

**Nicodemus
And
Joseph of
Arimathea
By
Bertrand Comparent**



About Pastor Dr. Bertrand L. Comparet, A. B., J. D.

Upon reading these most interesting discussions one will quickly recognize that the author is an ardent student of the Bible and particularly eschatology or the study of the prophecies of the things which have already taken place, the things that are now taking place, and the things that are yet to take place in the future. He is an ordained minister. His studies in this area of thought extend back over a period of thirty years.

One will quickly appreciate also the straight forward manner of factual presentation and logical thinking. This is due to his professional training and occupation as a well recognized Attorney at Law. He not only writes in a clear, convincing style, but is distinguished in the pulpit, on the lecture platform, and over the air for his clarity of thought and profound logic.

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Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea

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IN THIS LESSON WE SHALL STUDY THE HISTORY OF TWO INDIVIDUALS, from the time they are mentioned in the Bible and after any record of them in the Bible has ceased. These two individuals are Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who are well-established historical characters, in addition to the mention of them in Biblical records.

In our Bible, the only reference to Nicodemus is found in the gospel of John. It is a surprise to find Nicodemus is also mentioned in the Jewish Talmud. There is also the Book of Nicodemus, which was written some time during the first three centuries A.D. None of the early Christian writers, before 250 A.D. or 275 A.D., mention the Book of Nicodemus at all, although later it is extensively quoted.

There was a period of several centuries in which people thought they had to help Yahweh, He couldn't get along by Himself. These people were eager to make as many converts among the pagans as they could. In those days, as well as now, people were greatly impressed by miracles. Remember how the Jews were constantly demanding that Yahshua perform miracles, just to show them that he was more than just an ordinary man, before they would take Him seriously. Yahshua always refused these demands. He performed many miracles but only those that had been prophesied in the Old Testament, that He would do. These prophecies were mostly in Isaiah. Yahshua would not perform like a clown for the amusement of the Jewish population.

The Book of Nicodemus is full of these fake miracles that were later concocted by writers, trying to make some impressive documents for the church missionaries to show the pagans. One of the examples of the stories of these fake miracles relates to when Yahshua was brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman flags, carried by the soldiers, bowed before Him, the very flag staffs bent over. This was the type of miracle Yahshua

refused to do, the grandstand play. The Bible makes no mention of this incident because it never happened.

These various, falsified stories were produced by people who were well known cranks. Nobody would take them seriously if they wrote under their own names. They used the name of some prophet or well-known person in the Bible, who had been dead a few centuries. This way they would be sure he wasn't going to come back and deny the alleged miracles. These false writers wrote their fairy tales in the dead person's name and hoped it would get circulation on the basis of the authorship, falsely ascribed to these tales. The Book of Nicodemus is in this category, however it does contain some elements of truth, in this way giving it better credibility. Don't ever mistake this book as being genuine, or having been written by Nicodemus, because it wasn't.

John 3:1 starts out by telling us Nicodemus was of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews. However, he came to Yahshua at night and confessed he knew Yahshua came from Yahweh. In **John 3:10**, Yahshua calls Nicodemus a master of Israel, so we know he wasn't a Jew. The Pharisees knew about the prophesies of the coming Messiah, but they expected Him to come as a military conqueror to enslave all the non Jewish people of the world. They wanted all the wealth of the world delivered into Jewish hands. The Pharisees had seen Yahshua do a number of miracles, so this made them think because he was doing these miracles, He should kill off the Roman army and set them free to loot.

Have you ever wondered why Pontius Pilate was so jittery about something that might upset these Jews, during this period of time? The prophesies from the Book of Daniel told when the Messiah was going to come, but the date had been falsified. The first Herod was the one who had all the male babies, two years old and younger killed, trying to kill Yahshua.

Herod had tried to get the people to receive him as being the Messiah. For this purpose, the priests, who were the ones who kept the historical records, falsified the calendar dates. The purpose of this falsification was to make the dates come out right, to support Herod's claim of being the

Messiah. By this chicanery Herod didn't fool the people and his plan fizzled out. The people continued looking for the real Messiah, as this was the time that it had been prophesied He would come.

