

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY #27

The Chief Priests

The Forgotten Royal Families of Levi

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Two thousand years ago, the mysterious chief families of Levi were among the most powerful clans in the world. Their influence extended far from Judea to the furthest reaches of Roman power and beyond its eastern limits to the little-known trade routes of India and China. Levites quietly ruled the world through their four-fold roles of religious lawmakers, Judean politicians, merchant princes and advisors to kings.

Most Christians know that Joseph of Arimathea was the uncle of Jesus and scion of the House of David. But he was also the richest merchant prince of Levi. His metals business took him from the tin mines of Britain to the sword-makers of the ancient Samurai of the east. He traveled the known world, seeking the finest metal alloys and smelting technologies, the best artisans and the purest sources of metal. This was his primary course of life for some thirty years before Jesus was crucified. His reward for this effort was a bad marriage and a famous fortune that failed to buy him happiness.

Joseph was given many honors for his service to Rome, and we may assume he had been awarded honors by other nations as well. The Romans gave him the rank of an Equestrian, a Knight of the Empire, with the power to command Roman soldiers in the provinces. We know this because Jerome (who said he was guided in his translation of the Bible by two secretive Jewish scribes) twice called Joseph a *Nobilis Decurio*. According to the Latin language, a *Decurio* was either a "cavalry officer" or a Roman Senator in charge of a provincial town or colony. That latter office was hardly his role in Jerusalem. Therefore, Joseph must have been a cavalry officer, which became the rank of "Knight" in medieval times. As early as *A.D.* 500, King Arthur and all of his Round Table knights traced their lineage to Joseph. (Lewis 1955, p. 158)

Medieval legends call Joseph a knight. (Taylor 1923, pp. 86, 245-249) So *Nobilis Decurio* meant "noble knight" (Taylor 1923, p. 215), which in Rome could signify the Equestrian rank. (Bowder 1980, p. 611) It is also said that Joseph had been accorded official status as the *Decurio* in charge of Mining. (Capt 1987, p. 22) His titles indicate that Joseph was given the responsibility to help arm Rome's legions. He was honored for making sure Rome had better swords and shields than its enemies.

However, it is unlikely Joseph created this industry out of thin air. According to Moslem lore and *The Koran*, Joseph's ancestor King David had begun the family arms business after David obtained Goliath's mighty sword. When the Jews rescued Julius Caesar at Alexandria, he was extremely grateful. He not only granted them the sole right to evangelize the Roman Empire on behalf of the Judaic faith (a unique privilege of which the Pharisees made great use), but, we can now see that he also granted the head of the family the Equestrian rank. That enabled the family to procure the best alloys and metals for the Roman army, and that soon made them exceedingly wealthy.

Joseph held the Davidic royal seat on the Sanhedrin, and yet he had to submit to the higher-ranking Levites on the Council. For, although Joseph's family came from the prominent line of the daughters of the first High Priest, Aaron (Luke 1:5, 36), all the male-derived priestly lines ranked above him in Levi. The Sanhedrin was one of the few places where Joseph was not always treated with high honor and deference. He seems to have traveled much of the time and would give his proxy to the High Priest to cast for him. The trial of his nephew Jesus was a conflict-of-interest for Joseph. The vote had to be unanimous for a death-penalty conviction. Joseph was "not consenting" (Luke 23:51), which meant the High Priest Caiphas had exercised Joseph's proxy (Luke 22:66-71).

Levites became merchants as a consequence of several factors unique to that tribe. First, they were supposed to be sustained by their income from tithes. However, Levi's revenue fell when other tribes failed to pay their shares (Malachi 3:6-12). Second, the exile of non-Levitical tribes placed a greater burden on the remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin, to support Levi. Third, when Herod and the Romans imposed added taxes on the people, the Levites found themselves with less and less tithing income.

Fourth, the most powerful priests increasingly took a greater share of the tithes. (Bruce 1972, pp. 66-67, 348) (Jeremias 1975, pp. 98, 198, 206) This was because the number of living ex-high priestly families grew as the Romans kept deposing them.

Fifth, the Levites had no inheritance in the land (Deuteronomy 10:9). They could not farm nor raise animals. Shut out of agriculture and the tithes, they could only support themselves with marketable skills that did not require agricultural land. And sixth, without land, the Levites became urbanized men who found their contacts with higher-ranking priestly Levites a valuable political asset. They soon learned the art of negotiation and that naturally led them into merchant trading.

Scholars tell us that Levites continued to marry other Levites, even when they were no longer active in Temple service. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 214, 317) When Joseph of Arimathea sought to find a husband for his wife's daughter Anna, whom he had adopted, he naturally chose the son of another Levitical merchant family, the Levite Stephen of Cyprus (Acts 4:36, 6:1-10; 12:25), a family that had apparently specialized in the Cypriot copper trade. No doubt a common interest in the metals trade

resulted in the two families being united by marriage as well. Joseph's family had long-standing interests in the tin of Britain, which, when united with the Cypriot copper of Stephen's family, produced durable bronze, demonstrated by Stephen's heirs, Barnabus and John Mark.

Our previous detailed reconstructions of the Holy Family show that Peter's son Judas had married Mary, the mother of John Mark. This Mary was the sister of the Levite Joseph from Cyprus, whom the Apostles renamed Bar-Nabus ("Son of Consolation" (because his father had just been martyred); alternatively, "Son of a (Christian) Prophet"). So Barnabus' father was a Levitical Cypriot Christian prophet who had been executed and apparently had his name blotted out by the authorities. This can only be Joseph of Arimathea's Levite son-in-law Stephen, the only Christian prophet of Cyprus that had been officially executed at the time, and who could also have been Barnabus' father.

(We can eliminate the two Levites, John the Baptist and Jesus as the Christian prophet father of Barnabus, even if they were not celibate: Barnabus and his sister shared a house in Jerusalem, which shows that it had been inherited from their deceased father. John the Baptist had no home in Jerusalem. Jesus had no home in the city either, for He stayed at Bethany whenever He was in Jerusalem. Thus, even if these two figures are seen merely as Christian prophets and reckoned married with children, neither lived in Jerusalem and thus neither could be Barnabus' father. And neither was from Cyprus. That leaves Stephen as the only executed Levite prophet from Cyprus at that very early stage of the church.)

Joseph of Arimathea and Mary Magdalene's grandchildren were Joseph Barnabus and his sister Mary, who were probably named after them. Granddaughter Mary and her husband Judas had a son, John Mark, who seems to have been the first great-grandson of Joseph of Arimathea and Mary Magdalene. John Mark had Levite heritage on both sides of his family. We may infer that he inherited the name John from Judas' grandfather Jonah and the name Mark from his grandfather Stephen's uncle, Marcellus (mentioned in an "old Aquitaine legend"). (Taylor 1923, p. 51)

Early church tradition also said Joseph of Arimathea babysat Judas' son. Thus, Joseph was babysitting his first (and perhaps only) great-grandson. It would be hard to explain why Joseph would babysit at all, or why such a bizarre tradition would ever have existed, unless Joseph had such a strong family tie to Judas' Levitical son, John Mark. Besides this, Levites feared profane hands touching their males (*cf.* Luke 7:37-50).

Knowing that Stephen, his son Joseph Barnabus, and grandson John Mark were all wealthy Levites living in Jerusalem explains their skill defending Christian theology (Acts 6:3-10, 12:12, 13:43-50). Wealthy Levites living in Jerusalem were often trained as scribes. Barnabus is reckoned a scribe. (Jeremias 1975, p. 234) So, his father Stephen and nephew Mark (whom he raised) could also have been scribes.

Levitical marriage rules were by far the strictest in Israel. Long after other tribes were marrying outside of Israel, Levites continued to limit their marriages to those who could prove by their genealogies pure Israelite descent (Ezra 2:59-63) (Jeremias 1975, pp. 214, 297-8, 337, et al.) We have argued that Joseph married Mary Magdalene, the chief heiress of Benjamin and also of Levitical descent. By contrast, Paul's Benjaminite mother was married to a patrician Roman, which made Paul a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:28), yet he was still insufficient good standing to study in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, one of the leading rabbis of the day (Acts 22:3).

