

JOSEPHUS AND THE BIBLE

By A. J. POLLOCK

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IT HAS largely escaped the notice of Christians at the present time that such a history exists as that of Flavius Josephus. And further, the few, who do know of its existence, are largely unaware how very providential it is, that such a history, written by a Jew, living in Palestine at the time when the incidents of our Lord's life were largely known, is available. Later on Josephus was an eye-witness of the horrors that marked the siege of Jerusalem under Vespasian, the Roman general, and the destruction of the Temple by Titus, and has written an account of these terrible happenings in great detail.

The reason why Josephus' History is so remarkable is that when men call in question the incidents of the Gospels, the Christian has an answer in that here is a **secular** history, that in many ways corroborates what the Gospels say. For it is a strange thing that unregenerate men will readily receive the testimony of **secular** writers as to facts of history, and yet call in question the statements of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul.* Does this not show a bias in the wrong direction?

Of course the Christian needs no confirmation of the story of the birth, wonderful life, atoning death and triumphant resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as narrated in the Scriptures. He does not need Josephus.

* A glaring instance of this was seen when the higher critics contended that the Pentateuch could not have been written by Moses, for writing, they said, was not known in his day. This in spite of our Lord's own words: "He [Moses] wrote of Me." (John 5: 46), and the testimony of Matthew 19: 7; Mark 10: 4; Luke 20: 28. Then **secular** history, this time engraved on stone, the Stele of Hammurabi, was found at Susa in Persia, proving that writing was in vogue long before the Exodus took place, utterly routing "the assured results" of Higher Criticism. They would receive the word of a heathen monarch, whilst doubting the testimony of Scripture.

or any secular historian, to confirm him in his belief in the inspired Word of God, but such historians are weapons in the Christian's hands when meeting doubts cast on the Word of God, and become effective in closing the mouth of the doubter. It is these considerations that lead us to believe that God's overruling hand is seen in the writings of Josephus, uninspired as they are in the sense that the Scriptures are inspired.

Of course one would not expect a secular writer, and a Jew at that, to take much notice of the impact of Christianity on the Jewish nation and the pagan world. If he had been a Christian writer how differently he would have approached these subjects.

Josephus was a very voluminous writer, and went into masses of details in his history. The copy lying before us numbers 854 pages, and was published in 1843. The writings of Josephus were largely bought by Christians a couple of generations ago, simply because they dealt with Palestine, the land of the Bible. We fear his works are to-day out of print, and only second-hand copies here and there available.

The writings of Josephus that come within the compass of this pamphlet are two:—

(1) **THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS.** This covers the history of the Jews from the creation of the world, till the twelfth year of the reign of the Emperor Nero, comprising 523 pages.

(2) **THE WARS OF THE JEWS.** This covers a period between the capture of Jerusalem in B.C. 170 by Antiochus Epiphanes, and its siege under the Roman General, Vespasian, and the destruction of the Temple under his son, Titus, A.D. 70, comprising 232 pages.

As to Josephus the reliability of his history is well attested. The historian, Scaliger, described as "perhaps

the most learned person, and the most competent judge," wrote:—

" Josephus is the most diligent and the greatest lover of truth of all writers ; nor are we afraid to affirm of him, that it is more safe to believe him, not only as to the affairs of the Jews, but as to those that are foreign to them, than all the Greek and Latin writers ; and this, because his fidelity and his compass of learning are everywhere conspicuous."

— DE EMENDATIONE TEMPORUM, p. 17.

This is great praise, especially coming from such a source. The Emperor Titus likewise bore testimony to the accuracy of his **Wars of the Jews**, and ordered a copy to be placed in the Public Library of Rome, signing it with his own hand, as an authentic memorial of the times.

Josephus wrote **The Wars of the Jews** at Rome in the Syro-Chaldaic language for the use of his fellow-countrymen. Afterwards he translated it into Greek for the benefit of Western Jews, Greeks and Romans. Years after, about A.D. 93, he wrote **The Antiquities of the Jews**.

The date of his death is not known. The last record of him was after the siege of Jerusalem, when living in retirement in Rome. He was then in his 56th or 57th year.

Let us now give a few particulars as to Josephus himself. He sprang from a distinguished sacerdotal family. Not only so, he belonged to the first of the twenty-four courses into which this family was divided. He further belonged to the chief family of the first course. Moreover on his mother's side he was of royal blood, for the family of Asamoneus, from which she was descended, united for generations the dual position of the high priesthood with that of kingship.

He was born in the first year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Caius. When only fourteen years of age the high priests and principal men of Jerusalem would seek his opinion about the accurate understanding of

knotty points of the law, so great was his understanding at that tender age. When sixteen he made exhaustive enquiries as to the tenets of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. At the age of nineteen he decided to throw in his lot with the Pharisees. When in his twenty-sixth year he took a journey to Rome. For trivial reasons certain priests of his acquaintance were put in bonds, and sent to Rome to appear before Caesar. For these Josephus sought deliverance. Hence his journey to Rome.