John chapter 10 records, "And the dedication in Jerusalem came and it was winter and Yahshua was walking in the temple and Solomon's porch. The Jews therefore, came and surrounded Him and said to Him, Till when dost Thou hold our soul in suspense? If thou art the Messiah tell us plainly.

Yahshua answered them, I told you, and ye do not believe. The works that I do in the name of my Father, these testify concerning me: but ye do not believe for ye are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me."

This dedication was the Maccabean feast on the anniversary of the reconsecration of the temple after it's cleansing by Judas Maccabean. Here was all this unrest; the zealots were ready to rise in insurrection against Rome, regardless of the circumstances. The rest of the population was ready to rise in military insurrection, when the Messiah came as the leader.

Pontius Pilate had been sent to Palestine as the Roman governor. His job was to extract the most money in taxes, with the least possible expense to the government. He had enough troops to take care of small, ordinary disturbances of the peace, but he didn't have enough troops to take care of a major uprising. This is why Pontius Pilate was so afraid of pushing things too far, starting a general rebellion.

Before the time where it mentions the Jews coming to the dedication feast in December, the Pharisees had sent Nicodemus, in private, to Yahshua to inquire as to what was going on. John chapter 3 tells us, "And there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus his name, a ruler of the Jews (Judeans). This one came to him by night and said to him, Rabbi; we know that from Yahweh hast thou come, a teacher. For no one these signs is able to do which thou doest except Yahweh is with him. Yahshua answered and said to him, indeed I say to thee, if anyone be not born from

above, he is not able to see the kingdom of Yahweh. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How is a man able to be born being already old? Is he able to enter into the womb of his mother a second time and be born?"

These verses in John chapter 3 about being born again, are one of the worst mistranslations in the Bible. A lot of false doctrine has been woven around these verses. I have translated it, in the above chapter, the way it reads in the Greek. The correct translation is born from above, not born again.

It is only Nicodemus, not understanding born from above, who brings in any idea of being born again. Notice what Yahshua replied. "Indeed, indeed, I say to thee, if a man be not born of water and the spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of Yahweh. That being born of the flesh is flesh and that being born of the spirit is spirit. Do not wonder that I said to thee, you must be born from above. The wind blows where it wills and the sound of it thou hearest; but you know not whence it comes and where it goes.

Thus is everyone who is born out of the spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How is this able to be? Yahshua answered and said to him, Art thou the teacher of Israel and thou dost not knowest this? Indeed, indeed, I say to thee, that which we know we speak, and what we have seen we testify; and our testimony you do not receive. If I have told you the earthly things and you do not receive, how would ye believe if I told you the heavenly things? And no one ascended into heaven except the Son of man who descended from heaven.

And even as Moses held aloft the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be raised. That everyone who believes in him may not be destroyed, but may have life age abiding.

For Yahweh so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that everyone believing in him may not be destroyed, but may have life age abiding. Yahweh sent not his son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

He who believes in him is not judged; but he who does not believe is judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of Yahweh. And this is the judgment that the light has come into the world, and the men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For everyone who does vile things hates the light, and comes not to the light that his works might not be detected; but he who does the truth comes to the light so that it may be made manifest that his works have been done in Yahweh."

There is more concentrated plain speech in this passage, than Yahshua gave directly to His apostles. Yahshua was telling Nicodemus how it really was but, Nicodemus couldn't understand it as yet. Yahshua saw beneath outward appearances, He knew that here was a man who had what it took to respond to the truth.

However the Pharisees wouldn't come to Yahshua, other than scoffing and ridiculing Him in the daytime, they only came when they couldn't be seen. They would come, or send their emissary at night when nobody could see that they were just possibly willing to believe Yahshua.

John 7:43-53 records, "So there was a division among the people because of him, and some of them would have taken him, but no man laid hands on Him. Then came the officers to the high priests and Pharisees and they said to them, why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, never a man spoke like this man. Then answered the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this people that knows not the law are accursed. Nicodemus said to them (he that came to Yahshua by night, being one of them): Does our law judge any man before it hears him, and knows what it is that he does? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet; and every man went into his own house."