The strict Levite marriage rules explain an otherwise puzzling tendency to intermarry among the fiercely competing families of the chief priests. It was vital to have unquestioned Levitical ancestry if one dreamed of becoming High Priest. Those priests with marriageable sons and daughters, therefore, had valuable bargaining chips in the Levitical halls of power.

A Benjaminite like Paul reckoned their Israelite ancestry via the mother's side and did not need to count on the father's genealogy (Paul may have married a Levite, however). Most tribes had little power in Jerusalem, which made the issue moot for them. Aside from the Levites and the scribes of Benjamin, only the Davidic house of Judah had to protect its family lineage in case the throne might eventually be restored to them.

The High Priest was only one of several high-ranking priests who served in the Temple. Second in rank, like a Vice-President, was the Captain of the Temple. He took over if anything happened to the High Priest, and all High Priests had previously been the Captain of the Temple. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 155, 160-163) After the High Priests, came the heads of the 24 priestly families, the Overseer of the Temple, who had six deputy overseers, and last came the Treasurer, who had at least two deputies. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 161-179)

Among other duties, the Overseer and his six deputies held the seven keys that locked the seven gates of the Temple at sunset and unlocked them at sunrise each day. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 165-167, 173, 203) An exception was made on the night of Yom Kippur when the High Priest was kept awake all night (*cf.* Luke 2:27). (Jeremias 1975, 153-154, 159n39, 171)

One factor working against the tribal marriage rules in the time of Jesus was the reorganization of the Sanhedrin after the return from the captivity in Babylon. Originally there were supposed to be six representatives from each tribe on the Council, for a total of seventy-two (including the High Priest who only was allowed to vote in order to break a tie or exercise a proxy). (Jeremias 1975, pp. 151, 153, 159) But after the return from Babylon, not only were most heirs of the northern tribes missing, but too few families had maintained their genealogies well enough to qualify for their tribal posts (compare Ezra 2:59-63). This left the rest of the tribes to make up the difference. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 197, 214)

To solve this dilemma, known Israelites were appointed to fill the vacant Council seats. Because the men of Levi were better attested in general by having preserved their official written genealogies more completely than men of the other tribes, Levites got most of these appointments. (Jeremias 1975, p. 222f) So, Levite families took on the legal inheritances of the absent and defaulted clans of other tribes. Even among the Levitical families, genealogical faults were found. (Jeremias 1975, p. 337) Other Levitical families replaced these as well, typically from higher-ranking priestly Levites. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 196-197) (Ibid. pp. 196-197).

We have an example in the New Testament. The course or family of Abia on the Sanhedrin, the line of Zacharias and John the Baptist, was one of those who had to be substituted for by Levites of another line (Luke 1:5). (Jeremias 1975, pp. 275-290) Therefore, Zacharias and John the Baptist would have come from a higher-ranking family of Levi than Abia, possibly even from Zadok, the High Priestly family itself. That explains why Zacharias could marry Elizabeth of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5).

If John had a Zadokite heritage, it would explain the militant support for the “messiahship” of John the Baptist that continued long into the Christian era. Such a claim would have been based upon the expectation in the Dead Sea Scrolls of two Messiahs; one of David’s royal line, and one of the High Priestly line of Levi. (Zechariah 3-5, note 4:14, “These are the two anointed ones (“the two Messiahs”) that stand before the Lord of the whole earth”—one of whom is named “Jesus” (“Joshua”). Compare this text with Rev. 11:3-4: “And I will give power unto My Two Witnesses, and they shall prophesy... clothed in sackcloth (mourning clothes). These are the two olive trees (atop Olivet), and the two (Temple altar = the Altar of the Red Heifer) candlesticks (lights) standing before the God of the earth...where also their Lord was crucified.”).

We can now see why Jesus and John allied together posed such a threat to the power of the chief priests and other authorities in Jerusalem. Not only was Jesus a threat to their political rule, but John may have been deemed a prophesied legal heir to the very High Priesthood itself. With popular support, these two men could legally “clean house” in Jerusalem by officially re-establishing the kingdom and reforming the whole priestly apparatus. The Gospels show why the Judean rulers feared John:

“Pharisees (supporters of the claims of the Davidic tribe of Judah to legal superiority among the tribes) and Sadducees (supporters of the Levitical house of Zadok and its high priestly claims) came... He said to them, ‘O you offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the Wrath to come?’” (Matthew 3:7)

The Judeans sent (officially dispatched) priests (men of full Levitical training) and Levites from Jerusalem (official representatives of the chief Levitical families) to ask him... Are you (the Christ? Are you) Elijah (who is also prophesied to come) ...Are you The Prophet? (a special Prophet that was also expected). And he confessed... I am not... that Christ, nor (a resurrected) Elijah, nor that Prophet... (John 1:19-25)

Note the three men they expected: the Christ, a Levitical Prophet, and Elijah. In light of this, note what Jesus said. "If you can accept it, John was (symbolically in the spirit of) Elijah who was (prophesied) to come." Some say that Elijah's prophetic mantle was literally inherited by John the Baptist, as the leather girdle that John wore.

Jesus added that, "another (leader whom your generation will fail to recognize as a false Messiah) will come in his own name, and him you will accept," and at the end of the age, "many will go after... (at least two sets of) false Christs and false prophets."

Therefore, based on today's faulty religious teaching, many Jews and Christians in the last days are prophesied to repeatedly accept a False Christ, a False Prophet, and we may assume, a False Elijah "returning" in a fiery heavenly vehicle. This fake trio sounds suspiciously like the False-Christ known as the Beast, his False Prophet and the satanic fiery Dragon of Revelation, who descends to the earth. These three "send out three spirits like frogs" to gather the world to Armageddon, apparently by spreading false prophetic messages that "many" nominally Jewish and Christian people will be deceived into believing by some sort of erroneous theological interpretation.

Note that the fiery Dragon, like the Elijah-fulfilling John the Baptist, comes first, and then transfers his mantle of authority to the Beast, the False Christ of the prophecy. Thus, the Dragon that comes first is a parallel with John the Baptist and Elijah. There is even a kind of 'Baptist' scene where the fiery Dragon pours water out of his mouth to "carry away" the woman in a kind of false baptism. The hidden implication is that these waters symbolize a spiritual deception designed to "carry away" the true church with false priestly religion.

Elijah had symbolically poured water on stones, from which God was metaphorically able to raise up believers, and then God set fire to these wet stones, a symbol of the future pouring out of the Holy Spirit. The parallel, which we may assume John had on his mind when he wrote, would be for the Dragon to pour out spiritual deceptions, miraculous "signs," visions, and false prophetic experiences in order to create his own false "Christian" religion. Paul expected the same thing (II Thessalonians 2:1-12).

In anticipating this False Elijah period, note that there was a famine in Elijah's day that lasted three and a half years, and that he was a prophet during that time and even raised the dead son of a widow. "The widow's son" may be a reference to John, the Baptist, the son of the martyred Zacharias, who was slain between the altar and the Holy Place on the eve of Pentecost in 1 B.C. The "Widow's Son" is sometimes also said to represent Jesus, if one accepts the Catholic teaching that Joseph the Carpenter had died shortly after the birth of Jesus, but Joseph's early death was invented by the church to support its ever-Virgin doctrine. So, this view is doubtful.

Cain was also reckoned the son of the widowed Eve, as was Hiram Abif, the Masonic Levitical Temple-builder, and the False Prophetess Lilith, if she is Babylon the Great, has daughters and no husband (Revelation 17:5, 7, 18:7), but does not like to think of herself as a 'widow' even though that is clearly her status when the Beast dies. She seems to clone herself a miracle-working son who is called the "image of the Beast," implying that the Beast was her dead husband. Isis (Lilith) did the same thing after Osiris died, cloning Horus (the "image" of his father) from the body of Osiris (Cain) and making herself queen of Egypt.

