” who appeared during the rule of Fadus and credits him with setting the “pattern for later imposters.”<sup>100</sup> To be sure, Josephus does narrate the rising of “impostors” with the same wilderness motif during the rule of Felix and he distinguishes between “impostors” (γόης) and “brigands” (ληστής, *Ant.* 20.8.6). According to Josephus, Theudas declared himself to be a prophet which would make him more of a spiritual leader. Josephus’ use of the term γόης seems to favour a spiritual leader, although a false spiritual leader or deceiver. Acts describes Theudas as someone “claiming to be somebody,” which could be interpreted as having some sort of spiritual implications, as the context is the uprising of Jesus.

This uprising, as with John the Baptist, has no suggestion of violence on the part of the participants. In fact, Theudas’ actions seem pretty innocuous at first. Horsley suggests that Theudas was not expecting an attack from the Romans and if this was the case it would point to an unarmed uprising.<sup>101</sup> His defeat was executed easily and quickly, although Theudas’ followers were significant in number, which also suggests they were unarmed. Josephus claims that Theudas was able to persuade “the majority of the masses” to follow him, while Acts numbers them at four hundred, but that number may be inaccurate

---

<sup>98</sup> Morton Smith, “The Troublemakers,” 3:515.

<sup>99</sup> 4 B.C.E. - 44 C.E.

<sup>100</sup> Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman*, 259. *Ant.* 20.8.6 narrates the proliferation of “impostors” (γόης).

<sup>101</sup> Horsley and Hanson. *Bandits*, 167.

considering the inaccurate dating of the uprising. Josephus narrates that Theudas persuaded the people to bring their belongings with them and follow him to the Jordan River where he would part it and provide an easy avenue to the other side. There are many unanswered questions in this scenario; how did he persuade them? Did he promise some sort of gain? Did he claim divine authority? Did he perform a miracle that proved his legitimacy? Also, why did he persuade them to take their possessions with them?

We are given no indication as to the possible motivation of Theudas or his ultimate objective. Josephus does give two clear intents for Theudas' actions. He intended to part the Jordan River and cross to the other side and stay for some duration (implied by them taking up their possessions). Nothing is said of the objective once on the other side. Perhaps his intentions were, after having dwelled in the wilderness for a period of time, to attempt to reenact the conquest of the land and form an independent Jewish state.

These themes have Old Testament parallels. The wilderness/desert motif associates Theudas with not only Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and through the desert (Exod. 5, 18) but with the two major Jewish prophets, Elijah and Elisha. The parting of the Jordan parallels those of Elijah, Elisha (2 Kings 2), and Joshua (Josh. 3), as well of the parting of the Red Sea by Moses (Exod. 14); all have strong associations of divine endorsement, deliverance, liberation, and conquest.<sup>102</sup> It is clear that Theudas wanted to prove his miraculous power by parting the Jordan, perhaps as a demonstration of his divine election as the leader of the Jews. This would be a validation of his standing as someone of the status of the prophets, Joshua or Moses. As a leader such as Moses he could be construed as leading a new exodus from subjugation to freedom. As a new Joshua, he could be seen as “leading a type of reverse conquest,”<sup>103</sup> as traversing the Jordan could be interpreted as

---

<sup>102</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Powers*, 84.

<sup>103</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 216; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 167.

leading the people to a “new and independent land.”<sup>104</sup> Horsley and Collins posit that Theudas “anticipated a new, perhaps eschatological, action of deliverance by God.”<sup>105</sup> This has implications which may justify Fadus’ reaction. There could be at least two intentions; to establish an independent nation outside of Judaea or to go over the Jordan to organize and plan a return to conquer the land again. Theudas’ objective cannot be deduced from the brief narrative of Josephus, nor can the reason for Fadus’ excessive reaction. Why would Fadus take such extreme measures with a non-violent movement whose leader was more likely to fail in his pledged miraculous act?

Whatever Theudas’ intentions, the desert was secluded and unhindered by governmental interference and observation. Going to the Jordan with the intent of dividing it aroused Fadus’ suspicion and he obviously understood these activities to be a threat. “Fadus suspected some anti-Roman intention or feared the mass hysteria which the gathering might engender, with or without a miracle”<sup>106</sup> and moved to snuff out the uprising before it got off the ground.<sup>107</sup> Fadus sent troops to cut off Theudas before he could get to the Jordan, killing many of the followers as well as Theudas himself (cutting off his head).

---

<sup>104</sup> Worth, *Messiahs*, 25.

<sup>105</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 167; Collins, *Sceptre*, 217.

<sup>106</sup> Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman*, 260.

<sup>107</sup> Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background*, 30-31.

## CHAPTER 2: THE RULING PARTIES AND THE JEWISH UPRISINGS

### Romans and Client Rulers

The rule of Palestine at the turn of the Common Era was complex, as there were competing levels of authority and a fluctuating political situation. In governing Palestine, the Romans seemed to be searching for an arrangement that would establish and maintain the *pax romana*. Ultimate rule was held by the Romans, but it was administered through various surrogates. These agents were responsible for collecting taxes and maintaining law and order.<sup>108</sup> The preferred surrogates for ruling the provinces were the existing aristocracy or “indigenous élite,” characterized by their wealth and influence.<sup>109</sup> The lack of a real aristocracy with popular support made this first option impossible in Palestine. Client kings were used by Rome when cooperation from the locals was difficult to secure. When neither of these options was possible, Rome placed the province under direct rule under a procurator or prefect.<sup>110</sup> Palestine in the first century was ruled by a combination of these.<sup>111</sup>

Rome and the Jews in Palestine had a relationship from the Maccabean period, albeit one-sided. The Maccabean revolt brought about Jewish “independence” and an expansion of its territory. Infighting weakened the Jewish state, and ultimately the quarrel between

---

<sup>108</sup> Goodman, *Roman World*, 100.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>110</sup> “A recently found inscription indicates that during the period 6 to 41 CE this officer was a ‘prefect’, while from 44 to 66 CE he was a ‘procurator’” (E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* [London: Penguin, 1993], 23.

<sup>111</sup> John Riches and John Kenneth Riches, *The World of Jesus: First-Century Judaism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 14.

Hyrkanus II and Aristobulus II in the 60 s encouraged the Romans, who by this time had annexed Syria, to invade Palestine in 63 B.C.E. The squabbling continued, although now for the right to rule as the client ethnarch of Rome and through a series of political manoeuvrings and civil strife, Hyrcanus was placed in charge by Caesar along with Antipater. Herod, Antipater's second son, was eventually installed as client king. Prior to the reign of Herod the Great, and since the time of the Maccabean period, the high priests were the main power holders of the Jewish aristocracy. Goodman posits that the action of Herod the Great of appointing "nonentities" as high priest and de-politicising him by excluding the high priest from secular affairs led to a void in influential elite who the general populace would follow.<sup>112</sup> The emergence of a high priest with any political power is not seen until the time of Jesus.

At the death of Herod the Great, and after a prolonged struggle for succession, his kingdom was divided between three of his sons but without the title of king. Herod Antipas inherited Galilee and Peraea, Philip ruled Batanea and Archelaus controlled Idumaea, Judaea, and Samaria. In 6 C.E. Archelaus had his ethnarchy taken from him and was sent into exile in Vienne in Gaul.<sup>113</sup> The three regions of Idumaea, Samaria, and Judaea became one province (Judaea) and were placed under the direct rule of Rome by means of procurators.<sup>114</sup> Galilee continued under tetrarchy rule until 39 C.E. and Batanea until 34 C.E., at which time they came under Agrippa I. Judaea was placed under Agrippa in 41 C.E., and with that, the kingdom of Herod the Great was reunited. This would last until the sudden death of Agrippa

---

<sup>112</sup> Goodman, *Ruling Class*, 41; E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992), 320-321.

<sup>113</sup> Smallwood, *Jews under Roman*, 117.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

in 44 C.E., at which time the whole of Palestine, Idumaea, Peraea, and Batanea came under direct Roman control under procurators.<sup>115</sup>

The uprising led by Judas the son of Hezekias was centred in the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas (Galilee), Simon and Athronge's uprisings were in Judaea and Transjordan, Archelaus' territory. But they occurred before each could take control of their territory, during the impasse created by the uncertainty over who would succeed Herod the Great. While Herod's heirs travelled to Rome to stake their claims, there was a lack of clear control over the province, and the uprisings broke out. Judas and Simon attacked royal assets, seemingly more intent on increasing their resources (for personal or movement purposes), while Athronges directly confronted Roman and royal soldiers in direct revolt against Roman occupation.

These three uprisings were dealt with by the Roman general Varus with assistance from Arteas the Arab and Gratus, "the commander of the royal infantry" (*J.W.* 2.4.2) in the customary way. He systematically crushed each one with devastating brutality. Although we are not given detail of the defeat of Judas son of Hezekias, Josephus does state that Varus sent his son with Gaius to deal with the rebels in Galilee. They "routed them, and after capturing Sepphoris, he reduced its inhabitants to slavery and burnt the city" (*Ant.* 17.10.9; *J.W.* 2.5.1). As Sepphoris was the centre of Judas' uprising, we can safely assume that this was the defeat of his uprising. Simon of Peraea was beheaded as he tried to escape from Gratus and his followers were "destroyed" (*Ant.* 17.10.6).

Athronges, along with his brothers were captured after a protracted struggle, some by the Romans and one by Archelaus.<sup>116</sup> We are not told specifically of their fate, but Josephus does state that Varus pursued the rebels throughout the country and punished "those most

---

<sup>115</sup> Emilio Gabba, "The Social, Economic and Political History of Palestine 63 BCE–CE 70," in *The early Roman Period*, 141.

<sup>116</sup> The fact that Archelaus captured the last brother gives an indication of the duration of the uprising.

guilty” (*Ant.* 17:10.10). Emmaus was “burnt at the order of Varus in revenge for those who had been killed there” (*Ant.* 17.10.9), a reference to the attack on “a company of Romans” by Athronges (*Ant.* 17.10.7). The punishment for the “most guilty” was crucifixion (two thousand were crucified) and it is most likely that Athronges and his brothers were among those executed, since they presided over such an audacious, destructive and prolonged uprising.

These first three uprisings were brazen, violent revolts against royal rule and Roman occupation and they were perceived as such. Consequently, they were dealt with by Roman military action. When putting down any rebellion the Romans had a second objective, to make an example of the leader and their followers and thereby discourage any future insurrectionists. “They devastated the countryside, burned villages, and either slaughtered or enslaved the people. For good measure, they then rounded up those who had put up the greatest resistance and hung them on crosses along the roadways as a public warning to any who had survived the conquest.”<sup>117</sup> This was precisely what they did with these three uprisings.