The Pharisees treated the common people with the utmost contempt. They called them, *am ha eratz* meaning the people of the land. The Pharisees did believe in resurrection but said the common people weren't worthy of it. Like the Pharisees of today in our churches, they didn't know

their scriptures. Remember how often Yahshua had to say to them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures. If ye had believed Moses ye would have believed me, because he wrote of me."

Here it was again, the Pharisees said there weren't any prophets from Galilee. If they had known the Old Testament, the scriptures, as they existed up to that time, they would have known that Jonah, Nahum and Malachi were from Galilee. Like most of the clergy of today, they didn't read or know the book they professed to rely upon.

Nicodemus had already courageously spoken up in Yahshua's defence, after the Sanhedrin openly planned his murder. After the crucifixion, Nicodemus again took his life in his hands, to render Yahshua his last act of respect. **John 19:38-42** records, "And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Yahshua, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Yahshua; and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Yahshua; and there came also Nicodemus, who at first came to Yahshua by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. Then they took the body of Yahshua, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There they laid Yahshua because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

I don't believe it is recorded in the Bible, but this tomb was one Joseph of Arimathea had prepared for his own death.

Both Roman and Jewish law recognized both the right and the duty of the nearest relative to bury the dead. This included even someone who had been executed as a common criminal. However, the Jews and the Pharisees had made a new rule that unless the relatives claimed the body of an executed criminal within an hour of execution, the body was to be taken to one of the two cemeteries outside Jerusalem. These cemeteries were reserved for the bodies of executed criminals, and the bodies were just dumped into a common pit. There would be no separate grave that could be marked with its own headstone or otherwise identified.

Joseph of Arimathea had to step in quickly, to stop the Jews from taking Yahshua's body. You can understand why these Jews were especially anxious to prevent a decent burial for Yahshua's body, even though they didn't expect Him to be resurrected. If Yahshua's tomb were known, it would be something to keep alive His memory and the Christian movement they were determined to stamp out.

This is the last mention of Nicodemus in the Bible. However, we are going to follow what happened to him through the historical records.

To obtain some idea of the background of the times, it is necessary to have some understanding of the Jewish ecclesiastical groups or parties. There were the Pharisees, the name being derived from *pharash*, meaning separated, so Pharisee meant set apart. The beginning of the Pharisees was somewhere between 500 B.C. and 450 B.C., very soon after the return from Babylon. They were deep students of Judaism, meaning the Talmud, and they didn't pay much attention to the Bible. Their belief in the necessity of separation from other nations and their other customs grew out of this.

After the return from Babylon, here along the Palestinian coast (most of the time under the domination of Syria in the north), they had come into the ancient pagan world where the military power was Rome, but the outstanding culture was that of the Greeks. Literature was exclusively Greek along with art, but with all this came Greek paganism.

As the nation of Palestine developed, from the return from Babylon, until somewhere around 150 B.C., the Judeans were not an independent nation. They were only governed as a tributary province of one nation or another, which was Syria much of the time. Syria had entirely adopted the Greek culture and paganism, and they didn't see why they should allow any distinction to be made in this little conquered, tributary province of Judea. There was a large faction, among the local people, who wanted to get along with their conquerors, so they just went along with the crowd. The Greek culture was only a thin end of the wedge for Greek paganism. Even after the independence of Palestine was obtained, under Judas Maccabeus about 150 B.C., there still was this strong pagan Greek influence. The

King James Bible records them as the Greeks. It doesn't mean actual Greek people; it means the Judeans who wanted to adopt the Greek culture.

Here was this strong faction, wanting to keep all the Greek customs which lead right back into paganism. Persecutions of any dissenting religions, by Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria were harsh, so it became a precarious situation. Resistance to this Greek paganism centred in the Pharisee group, who at that time was called Hasidim, the pious ones.

The Hasidim gradually broke into two groups, those who were interested only in Judaism, as a religious cult, became the Essenes. Those who also became a political party, became the Pharisees.

One of the Maccabee kings, John Hyrcanus, who came to the throne around 125 B.C., sought to create an ordinary kingdom with political alliances with other nations, because of their strength. He also was the one who was responsible for bringing the Edomite Jews into the kingdom and giving them full citizenship. This was more of a disaster than anything else that could have been done.