So, if we are correct that Cain is the Beast, then the "image of the Beast" could be the "widow's son," a clone of Cain. This cloned son would be a type of "resurrection" for Cain, the Beast who was mortally wounded, yet 'revived' by cloning. Lilith ran off with Cain, but was not fully "married" to him, for her myths say she never "submitted" to a man in marriage. The Hebrew underlying the Genesis term "Cain's wife" means simply "Cain's woman" and does not require an actual marriage ritual as it is now understood. Jewish and Christian legends make clear that she was legally espoused to Abel, not Cain. (Platt 2016, lxxiv: 6-8; lxxv: 11; lxxvi: 10) Hence, she can declare, as she does in Rev. 18:7:

"A Queen I sit (Isis is usually shown seated), no widow am I."

The future last days anticipation of a False Christ, in order to be accepted by the "many" as Jesus foretold, must be preceded by a false church-endorsed, fake version of the genuine Two Witnesses, who are to prophesy during a divinely-appointed three-and-a-half-year famine just before Christ returns (Revelation 11). So, the fake two witnesses must come during a (fake?) global famine, that is, a time of claimed global climate change.

Thus, before the Dragon hands over his mantle of fake priestly authority to the Beast-Messiah, there should be another, earlier, man-made three-and-a-half-year famine. And that is indeed what Revelation implies is going on during the Dragon's immediate pre-Beast or pre-False Christ period:

"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place. There she is nourished (fed

food) for a time, and times, and half a time (three and a half years),
away from the face of the Serpent (the Dragon).” (Revelation 12:14)

We have shown that Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were also (by tradition) supernaturally fed during a three-and-a-half-year famine between the fall of *A.D.* 42 and the spring of *A.D.* 46. These early church traditions show that early Christians interpreted this passage in Revelation 12 as a literal three-and-a-half-year famine.

Another Elijah parallel with the fiery red Heavenly Dragon is the departure of Elijah in a fiery chariot. Elijah is taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot, from where the fiery red Dragon is to be cast down. The “return of Elijah” should in theory have him descend from heaven in the last days in a chariot of fire. Accordingly, the future casting down of the Fiery Red Dragon might be mistaken by some as the return of Elijah.

When this fiery “Elijah” Dragon (*cf.* fiery chariots of the gods as UFO's) hands his Levitical mantle to the False-Christ Beast, this leads to the rise of the False Prophet who revives the Beast by cloning a son in his image. Paul supports this view when he says:

Let no man deceive you by any means. For that day shall not come, except there come a “standing apart” (“apostasy”) first. And that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition (the son of Satan, the Red Dragon), who opposes and exalts (literally, “who pushes away and hyper-elevates”) himself above (literally, “up upon”) all that is called god (which in Paul’s day referred to Mars, the Moon, and the other heavenly bodies), or is worshipped. So that he as (a) god sits in the temple of God (in heaven; see Revelation 11:19). ...And then that Wicked One shall be revealed (the Dragon’s son), whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth and shall destroy by the brightness of His coming (*parousia*), even him (the Son of Perdition) whose own (fake) coming (*parousia*) is after the working (literally, “caused by the energetic activity”) of Satan (the fiery red Elijah-Dragon), using all power and signs and lying wonders, with (them taking advantage of) all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish (exploiting the gullibility to miracles of spiritually blind sinners) because they received not the Love (Holy Spirit) of The Truth (Christ) that they might be saved. For this reason, God shall send them strong delusion (“the energetic activity (false prophetic spiritual activity) of a

deceptive wandering one” = pun on the wandering planet of the wandering Cain: Mars) that they should believe The Lie (the False Christ) (the Lie that the grand fake “coming” of this Man of Sin is supposedly the True Christ returning).” (II Thessalonians 2:3-11)

The Elijah-Dragon Satan and the False Christ Man of Sin are believed by large masses on the earth because the “strong delusion” deceives them due to false prophecy.

We may assume that this trio will not merely perform magical signs and wonders, but will also have the prophesied Levitical credentials for which the rabbis are looking. It is not clear how these Levitical qualifications will be reckoned, given the loss of the old genealogical records. On the other hand, Levi’s priestly role was to represent God’s heavenly kingdom on the earth. Technically then, if the evil trio were regarded as being themselves the heavenly beings, they could effectively by-pass the genealogical barrier.

Presumably the scribes had actually found the required high-ranking Levitical ancestry in John the Baptist. Otherwise, why were they all so afraid of John? Even Herod Antipas feared to hurt John. It was Herodias, his wicked mistress, who tricked Herod into killing John, an event the priests had apparently not anticipated (Matthew 14:1-12).

The death of John must have been a relief to the rulers. It would have given the chief priests reason to assume that God was not about to overthrow them. They reasoned that since John was executed without reviving from the dead (Luke 9:7-9), then he could not have been the expected Levitical Elijah, and likewise, then his Messianic candidate Jesus was not the companion Davidic Messiah. That seemed sufficient evidence to the priests and the Pharisees that they could, in theory, safely remove Jesus with impunity.

However, Jesus had also inherited a Levitical line from His mother, the same line that Joseph of Arimathea possessed. Paul said that Jesus had become the “Great High Priest” (Hebrews 4:14), that is, the Chief High Priest, for unlike all the previous High Priests, Jesus had no need to repeat His ritual each year, because He had cleansed the heavenly tabernacle itself, “once and for all (time)” (Hebrews 10:10). Although Paul seemed to have forgotten that Jesus had High Priestly ancestry from the daughters of Aaron, it may be that Paul was reckoning the continued existence of the then-current living heirs of Aaron’s sons serving in the still-standing Temple. As long as they served, the line from Aaron’s daughters was not yet able to inherit. But by *A.D.* 70, the male heirs fell into default. Their Temple was gone, and they became defiled by Roman enslavement as had happened to some previous priests. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 271-302)

But Joseph of Arimathea and Lazarus (see Zechariah 12:10-13, a prophecy that refers to Lazarus’ family as Levitical) were both of Levi, and they would remain qualified to serve as Temple Levites while they lived.

Indeed, when John Mark writes Revelation 11, he specifically makes reference to the two Messiahs of Zechariah, who are the two olive trees who stand before the Lord of the whole earth, as we noted earlier.

If Joseph and Lazarus are the Two Witnesses, then it follows from Zechariah 4 that one of them is the heir to the throne of David's heir Zerubbabel. That is, one of the Two Witnesses should be heir to the throne of David—and Joseph of Arimathea is certainly such an heir, as Luke's genealogy shows. And the other Witness must be the heir of Joshua, the High Priest of Zadok's family—and that would then be Lazarus. This means that Lazarus was in line to become High Priest, and is now the only qualified priest still alive, if only because the genealogical records of all other competing Levites have now been lost.

Note that our reconstruction has Lazarus as Barabbas, yet another target of the chief priests in Jerusalem when they went after Jesus. The Gospel of John expressly states that the chief priests issued a death warrant against Lazarus (John 12:10). It may be that once John the Baptist was dead, Lazarus was considered the next in line of inheritance to challenge the clan of Levites then in power. This is supported by the fact that John the Baptist was not married and was an only child (Luke 1:5-25). His family had died out with him. Thus, the chief priests would naturally turn to the next likely family line that might harbor a threat to them, and this seems to have been that of Lazarus. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the threat level escalated dramatically:

If we let Him (go on) thus... everyone will believe in Him... (John 11:48)

It was at this very moment that the chief priests decided to issue a death warrant to arrest Lazarus as well as Jesus. Note that they were seeking to put to death three men, and two are clearly identified in the New Testament: Jesus, the Davidic Messiah, and John the Baptist, the Elijah who is to come. That leaves the third man, Lazarus/Barabbas, as the one who was deemed to be the expected Priestly Prophet. Indeed, as one of the Two Witnesses, Lazarus will literally become that expected end-time Prophet.

Herod thought Jesus might be the resurrected John the Baptist (Luke 9:7-8). Communication in those days was little more than a chain of gossip. Rumors that John had come back to life were obviously the source of Herod's fears. Then when Lazarus was 'also' raised from the dead, public belief in Jesus' Messianic potential exploded into a crisis for the chief priests. Hence, executing Jesus seemed a necessary step to restore the accustomed order.