The ship in which he sailed with six hundred on board foundered at sea. Eighty of them, Josephus among them, swimming all night, were rescued by a ship from Cyrene. Landing in Italy he was fortunate in becoming acquainted with Aliturus, a play actor, who stood high in Nero's favour, though a Jew. Through his good offices he was introduced to the Empress Poppea. Through her influence he gained the deliverance of the priests, in whose cause he had undertaken the journey to Rome. Receiving many presents from Poppea he returned to Palestine.

His early life displays a man of great force of character. His career shows him to have been possessed of great personal courage, a true patriot, a resourceful general, and a wise statesman. As a true friend of his nation he energetically warned his fellow countrymen against going to extremes in their opposition to the great Roman power, which he knew was too strong for them successfully to oppose. In this way he was in danger of being considered pro-Roman, and therefore anti-Jewish, and became suspect in consequence. He had to moderate his activities accordingly, and take a middle course.

* * * * *

THE MACCABEES. It may be well to describe in few words the history of the Jews during the four hundred years that elapsed between the writing of the Book of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament writings, and the

birth of our Lord as given in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke. The story is told by Josephus. This period is chiefly remarkable for the rising up and exploits of Mattathias, a great-grandson of the celebrated Asamoneus, and his five sons, commonly called the Maccabees. The uprising of this wonderful family was occasioned by the daring sacrilege of Antiochus Epiphanes, who gained possession of Jerusalem by guile, and then proceeded to rob the Temple of its golden candlesticks, golden altar of incense, table of shew-bread, and altar of burnt-offering. He forbade the Jews to offer their daily sacrifices. Added to this, he built an idol altar upon God's altar, and offered swine — the abomination of the Jews — upon it. He commanded that Jewish sons should no longer be circumcised, and ordered that temples should be built in every city and village, and swine offered on their altars in idol worship. All this was prophesied, as to take place, by Daniel, the prophet, centuries before. (Chap. 8: 9-14).

When Mattathias was commanded to offer sacrifice in this sacrilegious manner, he refused; and, daringly overthrowing the idol altar, called upon all, who were zealous for the worship of the true God, to support him. He fled to the desert with his sons, and all, who sympathised with him. After a year of heroic resistance the brave old man died, leaving his son Simon as their counsellor, and Judas, his third son, as their general, who was called Maccabeus, meaning the Hammerer.

After many conflicts and brilliant feats of arms, sometimes victories, sometimes defeats, at last Judas recovered Jerusalem, and after three-and-a-half years of profanation had the sanctuary cleansed, as Daniel had prophesied four hundred and eighty years previously. "The feast of the dedication" (John 10: 22) refers to the annual celebration of this event. After a long struggle Judas died in battle, indeed father and five sons all laid down their lives in this great struggle.

It has been thought by some that the vivid description of the horrors of persecution, as described in Hebrews II: 33-38, had the times of the Maccabees in mind, for their's was a desperate warfare, marked by wanderings "in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth."

Finally the Jews of that day settled under the rule of the Roman power, though there were many minor outbreaks from time to time, and it was in this nation and in these circumstances that our Lord was born at Bethlehem.

The sacrilegious actions of Antiochus Epiphanes are vividly typical of what the Head of the revived Roman Empire will do, as prophesied by Scripture, in a day rapidly approaching, when he will cause the sacrifices in the Temple, yet to be built, to cease (Dan. 9: 27); and set up "the abomination of desolation," spoken of by our Lord, as standing in the holy place. (Matthew 24: 15).

* * * * *

THE SEPTUAGINT. In the period between the close of the Old Testament and the opening of the New, Josephus tells us that Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, was proud of the world-wide celebrated library at Alexandria. Demetrius Phalerius, Library Keeper, approached the King:—

"He had been informed that there were many books of the law among the Jews worthy of enquiring after, and worthy of the king's library, but which, being written in characters and in a dialect of their own, will cause no small pains in getting them translated into the Greek tongue."

— ANTIQUITIES, B. XII., C. II.

The King thereupon took up the idea warmly, and wrote a letter to Eleazar, the High Priest at Jerusalem, saying,

"I am desirous to do what will be grateful to the Jews in my country, and to all other Jews in the habi-

table earth. I have determined to procure an interpretation of your law, and to have it translated out of Hebrew into Greek, and to be deposited in my library. Thou wilt therefore do well to choose out and send men of a good character, who are now elders in age, and six in number of every tribe. These, by their age, must be skilful in the laws, and of abilities to make an accurate interpretation of them; and when this shall be finished I shall think that I have done a work glorious to myself."

— ANTIQUITIES, B. XII., C. II.