The uprising of Judas the Galilean, as we have noted, was different than the first three. It occurred at a critical juncture in the history of the Jews in Palestine. Archelaus had been removed and exiled, and for the first time under Roman occupation, direct Roman rule was imposed on Judaea. The political situation undoubtedly was tense, and the ensuing uprising was the natural consequence. It was a direct revolt against Roman rule, founded on philosophical principles, with the objective of throwing off the shackles of occupation. Josephus does not relate how the Romans met Judas’ challenge or what his fate was but we can be sure that they followed their customary pattern. Acts states that Judas was killed and his followers scattered (Acts 5:37). The context in Acts is a discussion about what to do with

---

<sup>117</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Powers*, 23.



the followers of Jesus. Gamaliel's advice was to do nothing and the uprising would die out just as those of Theudas and Judas, who were executed by the Romans (according to Gamaliel) and whose uprisings came to an abrupt end.<sup>118</sup> We can conclude that Judas the Galilean probably met the usual fate of those who rebelled against Rome.

John the Baptist's uprising was distinct to the preceding four in that there was no direct Roman involvement. It unfolded in the region around the Jordan River, eastern Judaea and Peraea; Peraea was the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas who executed John. In fact, John's uprising was focused on the Jewish rulers and, as stated before, did not have their removal as its objective. The Gospel of Matthew emphasises John's rebuke of the Pharisees and Sadducees for what he perceived as ethical failures (Matt. 3:7-10, 12). In Luke's parallel, John is directing his rebuke at the ὄχλος, not the Pharisees and Sadducees. Horsley suggests that the designation of "Pharisees" is suspect due to the fact that the Pharisees "are the standard, typical enemy of Jesus throughout Matthew's gospel" and since the charge of "brood of vipers" was surely not directed to the common people, the rebuke must be directed at the priestly aristocracy.<sup>119</sup> Further, Matthew narrates Jesus declaring to the "chief priests and the elders" (the priestly aristocracy) that John had come to show them "the way of righteousness" (Matt. 21:32). Horsley submits that the priestly aristocracy was well aware of John's challenge to their authority.<sup>120</sup>

Nevertheless, it was the tetrarch Herod Antipas who brought John's uprising to an end, and he was the only tetrarch to be involved in quelling a rebellion (or perceived potential rebellion). The Transjordan region was under Herod's jurisdiction and John conducted some of his activities in this region. Both Josephus and the Gospels (Mark, Matt.) agree that Herod

---

<sup>118</sup> The context is the decision of what action to take with the followers of Jesus whom the Romans had executed.

<sup>119</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 178-179; Paul W. Hollenbach, "John the Baptist," *ABD* 3:894.

<sup>120</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 179.

executed John the Baptist, but they disagree on his motives. Josephus states that Herod feared “some form of sedition” authored by John because of his influence over a growing number of followers and decided to act before his fears became a reality. The context of Josephus’ narrative on John is Herod’s defeat at the hands of Aretas and the belief of “some Jews” that it was an act of “divine vengeance” (*Ant.* 8.5.2). In the estimation of Herod, an insurrection was a real possibility perhaps owing to John’s proximity to Aretas, who Herod had aggrieved with his actions toward Aretas’ daughter.<sup>121</sup>

The Gospels point to John’s denunciation of Herod on account of his marriage to his sister-in-law, Herodias, as the stimulus for his execution. Mark narrates that Herodias’ “nursed a grudge against John,” but Herod was afraid to harm John (Mark 6:19-20). Herodias took advantage of drunken bravado on the part of Herod to force him to behead John. Feldman and Horsley posit that these two scenarios are not necessarily incompatible, they only have a different emphasis; “the Christians chose to emphasise the moral charges that he brought against the ruler, whereas Josephus stresses the political fears that he aroused in Herod.”<sup>122</sup>

Theudas’ uprising was crushed by the Roman procurator Cuspius Fadus. Fadus dealt with Theudas as with any insurrectionist, execution. Fadus had recently been appointed procurator of Judaea after a brief period of client king rule under Agrippa I (c. 41 - 44 C.E.; *Ant.* 19.5.1). This made for a precarious situation; although Agrippa’s short-lived rule was not completely acceptable to the Jewish leadership, it was more palatable than being under the direct Roman rule of the procurator.<sup>123</sup> There seems to have been some discontent among the Jewish leadership because of what must have seemed to them, a backwards step in the

---

<sup>121</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 181.

<sup>122</sup> Louis Feldman, Josephus, *Ant.* 18.5.2, LCL (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 83<sup>e</sup>; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 180.

<sup>123</sup> Smallwood, *Jews under Roman*, 193; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 165.

politics of Judaea, as Fadus' short rule (44 - 46 C.E.) was not kind to the Jews.<sup>124</sup> Fadus immediately began to purge Judaea of the opposition that had emerged during the interim of the death of Agrippa I and his appointment, imprisoning some and executing others (*Ant.* 20.1.1). Theudas and his followers may have been victims of the heightened tension present in the province.

### **Jewish Rulers**

Ultimate power was held by the Roman procurator whose residence was not in Jerusalem but on the coast in Caesarea, an indication of their aspiration of disengagement with those whom they ruled.<sup>125</sup> As the desire of the Romans was not to be entwined in the prosaic affairs of their provinces, they delegated the day-to-day administrative power to the existing local leader, the high priest, "but a number of passages indicate other elements in the Jewish leadership: the chief priests, the 'rulers' (*archontes* in Greek sources), the elders, and notable citizens."<sup>126</sup> The primary sources reveal the high priest as the ultimate Jewish authority in governing Judea. He was completely beholden to the Roman ruler for his position as he had been appointed by the Roman representative from the time of Herod the Great, his son Archelaus and the procurators up to the Great Revolt. The history of the period is littered with the deposing of one high priest after another at the whim of the ruler, often at the beginning of the rule of the procurator (or tetrarch) and frequently during. This meant that, for the most part, the high priest was on good terms with their Roman overlords and

---

<sup>124</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 165-166.

<sup>125</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Powers*, 76-77.

<sup>126</sup> L. L. Grabbe, "Sanhedrin, Sanhedriyyot, or Mere Invention?" *JSJ* 39 (2008): 18; McLaren, *Power and Politics*, 43.

supported them due to the futility of opposing them.<sup>127</sup> This is evident in the fact that “in all the accounts of governors’ excessive brutality against Judean peasants or urban protests, never do we hear of the high priests speaking out on behalf of their people.”<sup>128</sup>

Although the high priest had the authority of the Roman ruler, he did not always have influence over the general populace. Goodman states that “even by A.D. 6 none of the priestly families given land and promoted to high office by Herod had won any prestige in their own right in the eyes of the Judaeen populace.”<sup>129</sup> This was evident from the beginning of direct Roman rule when Judas the Galilean and Saddok were able to influence a large number of people to resist the census (“the populace...responded gladly”) after Joazar the high priest had succeeded in convincing them to submit to it (*Ant.* 18.1.1). Another inference to their lack of influence (acceptance?) is the frequent removal by the Roman rulers in attempts to placate the Jews.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the high priest was the de facto ruler of the Jews. Even though absolute power was in the hands of the Roman procurator, the high priest had the ability to negotiate with him. The episode of Fadus in 44 C.E. demanding the high priestly vestments be turned over to him is a case in point (*Ant.* 20.1.1).<sup>131</sup>

It is difficult to get a clear picture of the high priests’ attitude toward and reaction to the individual uprisings. The first three uprisings are covered by Josephus concisely and focus primarily on the Romans; consequently, he gives no information in regard to the Jewish rulers’ attitude toward them. The only faint indication is Archelaus’ accusation of Joazar supporting the rebels, for which he sacked him forthwith, upon Archelaus’ assuming the leadership of Judaea. Josephus gives no further information of the accusations, leading to

---

<sup>127</sup> E. Mary Smallwood, “High Priests and Politics in Roman Palestine,” *JTS* 2/13, no. 1 (1962): 28.

<sup>128</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Powers*, 77.

<sup>129</sup> Goodman, *Ruling Class*, 42.

<sup>130</sup> The only procurator who did not change the high priest was Pilate. Caiaphas served as high priest for Pilate's complete ten-year appointment.

<sup>131</sup> McLaren, *Power and Politics*, 128, 130.

doubts of the allegation's veracity and more likely a pretext for the dismissal of Joazar (*Ant.* 17.13.1).

The high priest ruled in conjunction with the Sanhedrin, of which he was the head. There is considerable debate as to the nature and power of the Sanhedrin, with some scholars even questioning whether such an institution even existed in the first century. Yet, the primary sources do describe such a group and take its existence for granted, so I will follow the majority of scholars who argue that the Sanhedrin was an important part of the governing structure of the Jewish population in Palestine in the first century.<sup>132</sup> According to the sources, the degree of power the Sanhedrin possessed varied throughout the first century. At times it is a nonentity, the high priest making decisions independently, at others an “advisory council” for the high priest, and still at other times, an essential element, the high priest being subject to it in all decisions and even accountable to it for his actions (*Ant.* 15.6.1-2). The Sanhedrin consisted of prominent men, the high priest, former high priests, Sadducees and Pharisees. Outside of the uprising of Jesus, where the Sanhedrin is very prominent, there is no evidence that the Sanhedrin either supported or opposed any of the uprisings.<sup>133</sup>

A form of indirect governance in first century Palestine was through the Sadducees and Pharisees. Although these sects had no formal authority to rule, they wielded influence, the Sadducees through the high priesthood and the Pharisees through the general populace.<sup>134</sup> The sects composed a small minority of the population, but their influence was widespread.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> The debate over the character of the Sanhedrin and its existence is outside of the scope of this investigation. See E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 474-475; Grabbe, “Sanhedrin,” 16.

<sup>133</sup> Joshua Efron, *Studies on the Hasmonean Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 312.

<sup>134</sup> S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Vol. 1, Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1974), 401.

<sup>135</sup> David M. Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution: 6-74 C.E.* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 32.

In Josephus' depiction of the fallout after the execution of Hezekias by Herod the Great, he states that the "leading Jews" and the "chief Jews" demanded Herod stand trial for violating the law (*Ant.* 14.9.2-4). The "leading Jews" and "chief Jews" included the Sadducees, who were the wealthy aristocracy and were "active in political life and dominated life at the Temple."<sup>136</sup> As submitted earlier, Farmer theorises that Judas son of Hezekias had support from the Jerusalem elite based on his argument that Hezekias was of the "Maccabaeen royal house" and that is why "the leading Jews" and "chief Jews" objected to Hezekias' execution.<sup>137</sup> That would make Judas someone who would have naturally had the support of the Jewish elite; especially given the political situation at the time (appointment of a new leader for Palestine). The argument for Hezekias being of the Maccabaeen line is not very strong and requires making assumptions that cannot be substantiated. Farmer's only argument is that Hezekias must have been from Judaea and "a man of some importance for the Jerusalem aristocracy," because of the fact that these Jewish leaders complained. This is countered by the fact that these Jewish leaders were envious of Hyrcanus' wealth and influence and of Antipater and his sons' (Herod) grip on power (*Ant.* 14.9.3). Brandon suggests that the fact that Herod was forced to appear before the Sanhedrin demonstrates that Judas "had a greater significance for the Jews than Josephus' description of him indicates."<sup>138</sup> Nonetheless, there is no clear evidence that there was any connection between Judas the son of Hezekias and the Sadducees.