Yet, the removal of John the Baptist and Jesus and the later exile of Joseph of Arimathea and Lazarus did not bring stability to the chief priestly families. On the contrary, it brought growing chaos. During the first three decades before the Crucifixion, there were six High Priests; during the following four decades,

there were fourteen, half of those in the final decade alone. In the thirty years prior to the birth of Jesus, there had been only two. By the end, assassination had become a common worry for High Priests.

To understand this fundamental change in the fortunes of the chief priest, we need to go back to the time of Herod the Great and follow the course of events that led to the eventual collapse of the priesthood. These issues impact the modern delusions about rebuilding the Temple and re-establishing priestly sacrifices.

When Herod was born, the High Priesthood was being contested between two Levitical brothers who were not of the High Priestly line of Zadok. They were Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, two brothers of the line of the Hasmoneans, who were both descendent from one of the lesser weekly courses of the priesthood.

Some might wonder if, as with Abia, they too were actually of the line of Zadok, but legally represented the Hasmonean line. Had they been of Zadok, however, Herod would not have felt compelled to replace them with a true Zadokite by murdering the last heir of the brothers' line, as Josephus claimed. Thus, it is clear they were not true Zadokites, but were indeed ordinary Hasmoneans, and Josephus, who was himself a well-born Hasmonean, did not dispute this.

In any case, once he had removed the Hasmoneans, Herod chose to install as High Priest, a relatively obscure man named Ananel who was from a Zadokite family line from the Levitical priests in Babylon. Herod had previously attempted to make Ananel High Priest, but to please his Hasmonean wife, the first Mariamne, Herod had put her 17-year old brother in the High Priesthood. After a short time, though, Herod had the boy killed, and Ananel then became one of the few men (and possibly the only one) ever to return to the High Priesthood after serving previously. (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, I, 22, 2)

But make no mistake. Herod was not installing merely one individual when he brought in Ananel from Babylon. He was moving Ananel's entire family line into power. Once Ananel died, his heir, apparently his son-in-law, followed him into office. This man's name was Joshua ben Phiabi (also called Jesus Fabus), and his family produced a number of later High Priests. His family name would become infamous.

This is a matter of enormous importance. Ananel's line controlled the chief priests at the time Jesus was crucified. They tried to kill Lazarus as well. And they nearly wiped out the church's leadership a generation later. So, we need to learn everything we can about Ananel and his family if we are to understand New Testament history.

Ananel was a Levite whose ancestors had been captive in Babylon, but he was of one of the Zadok families of the priesthood. This indicates that he was a Zadokite (Sadducee) whose family genealogies

had survived intact through the Babylonian captivity, which was not the case with some of the other priestly lines.

Yet Ananel was not of the top Zadokite family line that had originally supplied the High Priests for Solomon's Temple, and for Ezra's Temple after the exile to Babylon. This more legitimate family had served until exiled to Egypt by the Syrian conqueror Antiochus Epiphanes around 175 B.C. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 184-192)

This family's leading line was living in Alexandria in Egypt in Herod's time, and they must have been very surprised when Herod suddenly elevated a lesser-ranking rival Zadokite line (Ananel's) to the High Priesthood. For the first time in over 135 years, Zadok's family line had re-entered the Holy of Holies, but it was not the true High Priestly line, the one that had been exiled to Egypt in 175 B.C. Instead, Herod had openly appointed the lesser Zadokite line, Ananel's family from the exiles in Babylon.

As we said, after Ananel, his son-in-law Joshua ben Phiabi became High Priest. He and his family enjoyed power for several years until a fateful day around 23 B.C. Herod was watching from his balcony as the crowds streamed into the Temple during one of the feasts, when suddenly his world (and ours) changed: Herod's lustful eyes fell upon a breathtakingly beautiful young virgin, being led regally through the crowd by a retinue of Egyptian attendants. It was a display that seemed designed to catch Herod's eye.

The girl was about 16 years old. She was the elder daughter of Simeon, the son of Boethus, the rightful heir of the true Zadokite High Priestly line that was then living in Alexandria. It takes no great imagination to suppose that Simeon's family had been upset about Ananel's lesser line being given the High Priesthood and wondered how they might reclaim it. They realized that Simeon's lovely daughter could be used as a strategic pawn in a ploy to restore the High Priesthood to its true family heirs.

King Herod's middle-aged eyes opened wide with desire. It soon became clear that nothing would stop him until he possessed this girl. He summoned a trusted servant to contact the girls' father. He may not then have known that her father was Simeon, the 30-something true heir of Zadok, but that fact was probably discovered quickly. Herod was no fool. He knew he would have to strike a costly bargain to win the girls' hand. This would set in motion a chain of events from which civilization still shudders.

We do not know the details of the negotiations, but here is what we do know: Herod, we are told, abruptly removed Joshua ben Phiabi and his family from the High Priesthood. If he would not resign, he could have a finger chopped off, marring him so that he could not enter the temple. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 214-215 (n213))

Removing High Priests and other ranking priests for political or other reasons gradually created a class of powerful, wealthy Levitical men who had ruled the nation. In addition, there were priests who stepped in

whenever the High Priest was not able to perform his duties. These “High Priests for a day” also enjoyed all the lifetime honors of a full-time High Priest who had served for years. (Jeremias 1975, pp. 157-158)

All these ex-rulers created political instability that led to violence and war. They competed for the tithes and many harbored grudges over their removal from office. Joshua ben Phiabi and his heirs had especially long memories. They would bide their time and return to power. But eventually war with Rome would end their domination of the priesthood. So their hatred shifted from priestly rivalries to their Roman conquerors. Eventually the Phiabi family would strike Rome with a horrific vengeance.

Phiabi hatred began the day King Herod saw the true Zadokite priest’s beautiful daughter. Herod would replace Joshua ben Phiabi as High Priest with this girl’s father, Simeon Boethus. It would be this man Simeon who would later—in 3 BC—prophesy about Jesus and Mary on Yom Kippur (“redemption” in Luke 2:25-38, *cf.* Hebrews 9:1-26).

Although the now-retired High Priest Ananel had offered a red heifer to “cleanse” the Temple that Ezra and Nehemiah had built, the new High Priest Simeon considered all the Babylonian Zadokites and the Hasmoneans to be illegal usurpers, as indeed they were. Accordingly, red heifer or not, to Simeon these men had been defiling the Temple for generations. To satisfy Simeon’s concerns, Herod tore down the entire Temple around 23 B.C., rebuilding it by 19 B.C. (that is, in about 3½ years).

In retrospect, we can now see that Herod’s actions were the result of a deal he had made to obtain the hand of Simeon’s daughter in marriage. From Simeon’s point of view, his daughter (the second Mariamne in Herod’s string of ten wives) was being defiled by marrying the diseased old Edomite king. She was of pure Levitical stock, of the High Priestly line, a virgin heiress of the first rank in Israel. And she was exquisitely beautiful. Her father was wealthy, and her dowry must have been impressive. She could literally wed any husband she wished among the royal lines of Israel and Judah, not to mention pretentious outsiders like Herod.

She must have had the king drooling with lust. No doubt, he had been sleeplessly dreaming up ways to entice her and her father. What else could he offer them?

Eventually, Herod promised not only to make her effectively the queen, but also to make her first son sole heir to his throne, ahead of his other children. (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, I, 30, 3-7) It was a fateful decision that created enemies for Simeon and his family and for all those who were later to become linked to them by divine destiny.

Josephus gives us one other clue about what motivated Herod’s compulsion to have this bride: The girl’s name Mariamne. Herod’s great love was his first wife, Mariamne the elder, whose Hasmonean

family line had been the first Levites willing to marry Herod. It was a significant humiliation for a leading Hasmonian woman to marry an Edomite. But Herod, whose mother is said to have been an Ephraimite, desperately wanted to be accepted as a true son of Israel. Mariamne the elder's decision to marry him elevated Herod's status enormously, and he was forever grateful to her. But, a few years later Herod was duped into having her executed for supposedly plotting against him. He deeply regretted this mistake, and apparently everyone knew that Herod was horribly depressed about her death.