This translation was made in B.C. 284-247 by these seventy-two elders from the twelve tribes of Israel, hence its name **Septuagint**, usually expressed by "LXX." Greek being the great language of commerce at that time, it can be manifestly seen that, though a heathen king sought to take the glory to himself, it was indeed God's overruling hand that prepared this wonderful vehicle for the spread of the Gospel in the days to come. It was this translation of the Scripture our Lord quoted from again and again.

* * * * *

We come now to New Testament times. Our first enquiry is as to what reference Josephus made to our Lord. We read,

"Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works — a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive on the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

— ANTIQUITIES, B. XVIII., C. III.

This allusion to our Lord has been questioned as an interpolation, and therefore rejected by some as spurious.

It is a statement, as it stands, that goes a long way. It suggests that our Lord was more than a man. It states that He was the Christ. His resurrection is not questioned. The prophecies of the Old Testament relating to our Lord are referred to as real prophecies with actual fulfilment. Lastly it speaks of the Christians being named after our Lord, as is mentioned in Acts II: 26.

No wonder the enemies of the Bible were furious. It was one thing to refuse to believe the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul; but here was a well-known man, a great historian, and how could they refuse to believe him? The only way out of the difficulty was to question that Josephus ever wrote such words, and condemn them as spurious. It will thus be seen how wonderful it is that such a history was written in times so near to those when our Lord lived and died and rose again, when there were many alive, who were witnesses to the facts stated, and abundant testimony to them was available, as the Apostle Paul drew attention to when he stated that five hundred brethren at one time had seen the risen Christ, of whom the greater part still lived (1 Cor. 15: 6).

But on what foundation is the charge made that this quotation concerning our Lord from the writings of Josephus is spurious? This quotation is given word for word by Eusebius, Jerome, Rufinus, Isidore of Pelusium, Sozomen, Cassiodorus, Nicephorus and by other authors, Greeks, Syrians and Egyptians, all of whom had access to manuscripts of considerable antiquity. **Not one of these writers ever questioned the genuineness of this quotation.**

Eusebius, one of the early fathers, writing about A.D. 324 says,

"Certainly the attestation of those I have already produced concerning our Saviour may be sufficient. However, it may not be amiss, if, over and above, we make use of Josephus the Jew, for a further witness; who in the eighteenth Book of his Antiquities, when he was writing the history of what happened under Pilate, makes mention of our Saviour in these words."

— EUSEBIUS DEMONSTR. EVAN. LIB. III, p. 124.

He then proceeded to quote the passage we have just given word for word. The same writer about A.D. 330, quoting the same passage word for word, ended up with the remark,

"And since this writer [Josephus], sprung from the Hebrews themselves, hath delivered these things above in his own work, concerning John the Baptist, and OUR SAVIOUR, what room is there for FARTHER EVASION?"

— ID. HIST. ECCLES. LIB. I. II.

An interval of six years lies between the writing of the first testimony of Eusebius, and the second. The closing words of the latter are most significant. We gather from his remarks that an attempt had been made to dispute the genuineness of the testimony given by Josephus to our Lord, and to prove it spurious, and that the attempt had failed.

This all goes to show how valuable these writings are, inasmuch as they throw corroborative light on Bible incidents. The very fury and venom, with which it was sought to discredit this tribute by Josephus to our Lord, only proves how damaging it was considered to be by the enemies of our Lord, and likewise by the Jewish nation, which had been guilty of the murder of their long-promised Messiah, the Son of God.

It would seem strange indeed that Josephus should have recorded the death of John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Lord, and also the martyrdom of James, the brother of our Lord, and yet have remained silent as to our Lord Himself. Certainly any attempt at this late hour to treat the allusion to our Lord in the writings of Josephus as spurious would seem to be an example of the proverb, "The wish is father to the thought."

* * * * *

JAMES, THE BROTHER OF JESUS. Though the martyrdom of James, the brother of our Lord, is not men-

tioned in Scripture, yet he, James, is mentioned. The Apostle Paul speaks of seeing him in Jerusalem when on his memorable visit to Peter. (Gal. 1: 19).

His martyrdom came about on this wise. Ananus, the high priest, a young man of a bold and insolent disposition, and very opposed to the Christian religion,

“ assembled the Sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, which was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.”

— ANTIQUITIES B. XX, C. 9.

This passage has never been questioned, as far as we are aware. Josephus takes pains to make it clear what Jesus was meant, for he adds that he was called the Christ. He evidently had it in his mind that Jesus was more important than James, else why did he introduce the chief subject of his remarks, “ the brother of Jesus, which was called Christ,” before mentioning his own name, James? Josephus evidently was of opinion that James owed his celebrity to being the brother of our Lord according to the flesh. In this passage several are stated to have been stoned, but only one is mentioned by name. Evidently it was his relationship to our Lord that led to the name of James being specially given.

This martyrdom of James is not mentioned in Scripture, and must not be confounded with that of James, the brother of John, as narrated in Acts 12: 2.