The uprising of Judas the Galilean may have had some measure of support from the Pharisees based on the fact that Saddok, his co-conspirator in the uprising, was a Pharisee.

---

<sup>136</sup> Gregory R. Knight, "The Pharisees and the Sadducees: Rethinking their Respective Outlooks on Jewish Law." *BYU Law Review* 3, no. 8 (1993): 930.

<sup>137</sup> Farmer, "Judas, Simon and Athronges," 150. Farmer believes Judas son of Hezekias and Judas the Galilean is the same person.

<sup>138</sup> Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 28. Brandon believes that Judas the son of Hezekias and Judas the Galilean is the same person.

“The Pharisees were characterized by a love for scholarship and intellectual pursuit,” and this may have been the reason they were influential with the masses, having more influence even than the high priests and the Sadducees (*Ant.* 13.10.5; 18.1.3).<sup>139</sup> Josephus claims that Judas’ uprising was the beginning of the “fourth philosophy,” indicating that it was of the same nature as a sect, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. He also claims that it “agrees in all other respects with the opinions of the Pharisees” (*Ant.* 18.1.6).<sup>140</sup> According to Hengel, this demonstrates that it was “closely connected with the Pharisees and may be regarded as their extreme ‘left wing.’”<sup>141</sup> The extreme views of Judas would have led to a separation from the Pharisees, which is confirmed by Josephus’ statement that Judas formed another philosophy. It is impossible to say how much, if any, support was received from the Pharisee hierarchy but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Judas and Saddok received at least some support, albeit not official. If Saddok shared Judas’ views, there is no reason to doubt that others among the Pharisees held them. Josephus gives no more information, but he may have intentionally omitted any connection due to his identification as a Pharisee (*Life* 11-12).

The involvement of the Jewish rulers in the uprisings was minor. There was negligible, if any, support for the uprisings and the sources are silent on any opposition. The Romans were the principle target of the uprisings, except for that of John the Baptist, and they responded in their usual way, they executed the leader and scattered their followers. As we will discuss in the following chapter, this was not the situation with Jesus’ uprising. His uprising involved all the ruling parties of Palestine.

---

<sup>139</sup> Knight, “The Pharisees and the Sadducees,” 932; D. Goodblatt, “The Place of the Pharisees in First Century Judaism: The State of the Debate,” *JSJ* 20, no.1 (1989): 13.

<sup>140</sup> The contradictory characterizations of the fourth philosophy in *Antiquities* and *War* are noted, and I take the position that *Antiquities* provides a more accurate description due to the sensitivities associated with the writing of *War*; Hengel, *The Zealots*; Smith, “The Troublemakers,” in *Early Roman Period* (ed. Horbury, Davies, Sturdy), 3:501.

<sup>141</sup> Hengel, *The Zealots*, 333. Hengel believes Judas the son of Hezekias and Judas the Galilean is the same person.

## CHAPTER 3: JESUS OF NAZARETH, C. 30 - 33 C.E.

### Introduction

The uprising of Jesus of Nazareth occurred c. 30 C.E. during the rule of Pilate. Jesus was active in Palestine, the Transjordan and Batanea, the sources present the bulk of his activities taking place in Galilee. His major confrontation with Roman authorities occurred in Jerusalem. His movement entailed conflict with the three power holders of Palestine. The public career of Jesus seems to have lasted between one and three years, similar to Athronges, but he did not come into direct conflict with the ruling factions of Palestine until the last days of his life.<sup>142</sup> There was no ongoing clash with the Romans as with Judas son of Hezekias, Simon, Athronges and Judas the Galilean. Judas (Hezekias) and Simon began their uprisings with direct confrontation with the Herodians which subsequently led to conflict with the Romans. Athronges attacked the Romans and the Herodians, while Judas the Galilean confronted the Romans from the inception of his uprising.

For Jesus' uprising, we must rely almost exclusively on the canonical gospels. The Gospel of Mark was the first written; it is concise and fast moving, characterized by constant action and thus is not very detailed. It is purported to have been written with the sensitivities requisite to not offend the Romans.<sup>143</sup> Mark was one of two main sources for both Luke and

---

<sup>142</sup> Traditionally, the length of Jesus public activities have been based on the three Passovers of the Fourth Gospel. Sanders opines a length of "only one or possible two years." E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 13.

<sup>143</sup> Ellis E. Jensen, "The First Century Controversy over Jesus as a Revolutionary Figure," *JBL* 60, no. 3 (1941): 266.



Matthew (the Q source the other). Matthew and Luke elaborate much more on what Jesus said, purportedly in an attempt to cast Jesus in a more acceptable light.<sup>144</sup>

There are two references to Jesus in Josephus (*Ant.* 18.3.3, 20.9.1) and one in Tacitus (*Annals*, XV: 44). Both sources confirm that Jesus was executed by Pilate (by crucifixion in Josephus) and that the uprising he began continued after his death. There is little, if any, opposition to the veracity of Tacitus' passage. However, the authenticity of Josephus' *Testimonium* passage (*Ant.* 18.3.3) has a long history of debate, with opinion ranging from it being a total interpolation to being entirely genuinely Josephan.<sup>145</sup> I take the view of John P. Meier that the passage is basically what Josephus wrote with some Christian interpolation.<sup>146</sup> Sanders lists eight details about Jesus that are almost universally agreed upon.

1. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist
2. Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed
3. Jesus called disciples and spoke of there being twelve.
4. Jesus confined his activity to Israel.
5. Jesus engaged in a controversy about the temple.
6. Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities.
7. After his death Jesus' followers continued as an identifiable movement.
8. At least some Jews persecuted at least parts of the new movement (Gal. 1.13, 22) and it appears that this persecution endured at least to a time near the end of Paul's career (2 Cor. 11.24; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; cf. Matt. 23:34; 10:17).<sup>147</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>145</sup> The most recent opinions are some variation of a compromise between the two extremes. John P. Meier offers the following four basic opinions: (1) The entire account about Jesus is a Christian interpolation; Josephus simply did not mention Jesus in this section of *The Antiquities*. (2) While there are signs of heavy Christian redaction, some mention of Jesus at this point in *The Antiquities* - perhaps a pejorative one - caused a Christian scribe to substitute his own positive account. The original wording as a whole has been lost, though some traces of what Josephus wrote may still be found. (3) The text before us is basically what Josephus wrote; the two or three insertions by a Christian scribe are easily isolated from the clearly non-Christian core. (4) The *Testimonium* is entirely by Josephus (Meier, "Jesus in Josephus: A Modest Proposal," *CBQ* 52, no. 1 (1990): 81-82; Paul Winter, S. G. F. Brandon, Morton Smith, James Worth, Carlo M. Martini, Wolfgang Trilling, and A.-M. Dubarle

<sup>146</sup> The three most contentious phrases; "if indeed one ought to call him a man," "He was the Messiah," "On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvellous things about him." I consider the rest of the passage, aside from these phrases, to be the work of Josephus.

<sup>147</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 11.

Notably absent from the list are details as to who or what Jesus was and what kind of movement he led.

The most frequent word used in the Gospels to describe Jesus' activities is διδάσκαλος, someone whose mission was to disseminate a message.<sup>148</sup> To be sure, Jesus' activities included more than just didactic endeavours, but for the most part, they were associated with his teaching. Josephus (in the passage discussed above) also referred to Jesus as a διδάσκαλος, as well as σοφός, terms that garner little objection as being interpolations in the *Testimonium*. Hengel posits that Jesus is seen as a rabbi by Jewish scholarship and that they make him to be a "Pharisee to a unique degree," and thus, a teacher.<sup>149</sup> Davies and Sanders characterize Jesus as a "wandering Hellenistic philosopher and miracle worker" which also fits the profile of teacher.<sup>150</sup> While it is widely accepted that Jesus was some sort of teacher, some consider him being a teacher to be only the antecedent of his greater purpose of being a revolutionary.

### **The Characteristics**

A *prima facie* reading of the Gospels reveals Jesus' uprising to be a non-violent, spiritual reformist movement which stands in defiance of the existing order. They present him as a teacher of ethical principles and narrate his actions as mainly miraculous events aimed at alleviating the suffering of individuals. But it has been posited that Jesus' uprising was not, in fact, non-violent at all but an armed insurrection.<sup>151</sup> The argument is founded on the

---

<sup>148</sup> 41 times. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 4.

<sup>149</sup> Martin Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 2.

<sup>150</sup> Davies and Sanders, "Jesus: from the Jewish Point of View," 3:619.

<sup>151</sup> Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*; A.E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trail: A Study of the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1976).

premise that the evangelists edited the original Jesus traditions in an apologetic effort to make Jesus and his movement more palatable to the Greco-Roman world. Ellis E. Jensen posits that the Gospel authors made a concerted effort to tone down Jesus' revolutionary characteristics in order to "erase from the record of Jesus' life any suspicion that he had been a pretender king of the revolutionary type common in his day," thus making Jesus appear to have been a pacifist.<sup>152</sup> In spite of this softening, the argument goes, a careful investigation reveals the remnants of the true picture.<sup>153</sup> The argument for a violent uprising is based on the "attacks" on the temple and the arrest and execution of Jesus. The supposed anti-temple sayings of Jesus (Mark 13:1; John 2:18-22) are interpreted as intending the destruction of the temple. The temple demonstration, which is recorded in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 11, and parallels) and is considered historical by almost all scholars, has been perceived as more than just a "cleansing" of the pecuniary practices in the Temple.<sup>154</sup> Dale Martin and Sanders posit that Jesus' action in the temple was a "prophetic, dramatic demonstration meant to predict the imminent destruction of the temple" by Jesus, his followers and angelic assistance.<sup>155</sup> Rose Mary Sheldon advances that this was a "violent occupation by Jesus and his men" similar to that of Barabbas.<sup>156</sup> Brandon takes this further positing that the insurrection of Barabbas was connected to Jesus' demonstration.<sup>157</sup> But the connection with Barabbas is speculative, and Hengel accuses the Markan Gospel of exaggerating the episode

---

<sup>152</sup> Ellis E. Jensen, "The First Century Controversy," 264-265.

<sup>153</sup> Jensen, "The First Century Controversy," 267; Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 221-282.

<sup>154</sup> Dale B. Martin, "Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous," *JSNT* 37, no. 1 (2014): 9.

<sup>155</sup> Martin, "Jesus in Jerusalem," 9; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 69-70. Whether this was a demonstration against the Temple *per se* or the ruling priests is not relevant to the argument.