Normally a girl like the younger Mariamne—today called Mariamne II—would have been betrothed by 12 years old. Yet she was already 16 years old in 23 BC, and had not yet secured a marriage contract. By contrast, Herod matched Herodias with her future husband when she was five-years-old. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XVII, 1,2) (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, 1, 28, 1-4)

So Mariamne II's betrothal had been delayed roughly four to ten years. This was surely unusual for a highly marriageable and beautiful daughter of a High Priestly line, a young woman who was clearly also an educated Greek-speaker as well (her name was Greek, and she grew up in a cultured Greek-speaking city). (Jeremias 1975, p. 372)

Could it be that there was more to this sudden romance than coincidence?

Look at it this way: Back in c. 37 B.C., as a newly-married teenager, Simeon had seen a lower-ranking Zadokite line installed as High Priest by Herod. His father, Boethus, the heir of the time, must have raised Simeon on the dream of supplanting this secondary family. As he reached his middle years, Simeon began to hope that Herod might actually be persuaded to replace that lower line with Simeon's own, more legitimate family. But how could Simeon accomplish this?

When Herod brought Ananel to the High Priesthood, Mariamne II was a new-born baby. Simeon may have looked at his little girl and wondered if she might one day marry into Ananel's family.

But then, unexpectedly, Herod married Mariamne I, a Hasmonian princess and sister of the last Hasmonian male heir. Herod removed Ananel and made Mariamne I's young brother High Priest. Clearly, Simeon must have thought, Herod loved Mariamne so much that Herod was willing to install whomever she wanted as High Priest.

Simeon's daughter was named Mariamne, but we do not know when he had begun calling her that. Perhaps she was always called Mariamne. Perhaps she had been renamed Mariamne after Herod had married Mariamne I. And perhaps, although no one knows for sure, Mariamne was renamed, only after Herod executed his wife Mariamne I and then promptly regretted it.

Regardless, she was probably the region's most sought-after bride, but Simeon had rejected all offers for several years. No suitors measured up to his expectations for his daughter. These must have been high expectations indeed, for Josephus implies that Simeon negotiated a very favorable deal with King Herod. His daughter was to become the Queen of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and Simeon also seems to have required that he be made High Priest.

Surely that was enough. Yet it was not enough, for we have seen that Herod had to tear down the old Temple and rebuild it for Simeon to use. And even though Herod already had other sons and heirs, Herod eventually declared in writing that his first son by Mariamne II would be his full heir, thereby disinheriting all others.

Can you see now the brilliance of this Levitical negotiator at work?

It may be that Simeon had studied the deceased Mariamne's hairstyle, the colors and robes she wore, the way she walked, and anything else that might have given his daughter an advantage in luring the wily Herod into marriage. Herod must have thought his dead wife had come back to life when the girl paraded into the Temple that day, with the bearing of a queen, in her elegant robes, her hair likely done much the way Herod's wife had always kept her hair. Then perhaps she had glanced up at his balcony throne and smiled discreetly. No doubt all eyes were upon her, for Herod would not have been alone in noting her beauty or the eerie resemblance to the dead Levitical Queen.

When told the girl's name was also Mariamne, surely his heart paused, his throat went dry, and the noise of the crowd faded away. For a moment, he must have wondered if some divine grace had forgiven him his sins and restored his lost love to him.

The fact that Herod could not refuse any request Simeon then made reveals the depths of the King's despair over his dead Queen. Herod was a ruined soul. He would do anything to undo his error. In his anguish, none of Simeon's demands seemed too grand.

"Yes...Yes...Yes!" the ill-fated monarch replied to his requests, until Simeon realized there was nothing more he could ask. And so, Herod made Simeon High Priest, made his grandson sole heir to the throne, made his daughter Queen, and promised to tear down the old Temple and build Simeon the most lavish new jewel-encrusted Golden Temple complex his architects could design.

What more could the King do? Herod, before whom so many quivered in terror, was himself brought to his knees by the noble young woman Simeon had so prudently raised. Like Queen Esther before her, Mariamne II was an Israelite soldier, sacrificed upon a matrimonial battlefield for a higher cause: The restoration of the true High Priesthood to Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple of

God. She would even give birth to and train the future King of the Holy Land. For a woman of her day, there could be few higher callings.

Mariamne was about to change history for all time to come.

She was the human price for the Temple of Herod, a bejeweled stone maze so secure it inspired the Zealots to use it as their ultimate defensive fortification in *A.D.* 70.

What became of her? Her remains may have been found. There is today a set of ossuaries, ancient stone bone boxes, resting on bolted steel shelving in a dusty Israeli antiquities warehouse. These ossuaries were retrieved from a tomb in 1980, at Talpiot, not far to the south of Jerusalem on a hill within view of the city.

One of these bone boxes is labeled “Mariamne the Great.” It is exquisitely incised and decorated, fit for a Queen. It was discovered in a burial niche all alone, with no mate. The tomb in which it was found is not only within a reasonable walking distance of Jerusalem and the place where Herod’s new Temple once stood, but it also had three skulls placed on the floor to form a large triangle. If interpreted as an arrow, the triangle points southward, toward the artificial mount where Herod’s own tomb was placed: the Herodium. (Jacobovici and Pellegrino 2007, pp. 2-23, 61-65, etc.)

In this Mariamne’s tomb were ossuaries for men named “Matthaiah” and “Jesus” and “Jose” and “Mary” and also some blank bone boxes. The remains in the “Jesus” box had different DNA from this Mariamne. So, one of the two had been buried there because of marriage, not blood descent. (Jacobovici and Pellegrino 2007, pp. 2-23, 61-65, etc.) But they were not likely married to each other.

We can deduce this from the fact that the woman in the Mariamne ossuary was found alone, without any other bone box in its niche. She was in this tomb, we must assume, because it was her father’s tomb. Her husband, if any, must be elsewhere. The Jesus in the tomb would then have been the husband of one of her sisters, for his wife’s ossuary and their child’s lay together with this Jesus in another side of the tomb. (Jacobovici and Pellegrino 2007, pp. 2-23, 61-65, etc.)

The data fits perfectly what we know about Mariamne II, Simeon’s daughter. She did indeed have a brother-in-law named Jesus, wed to Mariamne’s youngest sister. His full name was Jesus ben See (ben Hosea?), and he became High Priest after *A.D.* 1. His son died young, and no other son followed his father Jesus ben See to the High Priesthood when his father died in 6 AD. Jesus ben See’s death removed Simeon’s family from power for decades. His successor was the notorious Ananus, father of six later High Priests. Ananus was of Ananel’s Babylonian line, and probably was a close relation of Joshua ben Phiabi. (Jeremias 1975)

Mariamne had another sister who was married to the High Priest Matthaiah ben Theophilus, who succeeded her father Simeon as High Priest. And Mariamne also had a brother-in-law named Jose, who served as High Priest for just one day, on Yom Kippur, exactly one year after the Yom Kippur scene in Luke 2, where his father-in-law Simeon had prophesied about Jesus in the Temple. Matthaiah and Jose match the other two male names found in the Talpiot tomb, exactly as one would expect. (Jeremias 1975)

So, Simeon Boethus had four daughters, like the man whose family tomb this was. There was an ossuary in this tomb as elaborate as Mariamne's, but with no name on it. (Jacobovici and Pellegrino 2007) This box must have been the most prominent person in the family, the patriarch. Mariamne's burial niche was at this patriarch's right hand and ought to have held the man's first-born son and his family. But Mariamne's box lay there alone, forlorn. On the other side of her niche, in another prominent location, lay a completely empty niche. All the rest of the burial places in the tomb were filled.