Shortly after the martyrdom of James, and because of it, Ananus was accused by the Jews of gross injustice. The result was that King Agrippa deprived him of his high priesthood after a very short tenure of office, lasting only three months. Thus swiftly and surely was he punished for his wickedness.

* * * * *

The following extract is well worth reproducing. It has been well said:—

“ We must destroy the Annals of Tacitus, the Biographies of Suetonius, the Letters of Pliny, if we wish to get rid of the testimony to the fact that in the reign of the Emperor Tiberius there lived one called Christ, that Judea and Galilee were the places of His teaching, that He was put to death by the command of Pontius Pilate, that after His death His doctrines and teaching spread rapidly through Greek-speaking and Roman-speaking lands, that multitudes of converts were made, who worshipped Jesus as God, and for His sake suffered bitter persecution.

“ In the New Testament we have the names of Roman Emperors — Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius ; Roman Governors as Cyrenius, Pontius Pilate, Felix, Festus, Sergius Paulus, Gallio ; Jewish kings as Herod the Great, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Agrippa I, Agrippa II. Classical history and the writings of Josephus attest that they existed at the time specified, bore the offices assigned them in the Bible, and in the chronological order in which their names appear. Every quotation from Josephus, Tacitus, or Suetonius; every fresh archaeological discovery in Asia Minor, Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, serves to illustrate the minute accuracy with which every particular respecting them is recorded, even in facts apparently the most insignificant.”

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JOSEPHUS AND THE BIBLE. Before we go further we should like to point out the amazing difference between the writings of Josephus, and that of the inspired Word of God. In the former we get floods of details of the lives of the great men of the period, often great only in their wickedness. Many of Josephus' pages are defiling

to read, and serve no worthy purpose. They give a great deal of unnecessary information — we mean information that would not help men and women to live better and purer lives. In the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles we get allusions to the actions of wicked men, such as the Herods and Pilate, but only so far as these actions impinged on the life of our Lord and His apostles. Inspiration has no interest whatsoever in these men outside of this purpose. Scripture allusions to them are few, and all for a definite purpose, but vivid and revealing, standing in strong contrast to the methods of secular history. We marvel at the restraint put upon the inspired writers of the Gospels. How should “unlearned and ignorant men” attain to such heights of superiority, if they were not under the direct influence of the inspiration of the holy Spirit of God? No wonder the Bible leads men to purer and happier lives.

* * * * *

HEROD THE GREAT. We read of four Herods in Scripture. We propose to mention them one after another, so that the reader may have them clearly distinguished in mind. Herod the Great was the son of Antipater, an Idumean. Antipater was a man of mean origin, who ingratiated himself into favour with the Emperor, and was appointed procurator of Judea. His son, Herod, was born B.C. 62. He began his career very early for he was made procurator of Galilee when only fifteen years old. Josephus tells us this was no impediment to him, for he possessed great ability, courage and ambition. In B.C. 40 he was appointed King of the Jews. In the 18th year of his reign he undertook to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, not at the urge of piety, for he was a very wicked man, guilty of the murder of his own wife, and sons, and of many others also. His motive was to ingratiate himself with the Jews, and to get the glory of such an ambitious undertaking. Both the Bible and Josephus tells us of the rebuilding of the Temple.

At first the Jews stood in doubt of his intentions for it seemed sacrilegious that an Idumean, a heathen king, should rebuild the sacred Temple. But Herod soon showed he was in earnest, for he got together ten thousand wagons to transport the stones required for such an undertaking, and requisitioned ten thousand skilled workmen for the prosecution of the task. So gigantic were the efforts made that in a year and six months the Temple was opened with great rejoicings on the part of the Jews. Additions were added to it from time to time, which account for the remarks of the Jews when they said, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it in three days? But He [the Lord] spake of the temple of His body." (John 2: 20, 21).

Dr. Edersheim described this Temple:—

"But alone and isolated in its grandeur rose the Temple Mount. Terrace upon terrace its courts rose, till high above the city, within the enclosure of marble cloisters, cedar-roofed and highly ornamented, the Temple itself stood out, a mass of snowy marble and gold, glittering in the sunlight, against the half-circling green of Olivet. In all his wanderings the Jew had not seen a city like his own Jerusalem. Not Antioch in Asia, not even imperial Rome itself, excelled it in architectural splendour."

In the last few months of the end of Herod the Great's reign our Lord was born at Bethlehem, fulfilling prophecy that had waited seven centuries for its fulfilment,

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [meaning, **God with us.**"] (Isaiah 7: 14).

Matthew 2 is the only place in Scripture where Herod the Great is mentioned. That chapter tells us of the wise men, who came from the east to Jerusalem to enquire where was born the King of the Jews, for they had seen His star in the east, and had come to worship Him. Herod hearing of this was troubled, for was not he king of the Jews, and was not this a rival appearing on the scene?

Doubtless behind this was the sinister influence of Satan, who would put all his power to work to drive Herod to take measures to destroy the young Child.