<sup>156</sup> Rose Mary Sheldon, "Jesus, as Security Risk: Insurgency in First Century Palestine?" *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 9, no. 2 (1998): 25.

<sup>157</sup> Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 351; Sheldon, "Jesus, as Security Risk," 25.

in an attempt to “achieve narrative and kerygmatic interest.”<sup>158</sup> Had this been a large, violent demonstration or occupation, it would hardly have escaped the notice of the Roman cohort of 500 - 600 men that was stationed at the Antonia during the festivals and would have precipitated a violent response, a response that would not have escaped Josephus’ attention.<sup>159</sup> There is no evidence of any such response by the Romans; the narrative of the Fourth Gospel does include “a detachment of soldiers” at the arrest of Jesus, but they are led by “some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees” (John 18:3), which leads to the conclusion that Jesus’ arrest was not an initiative of the Romans. As for Jesus’ actions in the temple, neither Mark nor John describe the involvement of any of Jesus’ followers in his dramatic actions. Whatever Jesus did in the temple precincts appears to have been an isolated dramatic action by a single individual, rather than an organised guerrilla action involving multiple followers.

Another aspect of the argument in favour of an armed rebellion focuses on the arrest of Jesus. The fact that at least some of Jesus’ followers were armed (with μάχαιραι) when he was arrested (Mark 14:47 and parallels), along with Luke’s narrative of Jesus instructing his followers to buy swords days before his arrest (Luke 22:35-38), suggest to some that his was an armed uprising.<sup>160</sup> Coupled with this is the datum that those who arrested Jesus, whether a ὄχλος or a σπεῖρα, were heavily armed (with μάχαιραι, ξύλων, ὅπλων; Mark 14:48; and parallels).<sup>161</sup> This implies that they expected Jesus and his followers to offer substantial resistance and that such resistance would be in the form of armed conflict. All of

---

<sup>158</sup> Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* 16.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Jensen, “The First Century Controversy,” 263; Martin, “Jesus in Jerusalem,” 3-24; Ernst Bammel, “The Trial before Pilate,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule; Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 415-452; Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 341.

<sup>161</sup> Paul Winter affirms that “It is inherently unlikely that the author of the Fourth Gospel whose sympathies lay with the Romans rather than with the Jews would have assigned any part in the arrest of Jesus to the troops of the Emperor if he had not possessed a report bearing out such Roman participation.” Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1974), 61.

the Gospels record that at least one follower of Jesus was armed with μάχαιρα but there is debate as to for what purpose. Dale Martin presents an argument in support of the disciples carrying swords for armed revolt. He proposes that the practice of carrying μάχαιραι was contrary to Roman law and therefore the disciples would not risk being caught so armed unless their purpose was insurrection.<sup>162</sup> Paula Fredriksen counters this by noting that a μάχαιρα is not a sword but a “knife,” which one out of every ten men in Jerusalem would have during the Passover for the purpose of slaughtering the Passover lamb.<sup>163</sup> But such an interpretation would mean that those who came to arrest Jesus were armed with “knives” and stones, for they are reported to be armed in the same manner as Jesus’ disciple(s), with μάχαιραι. Hengel claimed that the “dagger or short sword belongs to the equipment of the Jewish traveller as protection against robbers and wild animals.”<sup>164</sup> Hengel also characterizes Jesus’ disciples as a “motley crowd” made up of persons of questionable backgrounds, men who one would expect to carry such a weapon.<sup>165</sup> Although the fact that those who arrested Jesus were well armed seems compelling at first, one would expect them to be thus armed when arresting someone who has been accused as and considered to be an insurrectionist, particularly if the arresting party was a military unit.

That Jesus was crucified is another factor that may point to his uprising being an armed conflict. Crucifixion was the execution reserved for “political agitators in the provinces” of the Roman Empire, partially because, as a public spectacle, it served as a strong deterrent to any would-be rebels. Jesus was crucified “among λησται [Mark 15:27] and was

---

<sup>162</sup> Martin, “Jesus in Jerusalem,” 19; “Response to Downing and Fredriksen,” *JSNT* 37, no. 3 (2015): 334-345.

<sup>163</sup> Paula Fredriksen, “Arms and the Man: a Response to Dale Martin’s ‘Armed and Not Dangerous,’” *JSNT* 37, no. 3 (2015): 323.

<sup>164</sup> Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* 21. See also Matthew Black, “Not Peace but a Sword” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>165</sup> Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* 22.

no doubt considered a ληστής himself [Mark 14:48].”<sup>166</sup> ληστής is a term that has been customarily translated robber, thief or brigand, although revolutionary, insurrectionist and guerrilla is included in its definition.<sup>167</sup> More recently it has been understood as social bandits and revolutionaries, “people using brigandage against collaborators and occupying forces as a form of social protest.”<sup>168</sup> Martin asserts that in Josephus the word has the meaning of “marauding, armed men who attack other people sometimes just for money, but sometimes as intentional revolt against ruling authorities.”<sup>169</sup> Barabbas is referred to as a συστασιαστής in Mark 14:7 and Pilate offered to release Jesus in place of Barabbas.<sup>170</sup> The implication is that by giving the Jews the choice between the two, Pilate considered Jesus to be a rebel like Barabbas. Of course, this opinion is based on Pilate’s perception of Jesus, not on the characterization the sources give him. The evidence we have from the sources tends toward the view that Jesus never rose up in armed conflict against the Romans. Tacitus only affirms that Jesus was killed by Pilate, with no judgment on why. Josephus states that Jesus was *called* the Christ and that he was “accused by men of the highest standing among us,” and characterized him only as a teacher. The Gospels concur but add that it was the Jewish leaders who brought Jesus to the Romans for execution. Collins asserts that there “is little if anything in the Gospel portrait of Jesus that accords with the Jewish expectation of a militant messiah,” although the triumphal entry may have given the Romans the contrary impression.<sup>171</sup> Whatever the nature of the Temple demonstration and whether or not Jesus’ disciples were armed, there is no explicit evidence of an armed revolt against the Roman

---

<sup>166</sup> Martin, “Jesus in Jerusalem,” 19.

<sup>167</sup> BDAG, 594; Jensen, “The First Century Controversy,” 264.

<sup>168</sup> Sheldon, “Jesus, as Security Risk,” 16.

<sup>169</sup> Martin, “Jesus in Jerusalem,” 19.

<sup>170</sup> BDAG, 978; συστασιαστής, a fellow insurrectionist.

<sup>171</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 229.

Empire by Jesus and his followers. He was crucified with rebels in the manner reserved for rebels, but that is not sufficient proof to make him the leader of an armed uprising.

### **Jesus' Objectives**

Jesus' objectives are revealed in his message and his actions.<sup>172</sup> According to the Gospels, his message is mainly one of love and peace and his actions promote this message. The message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7) and the Sermon on the plain (Luke 6) encapsulate his message. It is a message of tolerance and forbearance, a message of extreme love, a message of peace with little evidence of revolutionary intentions. Some propose that his message of love and peace and the corresponding behaviour have been intentionally worked into his story to "show that Jesus preached [and practised] a thorough-going quietistic ethic" in order to avoid Rome's reprisals (as noted above).<sup>173</sup> Matthew 10:34, ("Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword") is one passage that has been presented to show Jesus' message was advocating an armed insurrection. But the following two verses, a possible allusion to Micah 7:6, clarifies that he is not referring to a literal sword but is symbolic of the hostilities between family members elicited by their allegiance to Jesus.<sup>174</sup> The theory of Jesus having revolutionary objectives is unconvincing.

Jesus' message also entailed teaching about and proclaiming the coming of the "kingdom of God." This kingdom would be established by the Messiah, and God would

---

<sup>172</sup> Henry J. Cadbury has cast doubts upon whether the ancients plotted a specific course for their lives, stating that "Jesus probably had no definite, unified conscious purpose." But consciously planning one's life with a purpose in mind was not uncommon in Jesus' time, such as in the case of Herod the Great. Jesus is intentional in his teaching and his activities. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1937), 141.

<sup>173</sup> Jensen, "The First Century Controversy," 264-265.

<sup>174</sup> Sheila Marie Dugger Griffith, "Not Peace but a Sword! Luke 12:49-53 and Other Hard Sayings on the Family in Early Gospel Literature," (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2004), 134.

reign. Whether or not Jesus himself claimed to be the Messiah is a subject of much debate, with the veracity of relevant Gospel pericopes in question. Jensen asserts that Luke and Matthew edit their Gospels with the intention to “improve on Mark’s record of Jesus’ concept of the kingdom.”<sup>175</sup> By “improve” he means that the Gospel writers edited out the “real” message of the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed, namely that the kingdom of God that Jesus came to establish was a political kingdom; a kingdom in direct opposition to the Roman Empire that would be established by military force, either by human effort alone or with divine assistance. Under this paradigm, the Messiah would be a victorious warrior who establishes the kingdom of Israel anew, through which God would rule the world as undisputed ruler, as opposed to the Roman emperor. Therefore, according to this theory, the Gospels soften Jesus’ original message into a message of a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom “not of this world.”<sup>176</sup> While this approach has appealed to many scholars, my reading of the evidence points in a different direction. As Sanders has noted, “we must remember that the disciples almost immediately started a movement which (1) was identifiable as a separate entity within Judaism; (2) regarded Jesus as the Messiah; and (3) expected him to establish a kingdom on a different plane from those of this world.”<sup>177</sup>

When we compare Jesus’ objectives with those of Judas son of Hezekias, Simon, Athronges and Judas the Galilean we see that their objectives brought them into direct armed conflict with the Romans. With the exception of Judas the Galilean, the objective of the uprisings was the removal of Roman rule by military force, with the leader assuming the role of king. Judas the Galilean sought the removal of Roman rule but not the kingship. Only John the Baptist and Theudas had non-violent objectives similar to Jesus’.

---

<sup>175</sup> Jensen, “The First Century Controversy,” 267.

<sup>176</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 38.

<sup>177</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 231.



All the uprising leaders suffered the same fate, execution. With the exception of John the Baptist, who was executed by Herod Antipas, Jesus and all the other uprising leaders were executed by the Romans. Jesus' execution by the Romans is one of the rare pieces of biographical data that is almost entirely uncontested.<sup>178</sup> In addition to the Gospels, Josephus attests to his execution in the authentic portion of the *Testimonium Flavianum* (*Ant.* 18.3.3). In an exceptional piece of historical information on Palestine, Tacitus also affirms that Jesus underwent the death penalty imposed by Pilate.<sup>179</sup> We can also be fairly certain that the Jewish leadership played an integral role in Jesus' execution, distinct from the other uprising leaders.<sup>180</sup> As such, Jesus' execution can be attributed to one of two scenarios; he was a threat to the Romans, or he was a threat to the Jewish leadership.<sup>181</sup>

### **A Threat to Rome?**

A threat to the Romans and the *pax romana* does not necessarily have to have been a real threat; a perceived threat would suffice for Pilate to move against Jesus. Additionally, a civil disturbance that caused or threatened a disruption to the *status quo* would be seen as grounds for pre-emptive or restorative action. Both the Gospels and Josephus specify that Jesus was crucified by Pilate. Crucifixion was a punishment employed almost exclusively for the crime of insurrection. Did Pilate believe that Jesus had led an insurrection and thus posed a threat to the Romans? Some scholars claim that the very fact that Jesus was crucified confirms that

---

<sup>178</sup> Justin J. Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus: Why was Jesus Put to Death, but his Followers were Not?" *JSNT* 29, no. 4 (2007): 379.