We need not speculate about the reason. Josephus reveals that Simeon's two sons had been passed over for the High Priesthood. Only in 1 B.C., after Matthaiah and Jose had served and Simeon was dead, did his sons Joazar and Eleazar finally get to serve, and the result was a bloodbath in the Temple on Passover and the murder of Zacharias on Pentecost, between the altar and the Holy Place. Eleazar was the High Priest when Zacharias was murdered in the Temple. In 1 B.C., on Saturday evening at sundown before Pentecost, Eleazar would have been entering the Temple just as Zacharias was coming out. At this exact moment, a signal was given and thousands of Jews surrounding the Temple area launched a coordinated attack on the Romans. Only at such a time could a priest between the Altar and the Holy Place kill Zacharias, as Jesus indicated. Eleazar was in right location at the right time, and he was later put on trial for his crimes.

The two disgraced sons of the High Priest Simeon—Joazar and Eleazar—were not buried in their father's tomb, although he had two niches prepared for them. Their bloody reigns had shamed the family for two reasons: Not only did their actions desecrate Simeon's beautiful new Temple, but they betrayed Simeon's honor after Simeon had prophesied in favor of Jesus as Messiah, for they slew Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. One or both of these disgraced sons appear to have been yet alive and standing before Jesus when He said:

All the righteous ('Zadokite') blood shed from righteous ('Zadokite')
Abel down to Zacharias (the possibly Zadokite father of John the
Baptist) whom YOU slew, between the Altar and the Holy Place, shall
come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:35, Luke 11:51)

Under the circumstances, Jesus was defending His own family's honor in the face of the powerful ex-High Priests, Joazar and Eleazar. His family knew who had murdered Zacharias and how and where it

happened. When Jesus said, “whom you slew,” He must have been staring the killer priest right in the eyes. The Bible tells us Jesus spoke as One who had authority. His words must have shaken the old murderer.

Eleazar, who had wielded the spear that pierced Zacharias, as it had once pierced Abel and which would one day also pierce Jesus Himself, was not without friends. When he sold out his father Simeon, he and Joazar had turned to the rival line of Ananel for support. Perhaps they married into the family. All we know is that the next man to assume the High Priesthood was their brother-in-law Jesus ben See, married to their baby sister. He served until *A.D.* 6, dying young, as did his son. Perhaps the young family died together, victims of poisoning, a favorite weapon in ancient power politics. Or perhaps they died in connection with the tax revolt of Judas the Galilean that same year.

With the unexpected early death of the High Priest Jesus ben See, the last son-in-law of Simeon, the High Priesthood now defaulted back to the Babylonian Zadokite line of Ananel.

Ananus, the son of Seth, became High Priest. His name indicates that his father Seth had married into one of the two High Priestly families, and we know that all the sons-in-law of Simeon are accounted for. So Ananus ben Seth must have been in Ananel’s line, like Joshua ben Phiabi, and his name “Ananus” suggests this also.

Once Ananus gained power, he did not readily give it up. His immediate family alone supplied six of the remaining High Priests from him and his sons. Most of the other High Priests came from Ananus’ various in-laws and other relatives. They were virtually unchallenged in their control of Jerusalem until the eve of the war with Rome.

The tomb of the High Priest Simeon holds the remains of the four men who held the High Priesthood in his family while Simeon and Herod lived, and briefly afterward, a span of roughly 30 years, including the brief reigns of his two errant sons Joazar and Eleazar. By *A.D.* 6, the glorious generation of Simeon’s family came to an end. Descendants of his family who had allied themselves with the powerful House of Ananus would occasionally get to serve for a year or two, but the wily Ananus would make sure to restore power to his own bloodline as soon as possible.

Although the rest of Simeon’s tomb was jammed with ossuaries, the two niches originally reserved for the traitors Joazar and Eleazar remained essentially empty. Even Mariamne II’s ossuary rested halfway out of the Joazar niche, as if it were an unclean hole. No one in Simeon’s loyal family wanted to be associated with those two murderers and defilers of the Temple.

The family of Jesus of Nazareth was another matter. About Passover of *A.D.* 63 (some mistakenly think it was *A.D.* 62), one of Ananus’ heirs put to death James, the Zadokite brother of Jesus, also called

James the Righteous (“Yakov Zadok”). He was the eldest half-brother of Jesus and the first-born son of Joseph, the husband of Mary. This James is thought by many to have been the Apostle James the Less. In any case, he was the acting head of the whole church, and he lived in Jerusalem. Like Jesus and all his brothers, James had a Levitical inheritance from his mother Mary, the priestly line of the daughters of Aaron. Some legends even claimed that James had served in the Temple.

James was put to death upon Mount Olivet in front of the Temple. He was then stoned, as he lifted his hands in prayer for his attackers and was mercifully clubbed to death by a fuller (a man who beat laundry dry with a club). (Eusebius 1979, book II, Chapter xxiii) All this took place virtually simultaneous with the final events in the history of the church recorded in Acts (*i.e.* Paul's two-year house arrest in Rome in Acts 28:16-31 up until the spring of *A.D.* 63).

The reason for James' execution is important. He and the elders of the church in Jerusalem had just finished publishing the New Testament, or at least a Hebrew translation of the Gospel. Support for this can be found in a Cypriot tradition that Barnabas was buried in Cyprus with a copy of Mark's Gospel. His nephew John Mark placed it on his body in what could only be the early *A.D.* 60's. (Taylor 1923, p. 52) An independent Italian tradition says John Mark visited the region of Venice in the early 60's and left behind a copy of his Gospel. (Taylor 1923, p. 62)

The Apostles had not rushed these Gospels. They had obediently waited for the thirty-year blotting-out of the name of Jesus to expire. (*cf.* Psalm 109:1-15, John 19:19-22, Acts 4:12-21, 5:28, 40) Blotting out of the name of Jesus and accounts of His life was to last "unto the second generation," but the length of a "generation" was up to the Sanhedrin.

Even in *A.D.* 63, Ananus' grandson, the new High Priest Ananus ben Ananus, clearly did not want anything published by the Christians. He argued that James and other church elders at Jerusalem had committed an offense against the Law of Moses. He had them stoned to death at the Passover season. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX, 9, 1)

The battered remains of James were gathered up, but as an executed “criminal,” they were supposed to be burned. To avoid this, the family needed to hide them from the authorities. The tomb of Simeon was “full” but had an initial antechamber in it where a body could be laid. They lay James there and later placed his bones in an ossuary, which they left in the antechamber. When the tomb was accidentally cut open by a bulldozer in 1980, the antechamber was fully exposed and the ossuary of James found. Some children took the bones out and kicked them around in front of the tomb until a Jewish woman stopped them and gathered up James' bones. The ossuary was stolen and ended up on the antiquities market, where it eventually became a controversial discovery.

There is, it turns out, a detailed prophecy about the martyrdom of James and the fate of his remains. The prophecy also has a strong parallel with the crucifixion of Jesus. It is in a Psalm of King David, a direct ancestor of James and Jesus:

“LORD, I cry unto Thee! Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to Thee! Let my prayer go forth before Thee at incense, at the lifting up of my hands at the evening sacrifice (c. 3 P.M., time of the Crucifixion, James' hands were raised in prayer at this death). Set a watch (guard) before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; let me not eat of their dainties (let me not render evil to those who are doing evil to me). Strike me (the) righteous (“Zadok” = nickname of James); (an act of) mercy; let him smite me; it shall be as a precious anointing oil, which shall not break my skull, for even yet (as I die) my prayer shall go forth while they slander me. When their judgments are hurled at me as stones, they shall echo back as my sweet words to them (paraphrased due to the KJV’s awkward wording here). Our bones are to be scattered at the mouth of the tomb, (as) when one cuts and cleaves wood on the ground (others read, “when one plows and rips open the earth”). But my eyes are on Thee, O GOD, the Lord. In Thee is my trust. Leave not my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of Iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own traps, while I entirely escape (am resurrected).” (Psalms 141:1-10)

The men who were stoning and mocking James were trying to provoke him to return anger for anger. The same thing was done to Jesus, who instead cried out, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do!” James likewise refuses to reply in kind, realizing that they want him to die in a state of anger and vengeance and hatred for them. The real trap here is spiritual: By getting the executed man to adopt a spirit of hatred at the moment of death, they hope to send the condemned man to hell. This was done both to Jesus and to James, which suggests that the house of Ananus had adopted this as their policy. They were not content to kill their enemies. They tried to make sure their foes would also go to hell forever.