The Pharisees became the opposition party. In the time of the grandsons of John Hyrcanus, civil war broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees were very much on the Grecianized side so this civil war finally led to conquest by the Romans in 63 B.C.. The Pharisees refused to take the oath of allegiance either to the Romans or to Herod, and because of this refusal; they had to pay a fine.

The Pharisees were greatly respected by the learned and the common people, as students of the law. However, they developed to the extreme, the doctrines of the so called oral law. They taught that Moses gave them lots of other laws, besides the written laws. This tradition, saying that these laws came down from Moses, even though Moses wouldn't write them down, supposedly entitled their tradition to at least equal importance to the laws Moses did write down. This tradition later became known as the Talmud. In the time of Yahshua, it was still called The

Tradition of the Elders. Remember how often Yahshua rebuked the Pharisees for having set aside the laws of Yahweh by their tradition!

The Pharisees believed in immortality, with rewards and punishments, and eventual resurrection. They also believed in the existence of angels and both good and bad spirits. They believed in the coming of the promised Saviour, the Messiah. The Pharisees are the ones who developed the institution of the synagogue because the Sadducees were in complete control of the temple for the last one and a half centuries B.C. The Sadducees had a certain tendency toward asceticism, although they didn't carry it to the extremes the Essenes did. Yahshua speaks scornfully of this tendency in **Luke 18:11-12** saying, "The Pharisees stood and prayed thus with themselves, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

The Essenes were the extreme development of Phariseeism; they were practically a monastic order. They lived by themselves in barracks, however they didn't entirely retire to these monasteries. They went out and worked at jobs in the nearby communities to support themselves, but they went back at night to the monastery barracks to sleep. They were celibates, none of them could marry, no women were admitted to the order, and they were strict Sabbatarians and vegetarians. They also objected to the animal sacrifices offered at the temple, so they were denied admission to the temple. However, they did believe in immortality.

The other principal party was the Sadducees. They were numerically smaller than the Pharisees, but they were composed of wealthy and influential persons. Because of this wealth, they were more powerful than the larger group of Pharisees. The Sadducees began as the party favoring the Grecianizing of their customs and in this they were led by their high priest. They were out of power from the time of Mattathias Maccabeus, one of the early Maccabee kings, to John Hyrcanus.

Then the Sadducees regained power and control of the temple in the time of John Hyrcanus. The Pharisees' opposition to John's political policies

caused them to be entirely removed from any positions of power. From then on the Sadducees controlled the temple, except for one very short period at the very beginning of the reign of the first Herod.

The Sadducees were also the party favourable to the Romans. These Sadducees were the worldly men, the materialists, whose motto was to get along with those with power and wealth. As to their religious belief, they accepted only the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible that were written by Moses and contained the law. They rejected all the prophets and also the Talmud, the so-called oral law.

The Sadducees rejected a lot of things among them predestination, immortality or resurrection, the existence of angels or spirits, they were purely materialists. They quickly adapted the priesthood, which they controlled completely, to the Babylonian corruption of religion.

There was another group that receives only slight mention in the Bible, the Zealots. They were a Pharisee extremist group but politically, not doctrinally, like the Essenes. The Zealots believed in immediate revolt against the Romans, not even waiting for the Messiah. One of Yahshua's apostles, whom the King James Bible wrongly calls Simon the Canaanite, (No Canaanite was ever an apostle, you can be sure of that) Simon was a Zealot.

This mistranslation may come from one of two things. It is believed that Simon's home town was a little village of Cana where Yahshua performed His first miracle, that of changing water into wine. From Cananite to Canaanite, didn't take much of a slip of the pen. The Hebrew word meaning Zealots was Cana, was very much like the word Canaan. The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Cana, meaning Zealot, was Zelotes. Notice that in [Acts 1:13](#) Simon is correctly called Simon Zelotes, Simon the Zealot. Moffatt, Smith and Goodspeed, and some other modern English translations, have correctly translated the name in Matthew, Mark and Luke, where the King James Bible has it wrong.