<sup>179</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, XV: 44.

<sup>180</sup> "Jesus was tried and convicted by Jewish authorities for blasphemy (Matthew and Mark), or he was turned over to Pilate by the chief priests as an evildoer according to Jewish law (Jon 18:30; cf. 19.7). We must, I think, accept the view of the Gospels, at least in general terms. He was executed by Pilate at the behest of the Jewish leadership, including at least the chief priests." Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 218.

<sup>181</sup> Fredriksen, "Arms and the Man," 312.

he was an insurrectionist and therefore considered a real threat to Rome.<sup>182</sup> Fredriksen points out that Pilate could have executed Jesus “by much less public means” if he were not considered a political threat.<sup>183</sup> And Paul Winter asserts that Jesus’ arrest, accusation and sentence are of political character.<sup>184</sup> The facts of Jesus being arrested as a ληστής, crucified with λησταιί and considered by Pilate be comparable to Barabbas (a συστασιαστής), point to Pilate viewing Jesus as a threat to Rome. Why he may have had this perception is unclear. Did he know of the people’s attempt to make Jesus their king (John 6:15)? Did he hear of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem with the accompanying manifestation (Mark 11 and parallels), an event that could have been seen as “a demonstration of Jesus’ messiahship”?<sup>185</sup> Did he consider Jesus demonstration in the Temple as a precursor to rebellion? These are questions that are impossible to answer.

Pilate’s belief that Jesus claimed the title of king is established by the titulus he placed on Jesus’ cross. Publicly declaring the crime for which a person was executed was a practice attested as the normal Roman penal procedure in antiquity.<sup>186</sup> The authenticity of the title is confirmed by the fact that it is a “decidedly Roman rather than Jewish or early Christian expression.”<sup>187</sup>

If Jesus was perceived to be a threat to Rome, his execution might have been accidental. Since the Jewish rulers brought him to Pilate and accused him of claiming to be king, his words and actions may have been misconstrued as insurrection. As this was the

---

<sup>182</sup> Sheldon, “Jesus, as Security Risk”; Oscar Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970.

<sup>183</sup> Fredriksen, “Arms and the Man,” 322.

<sup>184</sup> Paul Winter, “The Marcan Account Trial of Jesus’ Trial by the Sanhedrin,” *JTS* 2/14, no. 1 (1963): 97.

<sup>185</sup> Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* 7.

<sup>186</sup> Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, 156.

<sup>187</sup> Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries*, 37; Meggitt, “The Madness of King Jesus,” 381; Winter, “The Marcan Account,” 97.

time of the greatest Jewish feast, an occasion known for unrest in Jerusalem, he may have gotten caught up in the Roman action against the Jewish insurgents who were active at the time (Barabbas and the λησταί who were executed with Jesus). Jesus could have been mistakenly crucified as part of the upheaval.

It has been suggested that Pilate did not consider Jesus a threat to Rome but that it was either his brutality or weakness that moved him to crucify Jesus. The three sources on Pilate characterize him in different ways. Philo portrays Pilate as a cruel and brutal governor.<sup>188</sup> The Gospels have him as a weak and indecisive flat character in the drama of Jesus' death. Josephus seems to depict him somewhere in between. Justin Meggitt asserts that Pilate's disposition was such that "ending up on a cross seems to have been a reasonably easy thing to achieve."<sup>189</sup> He lends an enormous amount of credibility to Philo's characterization of Pilate as "naturally inflexible," cruel, vindictive and a man of furious temper. He asserts that Pilate's rule was accompanied with bribes, insults, robberies, outrages and wanton injuries and, pertinent to Jesus' crucifixion, "executions without trial constantly repeated."<sup>190</sup> Whether or not Philo can be taken at his word or whether he is being loose with the facts in order to realise his objective is uncertain. Sheldon suggests that Pilate "was neither a monster nor a saint, but rather just another Roman bureaucrat."<sup>191</sup> The truth may be that Pilate was a blend of the three sources' characterization depending on the time and circumstances.

It has been argued that Pilate crucified Jesus out of fear of losing his office, worrying that Tiberius would hear of the unrest in Judaea and get the impression that he had lost

---

<sup>188</sup> Philo, *Embassy*, 299-305.

<sup>189</sup> Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus," 380. See also Paul Winter, "The Trial of Jesus and the Competence of the Sanhedrin," *NTS* 10, no. 4 (1964): 496-497; Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus," 384.

<sup>190</sup> Philo, *Embassy*, 299-305.

<sup>191</sup> Sheldon, "Jesus, as Security Risk," 28.

control over his territory, resulting in him being removed from his office (which ultimately happened).<sup>192</sup> Paul Maier and Paul Barnett posit that Sejanus was responsible for Pilate being procurator of Judaea and that Pilate had been under his tutelage. During the first half of his procuratorship, Pilate undertook some provocative actions which can be construed as having been associated with Sejanus' anti-Semitic agenda. When Sejanus died in 31 C.E., Pilate was vulnerable, as Tiberius was purging Rome of Sejanus' supporters.<sup>193</sup> The threat by the Jewish leaders becomes real under this scenario ("If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar," John 19:12). Pilate would not have wanted to antagonize Tiberius during this time, and therefore acquiesced to the Jewish leaders.

All of the uprising leaders in my study were perceived as threats; Judas son of Hezekias, Simon of Peraea, Athronges, Judas the Galilean, and Theudas were a threat to Rome, John the Baptist a threat to Herod Antipas. As stated earlier, a threat to the Romans does not necessarily have to have been a real threat; a perceived threat would suffice for Pilate to move against Jesus, as was the case with Herod's execution of John the Baptist and Fadus' beheading of Theudas.

When considering the Herodians and their involvement with the uprisings, only John the Baptist and Jesus confronted a tetrarch; they both engaged with Herod Antipas. As discussed previously, Herod executed John the Baptist because he feared John would lead a rebellion against him. Luke asserts that Herod wanted to kill Jesus during his ministry but was afraid of the public reaction (Luke 13:31-33). But when given the opportunity upon

---

<sup>192</sup> P.W. Barnett, "Under Tiberius," 567; Paul L. Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion," *CH* 37, no. 1 (1968): 12.

<sup>193</sup> Maier, "Sejanus," 11.

Jesus being sent to him by Pilate, he declined and sent him back to Pilate. Whereas Herod killed John the Baptist, he declined to deal with Jesus (Luke 23:8-12).<sup>194</sup>

### **A Threat to the Jewish Rulers?**

Another possible motive for Pilate's crucifixion of Jesus is that he acquiesced to the chief priests. Jesus may not have been a threat or perceived threat to the Romans, he may have been a threat to the Jewish leaders, and therefore they sought Pilate to do their unpleasant deed. In a bit of irony, they were using Pilate to wash their hands of Jesus. In other words, Pilate did the Jewish leaders a favour by executing Jesus.<sup>195</sup> Jesus' uprising is the only one in my study that had an involvement with the Jewish rulers. According to the Synoptic Gospels the chief priests, together with the whole Sanhedrin, played a central role in the condemning of Jesus (Mark 14:53-55 and parallels).<sup>196</sup> After finding him guilty of blasphemy they sent him to Pilate to carry out the punishment of the sentence.<sup>197</sup> Matthew and John both narrate some combination of the chief priests, elders, officials and the crowd demanding the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27:20-26; John 19:6), while Mark and Luke have the crowd (ὄχλος) calling for Jesus to be crucified at the behest of the chief priests (Mark 14:8-14; Luke 23:18-21).

---

<sup>194</sup> The authenticity of Luke's narrative of Jesus' appearance before Herod, is doubted by, M. Dibelius (*From Tradition to Gospel* (London: Scribner, 1935), 199, and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 23, among others. "J. Nolland, J. Fitzmyer and R.E. Brown find this position problematic for various reasons, and argue for a historical nucleus reused by Luke," Morten Hørning Jensen, "Herod Antipas in Galilee: Friend or Foe of the Historical Jesus?" *JSHJ* 5, no. 1 (2007): 7-32.

<sup>195</sup> Sheldon, "Jesus, as Security Risk," 20; Sanders, *Historical Figure of Jesus*, 273.

<sup>196</sup> The debate over whether there indeed was a Sanhedrin in the first half of the first century is beyond the scope of this paper. I will be taking the opinion that there was a Sanhedrin. "There is, to be sure, a scholarly consensus: There was a body of Jewish leaders who constituted the Sanhedrin, which in turn played an appreciable role in government and which saw to the administration of Jewish laws", Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 312.

<sup>197</sup> The debate over whether the Sanhedrin had the authority to impose the death penalty is noted and beyond the scope of this paper.

Smallwood posits a congenial relationship between Pilate and Caiaphas the high priest that was conducive to the execution of Jesus by Pilate at the behest of Caiaphas.<sup>198</sup> Pilate was the only procurator who did not depose the high priest at the inception of or during his tenure, as was the practice of the other procurators; this points to an amicable relationship. Also, as the leader of the Jewish people, it would have been incumbent upon the high priest to confront Pilate on behalf of the people when his actions caused Jewish consternation. But there is an absence of any objection from the high priest to Pilate's indiscretions in Josephus' accounts, probably due to the close relationship between them.<sup>199</sup>

Luke narrates the Sanhedrin's accusation against Jesus. They accuse him of "subverting our nation" by "opposing payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king" (Luke 23:2). Whether the concern was genuine is difficult to tell. The rulers could have come to the conclusion "that he was a Messianic pretender who was dangerous to the existing political and social order,[and] it was their duty to hand him over to the Romans" before Jesus' actions led to civil unrest, Roman intervention and bloodshed, as had happened in the past.<sup>200</sup> Of course, this would also be a case of self-interest, as Mark intimates was Pilate's suspicion (Mark 15:9-11). The Jewish leaders would want to preserve the peace which would guarantee their continued positions of wealth and power. Brandon suggests:

The Jewish aristocracy, though the official religious leaders of the nation, were concerned to keep their people submissive to their heathen overlord: it was a worldly-wise policy, and doubtless Israel's material interests, as well as their own, would have been best served by following it.<sup>201</sup>

The fact that the Jewish rulers were not only involved but heavily involved in the death of Jesus is unique among the uprisings in my study. It is possible that the Jewish

---

<sup>198</sup> Smallwood, "High Priests and Politics," 22. As well as Sanders, *Historical Figure of Jesus*, 273; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus - Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 623.