Note that James prays in the Psalm for his enemies to fall into their own trap, that is, to go to hell because James is returning prayers for their slanders. Even this detail is confirmed by the New Testament, where James says similar things, in the epistle he was writing just before he was executed

(James 1:13; 3:1-9. Hegesippus, who became a Christian a few decades later, described James' death in exactly the same term). (Eusebius 1979, ch. 23)

The epistle of James has the same attitude as the man in the Psalm. There is not a single word in the entire Psalm 141, all of which was quoted above, that does not relate directly to James. It is as if we are being given the actual last words of James as he is dying.

Note that this prophetic Psalm was written some 3,000 years ago by King David, but was still being fulfilled in our own time. The tomb was accidentally exposed by a bulldozer in 1980, and James' bones were thereby "scattered at the mouth of the tomb when one plows and rips open the earth." It happened exactly as prophesied. The sole unfulfilled part of the prophecy is the resurrection of James at the Second Coming.

The grandfather of Ananus ben Ananus, the elder Ananus, had waged war on the Holy Family all his life. Back in *A.D.* 6, when he had disposed of Jesus ben See, the last of Simeon Boethus' family, Ananus took over as High Priest and served for a decade. Then in *A.D.* 16, a political change occurred following the death of the Emperor Augustus. A new procurator arrived, who deposed Ananus. The new High Priest was Ishmael ben Phiabi, who offered a red heifer, 49 years after Ananel, was apparently the son of the former High Priest, Joshua ben Phiabi. Ishmael had been the Captain of the Temple under Ananus. He served only a couple of years before Ananus' son Eleazar came into office.

But Eleazar was quickly succeeded by Simon Kamithus who also ruled only briefly. Simon's name hints that he was related to Simeon Boethus. He may have been married to one of the traitors High Priest Eleazar's daughters. He was followed by Joseph Caiphas in *A.D.* 18.

Caiphas may have been the son of Eleazar, whose name probably had been blotted out by the Romans because of Eleazar's role in the rebellion following Herod's death in 1 B.C. Caiphas had married one of Ananus' daughters. With nothing much else to do after his removal, but enjoy his retirement, the youthful Eleazar had quite a few children. Caiphas had seven brothers, all of whom got to deputize for him on various Yom Kippur days during his two decades in office. (Jeremias 1975, p. 195)

The Gospel of John makes fun of Caiphas' frequent absences by always identifying him with the phrase "who was High Priest that year" (John 11:49, 18:13). Perhaps he had an alcohol or medical problem. He seems quite excitable. (Jeremias 1975, p. 195)

Caiphas' marriage into a rival family line, his long survival in office, his frequent sharing of power with his brothers, and the way he insisted upon irrefutable witnesses before condemning Jesus, all suggest that he was a

brilliant strategist. He kept the High Priesthood far longer than any other first-century priestly ruler. Had Tiberius not died, he may have continued to rule the rest of his life.

The Hasmonean priest-historian Josephus was born in *A.D.* 37, the same year the Emperor Tiberius died and Caligula succeeded him. Joseph of Arimathea and his family escaped to Gaul that year. Pilate was removed and sent into exile. Caiphas was deposed, and in a few more months, so was his brother-in-law Jonathan ben Ananus. The new Procurator then installed Jonathan's brother Theophilus ben Ananus as High Priest.

It was a sign of things to come. Following Theophilus, around *A.D.* 40, there would be, over the next three decades, no fewer than fourteen additional High Priests, an average of one every 34.3 months until the Temple burned.

Some of these were descendants of Simeon Boethus' line. One of them offered up a red heifer to 'cleans' the Temple. (Jeremias 1975, p. 229 n.30) He was soon followed by another priest of Ananel's line, who then "cleansed" it again with a red heifer. (Jeremias 1975, p. 229 n.30) Since the average time between red heifers was normally a jubilee of 49 years or so, we may properly assume that the first-century red heifer offerings had more to do with family rivalries than any actual need for purifying the Temple. (Jeremias 1975, p. 152)

The second Ishmael ben Phiabi took over the High Priesthood about a third of a century after the first one, who apparently had been his grandfather. Ishmael had at least three or four sons, none of whom seem to have become High Priest. (Jeremias 1975, p. 176) (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 1977, XI, 144) Ishmael was detained in Rome by Nero's wife in *A.D.* 62. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX, xiii, 11) Ishmael was later beheaded. He was succeeded by Joseph Cabi, the son of Simon Kantheras, who had been the first of the fourteen final High Priests. Joseph Cabi was gone in a few months, surviving into early *A.D.* 63, when Ananus, the son of Ananus became the High Priest.

Raised from childhood to expect to become High Priest, Ananus was the grandson of the family patriarch Ananus and probably the son of a High Priest also. Most if not all of his uncles and great-grandparents had also been High Priest. By all accounts, he was an arrogant and thoughtless man. He convened an illegal Sanhedrin to execute James the Righteous, the head of the Christian church, and "others" of the church leadership. Josephus details the outrage this caused among the people and the Romans. For this act, Ananus was deposed after only three months in office. Josephus seems to gloat over the man's disgraceful exit from power. (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1977, XX, ix)

The next High Priest, Jesus, son of Damneus, may have been of the house of Simeon Boethus. If so, this would have been a deliberate slap at the house of Ananus. But when he was deposed the following year, riots

broke out over who would succeed him, led by thugs hired by the interbred Ananias ben Nebedeus and Phiabi families. The short-lived Joshua ben Gamaliel, whose leanings are uncertain, was chosen. Then, in *A.D.* 65, came Matthias ben Theophilus, the sixth High Priest in barely three years.

Some feel that at this time Luke was writing his Gospel and Acts, both addressed to a man named “Theophilus” (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1). It would be charming to think Mathias ben Theophilus was sympathetic to Jesus. But Josephus assures us that this Theophilus was the grandson of Ananus, the patriarch, the arch-enemy of Christianity. War with Rome broke out a year later. After one final year, the Zealots terminated the long rule of the Ananel-Ananus-Phiabi High Priests. But, as we shall see, it would not end their evils.

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Appendix A

Chronology of The Final High Priests

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- 38 B.C. Herod the Great becomes King of Judea. Executes much of Sanhedrin.
- 37 Herod tries to win support by making low-ranking Zadokite Ananel High Priest.
- 36
- 35 Herod marries Mariamne I, Hasmonean Levitical princess; deposes Ananel, makes Aristobulus High Priest.
- 34 Mariamne's High Priest brother Aristobulus killed; Herod restores Ananel as High Priest. He offers red heifer.
- 33
- 32
- 31 Great Holy Land Earthquake launches massive building campaigns by Herod.
- 30? Ananel dies, his son-in-law Joshua ben Phiabi becomes High Priest (date uncertain).
- 29 Herod executes Mariamne.
- 28
- 27 Augustus declared Emperor of Rome.
- 26
- 25 Herod executes his brother-in-law.
- 24 Herod weds Mariamne II, true Zadok queen, her father Simeon Boethus new High Priest.
- 23

- 22 Ezra Temple torn down by Levite workers paid by Herod.
- 21 Levites begin rebuilding lavish new Temple, a marvel of the world.
- 20
- 19 Temple project ends, creating massive Levitical unemployment.
- 18 Herod devises series of major construction works to keep Levites happy.
- 17 About this time Mary and her twin brother Joseph of Arimathea are born in Galilee.
- 16
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- 7 Herod has Mariamne I's two sons executed.
- 6
- 5
- 4 Mary betrothed to mosaic artist Joseph, Joseph of Arimathea weds Mary Magdalene. Zacharias silenced.
- 3 John the Baptist, Jesus born. Anna, Simeon Boethus prophesy *Yom Kippur*. Shortly afterward, Simeon replaced by Matthias ben Theophilus, his son-in-law. Mariamne divorced by Herod; her son disinherited.

2 Matthias b. Theophilus kin Joseph b. Elam of Galilee stands in for him. Magi bring Grail Hallows to Jesus. Flight into Egypt. Bethlehem babies massacred. Herod executes his son & top rabbis.