Calling the chief priests and scribes of the people he demanded to know where Christ should be born. They replied in Bethlehem according to Micah's centuries-old prophecy. Then Herod called secretly for the wise men, and instructed them to locate where the Child Jesus was, and he would go and worship Him. But this was only a ruse. The wise men were warned by an angel that they should not return to Herod, but depart some other way. The King, finding himself mocked by the wise men, was exceedingly wroth, and slew all the children of two years old and under in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof with the intent of thus procuring the death of the young Child. But Joseph warned of God took Him, and His mother by night, and escaped to Egypt.

Not long after Herod, who had lived an evil and debauched life, and had given full rein to his passions and lusts, came to his death-bed. He died in untold agonies, his body a mass of horrible corruption. Can we not see a connection between his hatred of the Son of God, and the end to which he came? He was about seventy years old. What did he sow? What did he reap?

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ARCHELAUS, Herod the Great's eldest son, is only once mentioned in Scripture. (Matthew 2: 22). He received only half of his father's kingdom, for when Herod the Great died, he divided his kingdom among his three sons, Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Philip. In the tenth year of the reign of Archelaus his brothers and subjects made bitter complaint of his cruelty and tyranny, which led Caesar to strip him of his honours and banish him to Vienne, Gaul (France).

* * * * *

HEROD ANTIPAS was the second son of Herod the Great. He became tetrarch of Galilee, and is chiefly noticed in Scripture because of his relations with John the Baptist. Herod had committed the grievous sin of persuading his brother Philip's wife to desert her husband, and marry him. John had faithfully rebuked Herod to his face, thus incurring his anger, as also that of his unlawful wife, Herodias, who nursed bitter revenge in her heart. Herod flung John into prison, and would have killed him, but he feared the people, who esteemed him as a prophet.

The day came when Herod gave a birthday supper to his lords, chief captains and chief estates of Galilee. On this august occasion the daughter of Herodias danced before the assembled company, and so captivated Herod, that for a reward he offered her even to the half of his kingdom. Here was the occasion for Herodias to carry out her design of revenge. She instructed her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a charger. The King was exceedingly sorry, yet for his oath's sake sent an executioner to carry out his gruesome order. When the head of this man of God, gory and dripping with blood, was handed on a charger to the daughter of Herodias, she carried it to her mother. However, this unhappy marriage soon reaped its sad fruit.

It was the occasion of a war between Herod and Aretas, king of Arabia. Herod had married the daughter of Aretas, but when he became infatuated with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, he sought to divorce the daughter of the king of Arabia. In the war that ensued Herod's army was destroyed. Josephus commenting on this says,

"Some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the people to exercise virtue, both as righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God."

— ANTIQUITIES B. 18, C. 5.

But that is not the end of the tragic story. Herodias, who urged Herod to this tragic and evil deed concerning John the Baptist, was highly ambitious, which proved the undoing of her husband. She urged him to go to Rome to seek equal honours to those enjoyed by her brother, Agrippa. She could not endure to see her brother in a place superior to that of her husband. At first Herod's love of ease led him to refuse her wishes, but by her importunity night and day at last she prevailed. Herod went to Rome accompanied by Herodias, and preferred his request to Caesar, but suspicion fell upon him when it became known that in his armoury he had sufficient armour for seventy thousand men, to which allegation he had to confess. The result was he was charged with preparing for rebellion. Instead of rising to greater honour, he was sentenced to perpetual banishment to Lyons, Gaul (France). Herodias shared his punishment, Josephus remarking,

" Thus did God punish Herodias for her envy at her brother, and Herod also for giving ear to the vain discourses of a woman."

— ANTIQUITIES B. 18, C. 7.

We wonder if remorse filled their black hearts as they dragged out the remainder of their lives in disgrace. Did the staring vision of the bloody head of John the Baptist on a charger ever affright their guilty consciences? We wonder. Man reaps what he sows. What of eternity? What of eternity? Things are not done with, and settled in **this** life.

* * * * *

HEROD AGRIPPA I. was the son of Aristobulus and Bernice, and a grandson of Herod the Great. He it was, who killed James, the brother of John with the sword, and sought to bring Peter to the same fate, had not the angel of the Lord intervened, delivering him from prison,

and restoring him to the company of the Lord's people, as narrated in Acts 12. Of this Josephus says nothing.

But it is startling to note that in the very chapter where we get the martyrdom of James, and the imprisonment of Peter, narrated, we get the sad end of Herod described.

It came on this wise. On a certain day Herod sat on his throne arrayed in royal apparel, and made an oration to the people. They gave a shout, saying it was the voice of a god, and not of a man that they heard. Herod accepted this blasphemous adulation, and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory. He died a loathsome death, being eaten of worms. Thus simply does Scripture give us the story.

Josephus gives a more elaborate tale. King Herod went to Caesarea to be present at some festival, where were gathered the principal persons, and such as were of dignity throughout his province. We read on the second day that,

“ Herod put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning ; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him ; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god : and they added, ‘ Be thou merciful to us, for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.’ ”

— ANTIQUITIES B. 19, C. 8.