<sup>199</sup> Smallwood, "High Priests and Politics," 22.

<sup>200</sup> Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 255.

<sup>201</sup> S.G.F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1968), 30.

rulers' opposition to Jesus is overstated in the Gospels for reasons canvassed above. But it is doubtful that Josephus would omit any opposition from the Jewish rulers to the other uprisings and their leaders because he was writing to absolve the Jewish rulers, of whom he was one, from responsibility for the Great Revolt; he was putting forward the idea that it was the rebellious ἡσται who were responsible for the revolt and subsequent disaster.

The uprising headed by Jesus of Nazareth was a non-violent movement predicated mainly upon Jesus' teaching activities and his message of love and peace in the coming kingdom of God. Various primary sources attest to his life and death. He was opposed by all three ruling parties of Palestine and was ultimately killed by the Romans. His followers were not pursued and executed and this enabled them to continue the uprising. The reason the followers of Jesus were allowed to continue is the key to why his uprising was the only one that persisted.

## CONCLUSION

There is one common denominator among the seven major Jewish uprisings at the turn of the Common Era whose leaders are specified by the sources; every leader was killed in the process of leading their uprising. The one key distinction is that, while all the other uprisings dissipated after the death of the leader, the followers of Jesus persisted as a variety of different social groups that came to be identified as “Christian.” After conducting an analysis of all the uprisings, we may draw the following conclusions.

I affirm that there is a connection between Jesus and the Christian movement and that connection is a direct result of Jesus’ uprising. There are various suppositions about the relationship between the two, among them the opinion that the Christian Church was born as a result of Jesus’ message and activities but not as a direct result of his own intentions. Another opinion is that the two have no connection at all.<sup>202</sup>

In addition to all the uprising leaders being executed, they were all perceived as a threat to the powers of Palestine; John the Baptist to Herod Antipas, Jesus to the Jewish leaders and Pilate, and the remainder to the Romans. Brian McGing suggests that Judas son of Hezekias, Simon, Athronges, and Judas the Galilean were open opponents to Rome and therefore cannot be compared to Jesus, as he was not.<sup>203</sup> But there are similarities between Jesus’ uprising and those of Judas, Simon, and Athronges, in particular that they all advanced

---

<sup>202</sup> For discussion on connection between Jesus and his intentions post life see: Cadbury, *The Peril*; Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (Berkeley, Calif.: Seastone, 1998), 5; David L. Mealand, “The Dissimilarity Test,” *SJT* 31, no. 1 (1978): 41-50.

<sup>203</sup> Brian McGing, “Pontius Pilate and the Sources,” *CBQ* 53, no. 3 (1991): 422.



themselves as kings. Jesus was distinct in that he did not lead a violent uprising as these three did. The character of his uprising was more similar to those of John the Baptist and Theudas in that they did not attack the ruling powers; they only gathered a following and thus were considered threats. Jesus was similar to Judas the Galilean and John the Baptist in that their uprisings were based upon philosophical ideologies, though Jesus did not oppose the Romans as Judas the Galilean. On the contrary, he seems to have supported them, albeit in an apparently subversive manner (Mark 12:17 and parallels). Another distinction of Jesus' uprising is that it was the only one that came into conflict with the Jewish rulers. Josephus tells us nothing in regard the Jewish ruler's involvement with the uprisings so it is safe to assume that there was no conflict between them.

Jesus' uprising was different in respect to his message and activities. The message and activities of the first four uprisings were decidedly opposed to the Romans. Their message was one of resistance and conflict with the ruling powers. Theudas' message was interpreted as of revolutionary nature by Fadus and can be construed as such because of the conquest undercurrent in his claim of dividing the Jordan. John the Baptist's message was a call to repentance in anticipation of God's eminent intervention. In contrast to all these, Jesus' message was one of tolerance and peace.

The fact that Jesus' followers were not rounded up and executed is central to the continuance of his uprising; had they been executed there would be no one to continue the movement. Josephus specifically states that the followers of Simon and Theudas were killed but it is plausible that the others were killed as well.<sup>204</sup> Josephus narrates Varus' campaign against the uprisings c. 4 B.C.E. in which he sent his son and Gaius through Galilee to put down the revolt there (*Ant.* 17.12.9-10). The followers of Judas son of Hezekias most likely were among those killed when they "routed" those in Sepphoris. Varus led his army into

---

<sup>204</sup> Josephus asserts that Fadus "slew many of them and took many prisoners" from Theudas' followers, while Acts states that they were "dispersed."

middle Palestine and put down the revolt there, capturing many and crucifying two thousand insurrectionists. Some, if not all, of these most likely had been followers of Athronges. It is plausible that most of the followers of these three uprisings were killed in Varus' campaign.

However, there were uprisings whose followers were not killed, nonetheless, their uprising ended. Josephus gives no details about Judas the Galilean's followers but Acts affirms they were "scattered" by the Romans. As discussed earlier, some posit that the Zealot movement was the continuation of Judas' uprising although there is no direct evidence and even if correct, the Zealot movement came to an end with the Great Revolt. John the Baptist's followers were not harmed nor hindered by Herod Antipas or by the Romans, yet, his uprising eventually died out.

Why Pilate allowed Jesus' followers to live and continue his uprising has been the subject of much scholarly debate.<sup>205</sup> Some suggest that Pilate did not consider Jesus' followers a credible threat.<sup>206</sup> Martin posits that the approach of the Romans was to "just kill the ringleader and let the mob disperse."<sup>207</sup> But as we've seen above, there were occasions where the followers were executed along with the leaders. In Jesus' case, the "mob" did not disperse with Jesus' death. In fact, it grew exponentially. From what we know of Pilate's standard way of dealing with insurrectionist, he killed the leaders but did not bother with the followers. Towards the end of Pilate's procuratorship there was an incident with a Samaritan prophet, he too was killed along with "the principle leaders" (*Ant.* 18.4.1-2); the rest were "put to flight." Perhaps the fact that Jesus' followers fled and hid preserved them from being killed, but Pilate did not pursue them as Varus hunted the followers of the uprisings in 4

---

<sup>205</sup> See, Paula Fredriksen, "Why was Jesus Crucified, but His Followers Were Not?" *JSNT* 29, no. 4 (2007): 415-19; Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus," 381-382; Sheldon, "Jesus, as Security Risk," 27.

<sup>206</sup> Various opinions have been put forward; Jesus' following was very small (Sanders); Jesus' uprising was not violent and neither were his followers; Pilate executed Jesus as a concession to the high priest; etc.

<sup>207</sup> Martin, "Jesus in Jerusalem," 18.

B.C.E. Regardless of the reason, Jesus' followers were allowed to live and this fact is not unique to his uprising. Therefore, we cannot conclude that it was the distinctive issue that occasioned the continuation of Jesus' uprising. But it is significant in the final hypothesis.

The reason Jesus' uprising had an afterlife was timing. Jesus' uprising took place at the opportune time, at a time that was advantageous for an uprising to continue. I propose that Jesus' uprising was able to continue after his death because the environment was stable and relatively trouble free and there was peace and cooperation between the ruling parties. The uprisings that arose during the period examined in this thesis occurred at significant points in the history of the first half of the first century, junctures of transition and uncertainty. Jesus' uprising took place at a time of relative peace. The uprisings of Judas son of Hezekias, Simon of Peraea and Athronges the Shepherd occurred at a time when the region was at a flash point and open to attack. Herod the Great had ruled the region with an iron fist for approximately thirty-five years during which time the Romans had not had to deal with any Jewish uprisings.<sup>208</sup> Herod smashed virtually all resistance towards the beginning of his reign and there was very little trouble during the rest of his reign. When Herod died chaos ensued. The uncertainty of the succession plan left a leadership void and the opportunity for many to rise in arms and "make himself king as the head of a band of rebels" (*Ant.* 17.10.8). Consequently the Romans were forced to deal with the "continuous and countless tumults" that filled Jerusalem" (*Ant.* 17.10.4).

The uprising of Judas the Galilean took place at a time of transition and discontent. Archelaus had been exiled from Judaea and replaced by the procurator Coponius (*Ant.* 18.1.1); for the first time in c. 170 years Judaea was under direct occupation by a foreign power.<sup>209</sup> Along with this subjugation came the paying of the *tributum capitis* which in turn

---

<sup>208</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 65-66.

<sup>209</sup> From the Maccabean victory c. 164 B.C.E. - 6 C.E. After Pompey besieged Jerusalem c. 63 he placed Judaea under Hyrcanus.

required the census which triggered Judas' uprising.<sup>210</sup> Unfortunately, after introducing Judas and giving a brief summary of his actions, Josephus deviates onto a diatribe against those who were responsible for the Great Revolt and never completes the details of Judas' uprising.<sup>211</sup> The standard reaction to rebellion from occupying rulers at times of transition was to crush the dissent with brutal force.<sup>212</sup> Coponius no doubt crushed the dissent in emphatic fashion in order to secure control over his new domain. The uprising of John the Baptist occurred at a time of relative peace but his uprising was terminated not by the Romans but by Herod Antipas as a safeguard against rebellion and John's intent was that his uprising would be temporary.

The uprising of Theudas occurred at the beginning of the Second Procuratorial period (44 - 66 C.E.), also a time of transition and return to the old occupational status. Agrippa (41 - 44 C.E.) had won popularity among the Jews due to his respectful attitude toward Judaism and although the Jews were not entirely content with him, a "Jewish" king was preferable to a Roman overlord.<sup>213</sup> The sudden death of Agrippa crushed any hope of a return to true Jewish rule as Palestine reverted to direct Roman rule under Fadus' repressive regime.<sup>214</sup> Hostilities broke out in the region immediately after Agrippa's death and upon arriving Fadus moved quickly to quash the conflicts, executing some of the leaders and banishing others. According to Josephus, Fadus embarked on a campaign of eradication of all dissension (*Ant.* 20.1.1). It is safe to say that Theudas and his followers got caught up in this purge.

Jesus' uprising transpired at an opportune time because Pilate's procuratorship was relatively quiet. Tacitus states that "Under Tiberius all was quiet" (*Histories* 5.9). Jesus'

---

<sup>210</sup> Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman Rule*, 151.

<sup>211</sup> Acts states that Judas ἀπόλλυμι "which can mean that Judas died or that he was a failure" (Jeffrey A. Trumbour, "The Historical Jesus and the Speech of Gamaliel (Acts 5.35-9)," *NTS* 39 (1993): 503-504.)

<sup>212</sup> This was the case with Herod the Great, Varus, and Fadus.

<sup>213</sup> Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 193.