1 Herod dies. Joazar High Priest, 3,000 dies in Temple, Eleazar High Priest. Zacharias murder. Civil war. Rome victor. Joseph of Arimathea's father Heli Joachim executed. Joseph of Arimathea takes his Sanhedrin seat, metals trade. Simeon's son-in-law Jesus ben See new High Priest. Archelaus King over Judea, Herod Antipas rules over Galilee. John the Baptist and his mother flee to Petra, where he meets Herod Antipas' jilted wife, daughter of King Aretas IV of Petra.

A.D. 1

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6 Judas of Galilee tax revolt. Jesus ben See and family dies. Joazar may have held power again briefly. Ananel heir Ananus, son of Seth High Priest. Archelaus exiled to Gaul. Roman Procurators rule Holy Land.

7

8

9 The massacre of an entire Roman legion in Germany by Gothic warriors.

10? Jesus' *Bar Mitzvah*; questioned on Joseph of Arimathea's "King's seat" in Sanhedrin: "My Father's business."

11

12

13

14 Emperor Augustus dies. Tiberius is new Emperor. Sends new Procurator to Judea.

- 15 Procurator removes Ananus. New High Priest is Ishmael ben Phiabi I. He offers red heifer in *A.D.* 17.
- 16 Ananus spreads slanders; gets his son Eleazar b. Ananus appointed new High Priest. Ishmael retires.
- 17 Simon Kamithus, son-in-law of Ananus new High Priest. Priestly plots and conspiracies abound.
- 18 Joseph Caiaphas, the brother of Simon K. and son-in-law of Ananus, emerges as dominant High Priest.
- 19
- 20? Jesus may be traveling to Britain, India, etc. with merchant uncle Joseph of Arimathea.
- 21
- 22
- 23
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- 27 Levite John the Baptist is 30 years old. Begins revolutionary Messianic preaching.
- 28 Jesus baptized. Becomes 30 and is adopted by Joseph of Arimathea. "The Time is Fulfilled!"
- 29 Mary Magdalene feels neglected by always traveling husband Joseph of Arimathea.
- 30 Son by adoption, Jesus judges Mary Magdalene in adultery case; He becomes her effective "parole officer." Caiaphas prophesies at Yom Kippur that "one must die to save the nation."
- 31 John the Baptist beheaded. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. Caiaphas urges death warrants for Jesus and Lazarus. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Last Supper.

Judas hangs himself. Jesus crucified, blotted-out. Lazarus/Barabbas released.
Resurrection. Pentecost. Stephen martyred. Family dispersed. Mary, the mother of
Jesus, flees to Petra. Shroud was taken to Edessa.

- 32 Saul converted. Flees Damascus and hides out at Arabia Petra with Mary *et al.* for
three years.
- 33
- 34
- 35 Paul returns. Church council. Aretas defeats Antipas. Family ransomed by Joseph
of Arimathea with weapons.
- 36 Herod Antipas receives weapons for 70,000 men, releases fourteen members of
Holy Family.
- 37 Holy Family to Gaul. Tiberius dead. Caiaphas replaced by Jonathan, Theophilus,
sons of Ananus.
- 38 New Emperor Caligula frees Agrippa, Herodias' brother. Shown arms for 70,000
by Antipas.
- 39 Agrippa tells Caligula of Antipas' 70,000 arms stockpile; Antipas, Herodias exiled
to Gaul. Holy Family flees to Britain with converts from Gaul. Mary Magdalene
and Martha stay in Gaul.
- 40 Caligula goes mad after contracting the fever.
- 41 Caligula slain. Claudius Emperor. Antioch first uses name Christians. Simon
Kantheras High Priest.
- 42 Council in Jerusalem. James, the brother of John, beheaded. Peter escapes. Mark
visits his family on Cyprus with Paul (who helped kill his grandfather Stephen) and
Barnabus.
- 43 Famine. Undated High Priests: Matthias ben Ananus, and Elionaius, son of
Kantheras, and Joseph, son of Kami. Each high priest rules for a year or two.
Elionaius may have offered a red heifer.

- 44 Crops fail. Famine begins.
- 45 John Mark in Asia Minor with grandfather Peter. Disease follows famine in Gaul.
- 46 Revelation I to John Mark and Peter. Mary Magdalene and Martha died in exile in Gaul.
- 47 Ananius, son of Nebedeus High Priest. Corruption grows. Hires gangs of thugs to steal tithes.
- 48 Mary, mother of Jesus in a coma in Gaul; sleeping sickness? Thought dead by Apostles.
- 49 Council in Jerusalem. Defeat circumcision party. Gospel to Gentiles given to Paul, Barnabus.
- 50 Mary's Assumption by Jan 18th at the latest. Joseph of Arimathea regenerated first time, sent to India.
- 51 Paul's Thessalonian ministry... John Mark and Barnabus to Cyprus to publish Gospels, Revelation I.
- 52 Paul in gentile Corinth two years.
- 53
- 54 Paul revisits churches in Asia.
- 55
- 56 Council in Jerusalem. Paul arrested. Begins an intensive letter writing from prison.
- 57 Paul's speech to the Sanhedrin? Family members may be in the Council listening.
- 58 Ishmael ben Phiabi II replaces Ananius, but continues to use gangs of thugs to loot Jerusalem.
- 59 Paul could have been released, but appeals to Nero, based on his Roman citizenship.

- 60 Paul and Luke shipwrecked off Malta when Thera volcano explodes after Yom Kippur. John Mark witnesses the eruption, is given Revelation II visions. Barnabus and Mark rush to make seven copies for churches in Asia and much more for the Apostles and other churches.
- 61 Thirty-year blotting-out of Jesus expires (Rev 10:6 "There should be no more delay."). Barnabus and John Mark bring Hebrew version of Matthew's Gospel to Jerusalem for Passover distribution. Barnabus caught just before feast; gospels confiscated. Blotting-out imposed on Barnabus and the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew. Barnabus executed. Mark takes his body back to Cyprus and buries him with a copy of Matthew on his chest at Salamis, where his family had worked on the text.
- 62 Ishmael ben Phiabi II and his son Helkias, Treasurer of the Temple, along with Josephus and eight other Levites go to Rome to plead their case to Nero. Poppaea, a Jewish convert, is Nero's new wife and Empress. Josephus, Ishmael, and Helkias reside at her estate outside Rome while Nero considers Josephus' arguments. Nero decides in favor of Josephus, on the condition that Ishmael and Helkias are retained at Poppaea's estate as hostages. Joseph Cabi new High Priest.
- 63 Ananus ben Ananus High Priest. James and church elders at Jerusalem arrested and stoned. Public outcry removes Ananus. Jesus ben Damneus new High Priest. Apostle John escapes. Joseph of Arimathea, as Thomas, is attacked in India, stabbed with Spear, he miraculously revives. Smuggled out of India to Edessa (now Urfa in southern Turkey) where Shroud is located, hoping for a healing of Spear-wound, but it does not heal. Apostle Philip at nearby Hierapolis helps Joseph of Arimathea go on to Britain for recovery.
- 64 Riots break out when Jesus ben Damneus removed. Jesus ben Gamaliel High Priest. Peter, Mark bring Revelation to Rome to warn Jews & Christians to flee. The fire of Rome. Peter, Mark, Paul, John arrested in fall.
- 65 Peter, Paul executed. John & Mark escape. Nero halts persecution. Investigates conspiracy to overthrow him. Ishmael exiled to Cyrene (modern Libya) and is beheaded there (date unknown). Matthias ben Theophilus, last Ananel-Ananus family High Priest, replaces Jesus ben Gamaliel. (Red Heifer may have been due to be offered just as the war began.)

- 66 Mark killed in Alexandria War begins in Judea. Former High Priests murdered by Zealots...
- 67 Last Zadokite High Priest, Phineas of Habta, chosen by Zealots. Romans begin re-conquest.
- 68 Christians have entirely fled the Holy Land, after Revelation warning.
- 69 Final Yom Kippur service in the Temple. 1.1-million people will die during the war.
- 70 Herod's Temple destroyed by the Romans