Josephus goes on to relate how Herod did not rebuke this blasphemy, nor reject their impious flattery, and that immediately a severe pain seized the King in a most violent manner, which continuing with great force for five days, ended in his death. As he died he called upon his

friends to see how the one they called a god was about to die, saying,

“ I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life ; whilst Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me ; and I, who by you are called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death.”

— ANTIQUITIES B. 19, C. 8.

How often we see the bitter reaping of evil sowing in this ancient history.

* * * * *

HEROD AGRIPPA II. was the son of Herod Agrippa I., and a great-grandson of Herod the Great. We mention him out of chronological order in order to place the four Herods before the attention of our readers, one after the other, thus enabling them to be distinguished the one from the other. In the Acts of the Apostles he is spoken of as King Agrippa. Josephus gives his history, but in no place do the Scriptures and Josephus touch the same incident, unless it be the case of Bernice, mentioned as sitting beside King Agrippa on the famous occasion when the Apostle Paul stood before him on trial. They are apparently presented in Acts 25 as husband and wife, the wife sitting beside her husband when the Apostle Paul addressed the court. As a matter of fact Bernice was his sister. The relationship between the two was a matter of grave suspicion. It is in these little touches that the comparison between the Scriptures and Josephus is so striking and convincing.

King Agrippa sided with the Romans, and was present at the siege of Jerusalem under Titus. He finally retired to Rome with Bernice, where he died in A.D. 100.

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CYRENIUS. We read in Luke 2: 1-3 that in the days of Cæsar Augustus a decree went forth that all the world should be taxed, and that this was carried out when

Cyrenius was Governor of Syria. This was arranged in an unusual fashion, viz., that each individual had to repair to his birthplace in order to be taxed, however far removed he might be at the time, or however inconvenient it might be to attend. This was the occasion when Joseph and Mary, the virgin, his espoused wife, "great with Child," as Scripture tells us, were obliged in these very awkward circumstances to travel from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judæa, where the Scriptures prophesied that the Messiah, the Son of God, should be born. It seems wonderful that the whole machinery of the Roman Empire was put into motion to bring it about, that an *obscure couple*, as the world considered them, should arrive in their native city, Bethlehem, just in time to give birth to Him, who was destined to be the Saviour of the world. Yet so it was.

Josephus gives us the bare fact of this taxing decree under Cyrenius, whilst Scripture gives more details, showing how it worked out for the fulfilment of prophecy. We read in Josephus,

"Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take account of their substance . . . The Jews took the report of a taxation heinously, yet did they leave off any further opposition to it, by the persuasion of Ivazar, the High Priest."

— ANTIQUITIES B. 18. C. 1.

This was the occasion of the outbreak of the rebellion of Judas of Galilee, which we will now notice.

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JUDAS OF GALILEE. We read in Acts 5: 37 how he rose up, and headed a rebellion in the days of the taxing under Cyrenius. He it was who said that taxing was no better than slavery, exhorting the nation to assert its liberty. He drew many after him. Josephus refers to him:—

"Under his [Caponius'] administration it was that a certain Galilean, whose name was Judas, prevailed with

his countrymen to revolt, and said they were cowards, if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans."

— WARS OF THE JEWS B. 2, C. 8.

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JOHN THE BAPTIST. This remarkable man was chosen to be the forerunner of our Lord, as prophesied in Isaiah 40: 3-5. He was miraculously born, for his mother, Elizabeth, was barren; and she and her husband, Zacharias, well stricken in years. The beginning of his history is marked in a very unusual way. We read:—

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrach of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrach of Ituræa, and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrach of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." (Luke 3: 1, 2).

This is a most impressive and precise introduction, and the more so that it surely appears that John's ministry was of far greater importance in the estimation of heaven than all the offices held by emperors, tetrarchs and high priests. This is an interesting list of men ruling at one and the same time. These names and places and chronology can all be traced in Josephus as completely agreeing with those of Luke 3: 1, 2.

As we have already written of the death of John the Baptist at the command of Herod Antipas, we forbear repetition.

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PONTIUS PILATE. The sixth procurator of Judæa. During his administration our Lord carried out His earthly ministry, and it was at his command that our Lord was crucified. Luke 3: 1 fixes the date of the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry, and we know that this preceded our

Lord's ministry. Josephus as we have seen dismisses the crucifixion at the command of Pilate in a single paragraph, whereas the description of the trial and death of our Lord is given in great detail in the four Gospels, as we should expect. But the Scriptures and Josephus unite in testimony that our Lord was crucified, and that at the command of Pilate. From the Scriptures we gather that Pilate was weak and vacillating, that he was convinced of the innocence of our Lord, saying, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23: 4), that he knew full well that it was only religious fanaticism that was clamouring for His blood. We read,

"And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and the chief priests prevailed. **And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they desired.**" (Luke 23: 24).