<sup>214</sup> Barnett, "Under Tiberius," 565; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 165-166.

uprising occurred in the middle of Pilate's procuratorship.<sup>215</sup> Josephus gives very little information on the preceding ten years to Pilate's procuratorship under Valerius Gratus, which gives the impression that it was a time of relative peace. He only details one conflict, "an episode in which friction between Roman rule and Jewish nationalism played no part."<sup>216</sup> There are two possibilities for this dearth of information; Josephus' sources were limited for this period or "it was reasonably peaceful," whether because of a tight grip on the region or no Jewish antagonism and therefore there was nothing to report.<sup>217</sup>

It was an opportune time for Jesus' uprising because of the death of Sejanus and the rescinding of the decree by Tiberius (*Embassy* 161). If Pilate crucified Jesus because of the threat of the Jewish rulers to accuse him of not being a "friend to Caesar" (John 19:12), it would also provide a reason for Pilate's hesitation in pursuing Jesus' followers. Philo gives a similar episode when the Jewish leaders followed through on a threat to notify Tiberius of what they perceived as misconduct by Pilate (*Embassy* 299-305). Pilate must have felt vulnerable with Tiberius hunting down Sejanus' supporters and had to find a way to placate the Jewish leaders and not attract the attention of Tiberius.<sup>218</sup> He did this by killing Jesus but allowing his followers to go free. The Jewish rulers, not the Romans, continued their

---

<sup>215</sup> There were four procurators before Pilate and three after.

<sup>216</sup> Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 157.

<sup>217</sup> Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 156; McGing, "Pontius Pilate," 422; Barnett, "Under Tiberius," 567; Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People*, 346. Under Pilate there were several disturbances but only three involved bloodshed; the use of the "sacred treasury" for the construction of an aqueduct (*Ant.* 18.3.2; *J.W.* 2.9.4), the massacre of the Galileans (Luke 13) and the insurrection of Barabbas (Mark 15). In the other upheavals there seems to be a certain level of cooperation by Pilate. Of the disorders involving bloodshed, only the Barabbas episode involved revolt. It has been suggested that the two λησται who were crucified with Jesus were part of Barabbas' insurrection and that Jesus got caught up in it. In fact, Barnett suggests that the three incidents could "be different aspects of the one disturbance." Sheldon concurs, "There may already have been an intelligence operation gathering information on a revolt concurrent with Jesus' actions (by Barabbas?) and Jesus simply got caught up in the net" (Sheldon, "Jesus, as Security Risk," 29). Pilate's response to these incidents was relatively measured.

<sup>218</sup> Barnett, "Under Tiberius," 567; Maier, "Sejanus," 12.

opposition to Jesus' uprising after his death. In fact, the Romans aided Jesus' followers in the subsequent years, protecting them from the Jewish leaders.<sup>219</sup>

Jesus' uprising continued after his death because it took place at just the right time. The situation of relative peace encouraged the ruling parties to exercise restraint and cooperate with each other in order to maintain the *pax romana*. The precarious predicament of Pilate made him tentative to act in a manner that would exacerbate his situation in relation with Tiberius. This provided the perfect opening to have an uprising outlive its founder. To conclude, it was the right place and the right time for an uprising.

---

<sup>219</sup> Davies and Sanders, "Jesus: from the Jewish Point of View," 3:625; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 281-287.

## APPENDIX: PRIMARY SOURCE TEXT

The following primary source text is provided for the convenience of the reader. It is not part of the text of this thesis.

### **Judas the son of Hezekias, 4 B.C.E.**

Then there was Judas, the son of the brigand chief Ezekias, who had been a man of great power and had been captured by Herod only with great difficulty. This Judas got together a large number of desperate men at Sepphoris in Galilee and there made an assault on the royal palace, and having seized all the arms that were stored there, he armed every single one of his men and made off with all the property that had been seized there. He became an object of terror to all men by plundering those he came across in his desire for great possessions and his ambition for royal rank, a prize that he expected to obtain not through the practice of virtue but through excessive ill-treatment of others.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.5, Thackeray

At Sepphoris in Galilee Judas, son of Ezechias, the brigand-chief who in former days infested the country and was subdued by King Herod, raised a considerable body of followers, broke open the royal arsenals, and, having armed his companions, attacked the other aspirants to power.

Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.4.1, Thackeray

### **Simon of Peraea, 4 B.C.E.**

There was also Simon, a slave of King Herod but a handsome man, who took pre-eminence by size and bodily strength, and was expected to go farther. Elated by the unsettled conditions of affairs, he was bold enough to place the diadem on his head, and having got together a body of men, he was himself also proclaimed king by them in their madness, and he rated himself worthy of this beyond anyone else. After burning the royal palace in Jericho, he plundered and carried off the things that had been seized there. He also set fire to many other royal residences in many parts of the country and utterly destroyed them after permitting his fellow-rebels to take as booty whatever had been left in them. And he would have done something still more serious if attention had not quickly been turned to him. For

Gratus, the officer of the royal troops, joined the Romans and with what forces he had went to meet Simon. A long and heavy battle was fought between them, and most of the Peraeans, who were disorganized and fighting with more recklessness than science, were destroyed. As for Simon, he tried to save himself by fleeing through a ravine, but Gratus intercepted him and cut off his head. The royal palace at Ammatha on the river Jordan was also burnt down by some rebels, who resembled those under Simon. Such was the great madness that settled upon the nation because they had no king of their own to restrain the populace by his pre-eminence, and because the foreigners who came among them to suppress the rebellion were themselves a cause of provocation through their arrogance and their greed.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.6, Thackeray

In Peraea Simon, one of the royal slaves, proud of his tall and handsome figure, assumed the diadem. Perambulating the country with the brigands whom he had collected, he burnt down the royal palace at Jericho and many other stately mansions, such incendiarism providing him with an easy opportunity for plunder. Not a house of any respectability would have escaped the flames, had not Gratus, the commander of the royal infantry, with the archers of Trachonitis and the finest troops of the Sebastenians, gone out to encounter this rascal. In the ensuing engagement numbers of the Peraeans fell. Simon himself, endeavouring to escape up a steep ravine, was intercepted by Gratus, who struck the fugitive from the side a blow on the neck, which severed his head from his body. The palace at Betharamatha, near the Jordan, was likewise burnt to the ground by another body of Peraean insurgents.

Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.4.2, Thackeray

After Herod's death, a certain Simon assumed the name of king without waiting for Caesar's decision. He, however, was put to death by Quintilius Varus, governor of Syria; the Jews were repressed; and the kingdom was divided into three parts and given to Herod's sons. Under Tiberius all was quiet.

Tacitus, *Histories* 5.9.5, Jackson

### **Athronges the Shepherd, 4 B.C.E.**

Then there was a certain Athronges, a man distinguished neither for the position of his ancestors nor by the excellence of his character, nor for any abundance of means but merely a shepherd completely unknown to everybody although he was remarkable for his great stature and feats of strength. This man had the temerity to aspire to the kingship, thinking that if he obtained it he would enjoy freedom to act more outrageously; as for meeting death, he did not attach much importance to the loss of his life under such circumstances. He also had four brothers, and they too were tall men and confident of being very successful through their feats of strength, and he believed them to be a strong point in his bid for the kingdom. Each of them commanded an armed band, for a large number of people had gathered round them. Though they were commanders, they acted under his orders whenever they went on raids and fought by themselves. Athronges himself put on the diadem and held a council to discuss what things were to be done, but everything depended upon his own decision. This man kept his power for a long while, for he had the title of king and nothing to prevent him from doing as he wished. He and his brothers also applied themselves vigorously to slaughtering the Romans and the king's men, toward both of whom they acted with a similar hatred, toward the latter because of the arrogance that they had shown during the reign of



Herod, and toward the Romans because of the injuries that they were held to have inflicted at the present time. But as time went on they became more and more savage (toward all) alike. And there was no escape for any in any way, for sometimes the rebels killed in hope of gain and at other times from the habit of killing. On one occasion near Emmaus they even attacked a company of Romans, who were bringing grain and weapons to their army. Surrounding the centurion Arius, who commanded the detachment, and forty of the bravest of his foot-soldiers, they shot them down. The rest were terrified at their fate but with the protection given them by Gratus and the royal troops that were with him they made their escape, leaving their dead behind. This kind of warfare they kept up for a long time and caused the Romans no little trouble while also inflicting much damage on their own nation. But the brothers were eventually subdued, one of them in an engagement with Gratus, the other in one with Ptolemy. And when Archelaus captured the eldest, the last brother, grieving at the other's fate and seeing that he could no longer find a way to save himself now that he was all alone and utterly exhausted, stripped of his force, surrendered to Archelaus on receiving a pledge sworn by his faith in God (that he would not be harmed). But this happened later.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.7, Thackeray

Now, too, a mere shepherd had the temerity to aspire to the throne. He was called Athrongaeus, and his sole recommendations, to raise such hopes, were vigour of body, a soul contemptuous of death, and four brothers resembling himself. To each of these he entrusted an armed band and employed them as generals and satraps for his raids, while he himself, like a king, handled matters of graver moment. It was now that he donned the diadem, but his raiding expeditions throughout the country with his brothers continued long afterwards. Their principal object was to kill Romans and royalists, but no Jew, from whom they had anything to gain, escaped, if he fell into their hands. On one occasion they ventured to surround, near Emmaus, an entire Roman company, engaged in convoying corn and arms to the legion. Their centurion Arius and forty of his bravest men were shot down by the brigands; the remainder, in danger of a like fate, were rescued through the intervention of Gratus with his Sebastenians. After perpetrating throughout the war many such outrages upon compatriot and foreigner alike, three of them were eventually captured, the eldest by Archelaus, the two next by Gratus and Ptolemy; the fourth made terms with Archelaus and surrendered. Such was the end to which they ultimately came; but at the period of which we are speaking, these men were making the whole of Judaea one scene of guerilla warfare.

Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.4.3, Thackeray

### **Judas the Galilean, 6 C.E.**

But a certain Judas, a Gaulanite from a city named Gamala, who had enlisted the aid of Saddok, a Pharisee, threw himself into the cause of rebellion. They said that the assessment carried with it a status amounting to downright slavery, no less, and appealed to the nation to make a bid for independence. They urged that in case of success the Jews would have laid the foundation of prosperity, while if they failed to obtain any such boon, they would win honour and renown for their lofty aim; and that Heaven would be their zealous helper to no lesser end than the furthering of their enterprise until it succeeded—all the more if with high devotion in their hearts they stood firm and did not shrink from the bloodshed that might be necessary. Since the populace, when they heard their appeals, responded gladly, the plot to

strike boldly made serious progress; and so these men sowed the seed of every kind of misery, which so afflicted the nation that words are inadequate.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.1, Feldman

The territory of Archelaus was now reduced to a province, and Coponius, a Roman of the equestrian order, was sent out as procurator, entrusted by Augustus with full powers, including the infliction of capital punishment. Under his administration, a Galilaean, named Judas, incited his countrymen to revolt, upbraiding them as cowards for consenting to pay tribute to the Romans and tolerating mortal masters, after having God for their lord. This man was a sophist who founded a sect of his own, having nothing in common with the others.

Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8.1, Thackeray

<sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup> Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. <sup>36</sup> Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. <sup>38</sup> Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup> But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

Acts 5:33-39, NIV

### **John the Baptist, c. 30 C.E.**

But to some of the Jews the destruction of Herod's army seemed to be divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practise justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing to join in baptism. In his view this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to God. They must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behaviour. When others too joined the crowds about him, because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything that they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake. Though John, because of Herod's suspicions, was brought in chains to Machaerus, the stronghold that we have previously mentioned, and there put to death, yet the verdict of the Jews was that the destruction visited upon Herod's army was a vindication of John, since God saw fit to inflict such a blow on Herod.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.2, Feldman

### **Theudas, 44 C.E.**

During the period when Fadus was procurator of Judaea, a certain impostor named Theudas persuaded the majority of the masses to take up their possessions and to follow him to the Jordan River. He stated that he was a prophet and that at his command the river would be parted and would provide them an easy passage. With this talk he deceived many. Fadus, however, did not permit them to reap the fruit of their folly, but sent against them a squadron of cavalry. These fell upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them and took many prisoners. Theudas himself was captured, whereupon they cut off his head and brought it to Jerusalem. These, then, are the events that befell the Jews during the time that Cuspius Fadus was procurator.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.5.1, Feldman

<sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup> Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. <sup>36</sup> Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. <sup>38</sup> Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup> But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

Acts 5:33-39, NIV

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bammel, Ernst. "The Trial Before Pilate." Pages 415-452 in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*. Edited by Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Barnes, W. Emery. "The Testimony of Josephus to Jesus Christ." *The Contemporary Review* (1914): 57-68.
- Barnett, P. W. "The Jewish Sign Prophets -A.D. 40-70: Their Intentions and Origin." *New Testament Studies* 27 (1954): 679-97.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Under Tiberius All was Quiet." *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975): 564-71.
- Bauer, W., W. G. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Edited by Frederick William Danker. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Bermejo-Rubio, Fernando. "Are Judas the Galilean and the 'Fourth Philosophy' Mere Concoctions? The Limits of Josephus' Inventiveness." *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok*, 81 (2016): 91-111.
- Betz, Otto. "Was John the Baptist an Essene?" *Bible Review* VI (1990): 18-25.
- Birdsall, J. Neville. "The Continuing Enigma of Josephus's Testimony about Jesus." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 67 (1985): 609-22.
- Bond, Helen K. "Pontius Pilate: Portraits of a Roman Governor." *Expository Times* 115 (2004): 240-41.
- Brandon, S. G. F. *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pontius Pilate: History and Legend." *History Today* 18 (1968): 523-30.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1968.
- Bruce, F. F. "Tacitus on Jewish History." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 (1984): 33-44.
- Buckley, Jorunn Jacobsen. *The Mandaean: Ancient Texts and Modern People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

- Cadbury, Henry J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. New York: Macmillan, 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1937.
- Capponi, Livia. "Josephus in Rome" (review of William den Hollander, *Josephus, the Emperors and the City of Rome*). *Histos* 9 (2015): xii-xviii.
- Cohen, Shaye J. D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishna*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.
- Collins, John J. *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Cullmann, Oscar. *Jesus and the Revolutionaries*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- Davies, W. D and E. P. Sanders. "Jesus: from the Jewish Point of View." Pages 618-77 in *The Early Roman Period*. Edited by William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy. Vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Edited by W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Downing, F. Gerald. "Dale Martin's Swords for Jesus: Shaky Evidence?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (2015): 326-33.
- Dunn, James D. G. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Efron, Joshua. *Studies on the Hasmonean Period*. Leiden: Brill, 1987.
- Fairstein, Morris M. "Why to the Scribes Say That Elijah Must Come First." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 75-86.
- Farmer, William R. "Judas, Simon and Athronges." *New Testament Studies* 4 (1958): 147-55.
- Farnes, Alan Taylor. "John the Baptist and the Qumran Connection." *Studia Antiqua* 9 (2011): 39-45.
- Feldman, Louis. *Josephus, Antiquities*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Fredriksen, Paula. "Arms and the Man: A Response to Dale Martin's 'Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous.'" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (2015): 312-25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Why was Jesus Crucified, but His Followers Were Not?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2007): 415-19.
- Gabba, Emilio. "The Social, Economic, and Political History of Palestine, 63 BCE-CE 70." Pages 94-167 in *The Early Roman Period*. Edited by William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy. Vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Edited by W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- Gager, John. "Messiahs and Their Followers." Pages 37-46 in *Toward the Millennium. Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*. Edited by Peter Schafer and Mark Cohen. Studies in the History of Religions 77; Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- Goodblatt, D. "The Place of the Pharisees in First Century Judaism: The State of the Debate." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 20 (1989): 12-30.
- Goodman, Martin. *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*. New York: Vintage, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Roman World, 44 BC-AD 180*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome, A.D. 66-70*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Grabbe, L. L. "Sanhedrin, Sanhedriyyot, or Mere Invention?" *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 39 (2008): 1-19.
- Griffith, Sheila Marie Dugger. "Not Peace but a Sword! Luke 12:49-53 and Other Hard Sayings on the Family in Early Gospel Literature." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2004.
- Gruen, Joan, B. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Harvey, A. E. *Jesus on Trail: A Study of the Fourth Gospel*. London: SPCK, 1976.
- Hengel, Martin. *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Zealots: Investigations Into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I Until 70 A.D.* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989.
- Hollander, William den. *Josephus, the Emperors and the City of Roman: From Hostage to Historian*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2014.
- Hollenbach, Paul W. "John the Baptist." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. David Noel Freedman vol. 3 H-J. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Horsley, Richard A. "Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine." *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 8 (2010): 99-145.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus and the Powers*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Josephus and the Bandits." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 10 (1976): 37-63.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Messianic Figures and Movements in First-Century Palestine." In *The Messiah*:

- Development in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*. Editor James H. Charlesworth. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Popular Messianic Movements Around the Time of Jesus." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 471-95.
- Horsley, Richard with John S. Hanson. *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.
- Isaac, Benjamin. *The Limits of Empire: the Roman Army in the East*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2000.
- Jenkins, Keith. *Re-Thinking History* London: Routledge, 1991.
- Jensen, Ellis E. "The First Century Controversy over Jesus as a Revolutionary Figure." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 60 (1941): 261-72.
- Jensen, Morten Hørning. "Herod Antipas in Galilee: Friend of Foe of the Historical Jesus?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 5 (2007): 7-32.
- Jonquière, Tessel. Review of William den Hollander, *Josephus, the Emperors and the City of Rome*. *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 47/2 (2016): 280-82.
- Josephus*. Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray et al. 10 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926–1965.
- Kelhoffer, James A. "Did John the Baptist Eat like a Former Essene? Locust-Eating in the Ancient Near East and at Qumran." *Dead Sea Discoveries* 11 (2004): 293-314.
- Kennard, J. Spencer, Jr. "Judas of Galilee and His Clan." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 2/36 (1946): 281-86.
- Knight, Gregory R. "The Pharisees and the Sadducees: Rethinking their Respective Outlooks on Jewish Law." *BYU Law Review* 3 (1993): 925-48.
- Maier, Paul L. "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion." *Church History* 37 (1968): 3-13.
- Martin, Dale B. "Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (2014): 3-24.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Response to Downing and Fredriksen." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (2015): 334-45.
- Mason, Steve, ed. *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*\_ Vol. 1B: *Judean War* 2. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

- McGing, Brian. "Pontius Pilate and the Sources." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991): 416-38.
- McLaren, James S. *Power and Politics in Palestine the Jews: The Jews and the Governing of Their Land, 100 BC-AD 70*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991.
- Mealand, David L. "The Dissimilarity Test." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31 (1978): 41-50.
- Meggitt, Justin J. "The Madness of King Jesus: Why was Jesus Put to Death, but His Followers were Not?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2007): 379-413.
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus - Companions and Competitors*. New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Jesus in Josephus: A Modest Proposal." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 76-103.
- Pervo, Richard I. *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologist*. Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2006.
- Rajak, Tessa. *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* 2nd Edition. London: Duckworth, 2003.
- Rhoads, David M. *Israel in Revolution: 6-74 C.E.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.
- Riches, John and John Kenneth Riches. *The World of Jesus: First-Century Judaism in Crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Rudolf, Kurt, Dennis C. Duling and John Modschiedler. "Problems of a History of the Development of the Mandaean Religion." *History of Religions* 8 (1969): 210-35.
- Safrai, S. and M. Stern, eds. *The Jewish People in the First Century*. Stichting Compendia Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 1. Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1974.
- Safrai, Zeev. "The Description of the Land of Israel in Josephus' Works." In *Josephus, the Bible and History*. Edited by L.H. Feldman and G. Hata. Tokyo: Yamamoto Shoten, 1988.
- Sanders, E. P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. London: Penguin, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus and Judaism*. London: SCM, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE*. London: SCM, 1992.
- Schwartz, Daniel R. *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 60. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992.
- Schwartz, Seth. *The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad*. Cambridge: Cambridge



- University Press, 2014.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Imperialism and Jewish society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Sheldon, Rose Mary. "Jesus, as Security Risk: Insurgency in First Century Palestine?" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 9 (1998): 1-37.
- Sims, David C. "The Sword Motif in Matthew 10:34." *HTS Teologieses Studies / Theological Studies* 56 (2000): 84-100.
- Smallwood, E. Mary. *The Jews under Roman Rule: from Pompey to Diocletian.* Leiden: Brill, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "High Priests and Politics in Roman Palestine." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 2/13 (1962): 14-34.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Josephus as a Historian." In *Josephus: The Jewish War.* London: Penguin, 1981.
- Smith, Morton. *Jesus the Magician.* Berkeley, Calif.: Seastone, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Troublemakers." Pages 501-68 in *The Early Roman Period.* Edited by William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy. Vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism.* Edited by W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Tacitus. *The Histories and The Annals.* Translated by C. H. Moore and J. Jackson. 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937.
- Taylor, Joan E. "John the Baptist and the Essenes." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996): 256-85.
- Thackeray, Henry St. John. *Josephus: the Man and the Historian.* New York: Ktav, 1967 [1929]).
- Trumbower, Jeffrey A. "The Historical Jesus and the Speech of Gamaliel (Acts 5.35-9)." *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993): 500-17.
- Whiston, William. *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition.* Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1987.
- Winter, Paul. *On the Trial of Jesus.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Trial of Jesus and the Competence of the Sanhedrin." *New Testament Studies* 10 (1964): 494-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Marcan Account Trial of Jesus' Trial by the Sanhedrin." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 2/14 (1963): 94-102.
- Worth, Roland H. Jr. *Messiahs and Messianic Movements through 1899.* Jefferson, N.C.:

McFarland, 2005.