In this last sentence we have underlined Pilate stands branded to all time in the committal of the blackest crime this world has ever known. Wherever in all the annals of history can you find a judge declaring publicly his belief in the innocence of the accused, offering first unjustly to scourge Him, and then giving way to the clamour of his enemies and giving sentence as they required, and that to capital punishment by crucifixion, the cruellest of all deaths? No wonder the name of Pilate goes down to all eternity blackened and blasted. Words are too weak to reprobate such gross injustice.

Secular history tells us of the end of Pilate. Shortly after the crucifixion of our Lord, the Samaritans broke out in rebellion, and Pilate gathering a great band of horsemen and footmen fell upon them, and slew many of them. Taking many prisoners alive, he wickedly put them to death. The Jews then accused Pilate of harshness and barbarity, and Vitellius, president of Syria, ordered Pilate to go to Rome, and answer for his actions. One tradition says that he was banished to Vienne on the Rhone (France), where a monument, erected in pyramidal form on a quadrangular base, 52 feet high, was called Pontius

Pilate's Tomb. Another tradition is that he sought retirement on a mountain rising from the shores of Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, and called to this day Mount Pilatus. After spending years in this mountain, filled with remorse and despair, tradition has it, that he ascended the mountain to a small lake on its summit, and drowned himself.

At any rate this much is sure that Pilate fell into disgrace, lost all his honours, and died an exile from his native land. It is significant that one after another, who did despite to our Lord or His people, came to a swift and evil end, carrying out the Scripture warning, which says, "Whosoever shall fall on that stone [symbolic of our Lord] shall be broken." (Luke 20: 18).

It is a fact that many, who thought themselves great in this world, and who despised the "lowly Nazarene," are only remembered to-day, because their actions here and there had a connection with the life of our Lord. The writings of Josephus may pass out of print, and be forgotten by all but a handful, whilst the name of our Lord is remembered from century to century by the purest and best of the human race.

The very date, we put upon the headings of our letters, or is affixed to the laws of the land, or the official documents of civilised countries, enshrines the date of a birth of a Holy Child in a stable at Bethlehem, and who was cradled in a manger. The Book which tells us this story is still the world's best seller; and nations, far off from the scene of Christianity's early triumphs, are stretching out their appealing hands for the Word of God as never before.

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FELIX. Was procurator of Judæa. His character was mean and despicable and profane. Josephus tells us that King Agrippa's sister, Drusilla, was married to

Azizus, King of Emesa, and how Felix, being enamoured of her beauty, persuaded her to forsake her husband and marry him. The Bible narrative mentions Drusilla by name as sitting beside Felix when the Apostle Paul stood before him reasoning of righteousness, temperance (self-restraint), and judgment to come. (Acts 24: 24, 25). As Paul reasoned on these weighty matters, Felix trembled. We wonder what Drusilla thought of it all. God gave them a chance, but alas! they did not avail themselves of it. Felix exhibited his despicable character when he left the noble apostle bound because he did not bribe him to obtain his release, and for no other reason than to give the Jews pleasure. Little did Felix think that his conduct would be on record in the holy Scriptures to his shame, for yet unborn millions to read.

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PORCIUS FESTUS. Succeeded Felix as governor of Judea. Beyond the fact that Josephus mentions his name as succeeding Felix, and Scripture does the same, no other details are given of this man.

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THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM. Scripture prophesied the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans as far back as some six centuries before Christ was born into the world. We read in very precise language,

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood." (Dan. 9: 26).

"The prince that shall come" refers to what is yet future, even to the advent of the Head of the revived Roman Empire, which seems even now to be in its birth throes, mentioned in Revelation 13: 1-9, as the beast rising out of the sea, who will act like Antiochus Epiphanes in causing the sacrifice and oblation of the Temple service

to cease, and who will cause "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, [to] stand in the holy place." (Matt. 24: 15).

But note carefully it is "the **people** of the prince that shall come," who are said to destroy the city and the sanctuary. The prince is still future. The destruction of the city and sanctuary has already passed into history.

Our Lord definitely prophesied that the Temple should be destroyed. When some spoke of the Temple, and how it was adorned with godly stones and gifts, our Lord replied,

"As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down . . . And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21: 6 and 24).

Josephus lived to see this prophecy come true about forty years after it was uttered. It is well known that when Titus captured Jerusalem, he was most anxious that the Temple, with its magnificence and religious associations, should be spared. The question was, Should the word of Titus, a successful general, at the head of a powerful army flushed with victory, stand: or should the prophecy of our Lord forty years before come true? Hear what happened:—

"The direful day arrived, the destruction of the Temple by the power of Rome. A soldier, then, upon the shoulder of a comrade, succeeded in casting a torch through the door in the wall, which led to the chambers on the north side of the Temple. Titus would have avoided this, for he was reluctant to destroy what was the glory of the whole world. The conflagration spread, however, fanned by a tempest; in the flames besieged and besiegers, locked in the final struggle, perished — their bodies against the very altar, and the blood ran down the steps. The ground could not be seen for the

dead. The furious priests brandished for weapons the leaden seats and spits of the Temple service, and, rather than yield, threw themselves into the flames. Titus and his captains, entering the holy place, found it beautiful and rich beyond all report. **The fire fastened upon all but the imperishable rock**; the Roman standards were set by the Eastern gate, and Titus received the salute of the legions as Emperor."

— THE JEWS — ANCIENT, MEDIAEVAL AND MODERN, HOSMER, p. 118).

Thus literally was our Lord's prophecy fulfilled, that one stone should not be left upon another.

Josephus tells us that no less than 1,100,000 perished by the sword. Only 97,000 survived. An immense number of Jews had flocked to the ill-fated city to celebrate the feast of the Passover, hence the large numbers involved.

Rather than run the risk of many prisoners-of-war, the Romans crucified their captives, till the multitude of victims were so great that in the words of Josephus "room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies." The forests for miles round Jerusalem were denuded of timber to make crosses on which to impale these victims of war. Forty short years before the Jews had erected three crosses outside Jerusalem, and on the centre cross had crucified their Messiah. Now, outside Jerusalem, were seen thousands of crosses on which were impaled multitudes of Jews. Was there no connection between the two events? Was not one the sowing when the Jews so light-heartedly cried out to Pilate,

"His blood be on us, and our children" (Matt. 27: 25).

And behold! here was the awful reaping.

Since that day to this the Jews have been scattered among the nations and Jerusalem has been trodden down

of the Gentiles. Surely in this we can see the finger of God.

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What happened to Josephus in all this turmoil? He was captured and taken prisoner during Vespasian's campaign in Galilee, and was afterwards with Titus during the siege of Jerusalem. Vespasian was minded to send him to the Emperor Nero, but Josephus drawing Vespasian to one side told him the day was not far distant when he would be proclaimed Emperor, which turned out to be true in a little while. Nero committed suicide. His successor, Galba, was assassinated in the Roman market place seven months after he was proclaimed the wearer of the imperial purple. Otho succeeded him, but shortly after was defeated in battle, and committed suicide, after reigning for three months and two days. Then the victorious legions in Palestine proclaimed Vespasian as their Emperor.

When Josephus went to Rome, Vespasian received him with every mark of respect, honoured him with the privileges of a Roman citizen, bestowed upon him an annual pension, and appointed him an apartment in his own house, which he had occupied before he became Emperor. When his son Titus became Emperor, he showed Josephus continued kindness, presenting him with lands in Judæa. When Domitian succeeded Titus as Emperor he too showed kindness to Josephus. And thus we say goodbye to this extraordinary man. We are indeed indebted to him for his writings, and believe they were permitted of God for a special purpose of which we have sought to take advantage.

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What follows now is quite outside the scope of this pamphlet, but we came across a remark in the writings

of Josephus, which we would like to pass on to our readers. We all remember how God said to Abraham,

“ Take now thy son, **thine only son**, Isaac, whom thou lovest.” (Gen. 22: 2).

when all the time God knew full well that Ishmael was a son of Abraham. How then could Isaac be his “only son”? The explanation generally given is that the term, “**only**,” and “**only begotten**,” is intended to convey that the one so spoken of is specially dear to the one thus speaking. We read in Scripture of God’s “only begotten Son.” (John 3: 16), meaning His dearly Beloved.

It is interesting that Josephus used the term, “**only begotten**” (Greek *monogenes*) in exactly the same way. He writes,

“ He [Monobazus, king of Adiabene] had indeed Monobazus, his [Izates] elder brother by Helen also, as he had other sons by other wives besides. Yet did he openly place all his affections on his **ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**, Izates, which was the origin of that envy, which his other brethren, by the same father, bore to him.”

— ANTIQUITIES B. 20, C. 2.

The learned translator of the works of Flavius Josephus, the Rev. William Whiston, A.M., puts a footnote to this:—

“ Josephus here uses the word, *monogenes*, an only begotten son, for no other than best beloved, as does the Old and New Testament; I mean where there were one or more sons besides. Gen. 22: 2; Heb. 11: 17.”

It is interesting to see this in Josephus, as showing how this expression was used in Bible lands in those days. It is interesting, too, to know that Queen Helena, the mother of King Izates, renounced with her son idol worship, and embraced the Jewish religion. She made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and when she got there it was to find a famine raging, which she generously sought to alle-

viate by gifts of large quantities of wheat, and other food-stuffs. This was the very famine that Agabus prophesied should come to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11: 28). She was evidently a woman of deep piety. When she died she was buried at Jerusalem in a great sepulchre, which she had erected for the purpose of receiving her remains. The location of this is not known to-day. Thus God worked in those far-off days.

By the same Author

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