The Sanhedrin is also mentioned, the origin of which is rather uncertain. It possibly goes back to Babylon under Persian rule, but cannot be

positively traced any earlier than the time of the Greek domination under Alexander the Great. Upon Alexander's death, the eastern shores of the Mediterranean fell into the hands of his general who was in command in Syria, so there was a continuation of Greek domination and culture there. The Romans allowed the Jews a large measure of self-government, which was recognized as being in this council.

The Aramaic word Sanhedrin means council. The number of men in the council is fixed in the Talmud, as seventy members plus a president, a Nasi as head, therefore seventy-one members in total. The membership of the council had originally been limited to the Sadducee priesthood and the nobility. The Pharisees were a minority but still a substantial number. From about 75 B.C. on, many Pharisees were admitted under the classifications of scribes and elders. Exactly how the members of the scribes and elders were selected was not known. The nasi, the head, was the high priest.

Originally the high priest had authority equal to all the other seventy members of the council. After Herod reduced the high priesthood from a hereditary religious office to just a political plum, as a payoff for political services rendered, the high priest lost his prestige and great power, he became just one vote among the seventy-one. How little things change over the years, this sounds just like what happens with appointments for the United States Supreme Court.

Among the political powers of the Sanhedrin, was the collection of taxes. The King James Bible uses the word publican. Yahshua classified the harlots and the publicans together. When you make out your income tax return, you'll understand exactly why this was the classification of the tax collectors.

The Sanhedrin was the high court of Jewish law. As such, it had its own armed police force and made arrests at its own discretion. The Romans did not interfere with Jewish local self-government. Under Biblical law, the method of killing a condemned criminal was stoning him to death. The Jews could pass this death sentence and execute it without getting permission from the Roman governor.

When the Jews wanted to murder the first Christian martyr Stephen, they didn't go to ask permission from Pontius Pilate, they just picked up the stones and stoned Stephen to death. When the Jews wanted to use a method of execution that was not according to their own custom this was a different matter. Then they were getting outside the permitted sphere of self-government, so they had to go to the Roman governor for this.

When the Jews wanted to put Yahshua to death by a peculiarly horrible method of torture, crucifixion, they had to get Pontius Pilate to do the job for them. When the Jews were urging Pontius Pilate to have Yahshua killed he said, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Stoning was a relatively merciful death as it caused very quick unconsciousness, but the Jews didn't want this.

The Sanhedrin was composed of three groups. First the high priests, note this is in the plural. Under the rule set up in the Old Testament, there was only one high priest at any one time. The high priest held the office for life, and upon his death his oldest son succeeded to the office.

Herod the First murdered the last of the legitimate high priests who could still trace his descent from Aaron. Thereafter Herod appointed to the high priesthood, a succession of scoundrels out of his own political following. The high priesthood was never held very long by one man, only a few months in some instances, before he was deposed and Herod replaced him with somebody else. The Talmud records the almost yearly change of the high priest.

At the time of the trial Yahshua, there were about twelve former high priests around, along with Caiaphas, who was then high priest. Translating right from the Greek **John 11:47-48** reads, "Then assembled the high priests and the Pharisees a high council, and said, what are we doing? Because this man doeth many miracles, if we allow Him thus, all will believe in Him; and will come the Romans then and take away from us both the place and the nation."

What were they referring to? They weren't afraid because somebody was going around, meekly whimpering that people ought to behave them-

selves and be good. Yahshua was reminding the people that nothing they had, in their then existing religious or political system, was according to the laws of Yahweh.

When Herod the Great died, he willed Judea to one of his sons Herod Archelaus, to be king over this area, as the Romans had also confirmed the first Herod as king of Judea. The Romans were not new at this game; they weren't about to make an untried man king. Consequently they confirmed Herod Archelaus only as governor for a test period. From 4 B.C. to 6 A.D. Herod Archelaus gave the people of Judea, about the most miserable misrule any nation has had in history.

The Romans were hated as the alien conquerors, who maintained rule by military force. The people would not easily, on any trifling ground of discontent, ask the Romans to take over the complete government. To pacify the people, they had been allowed a measure of local self-government. Under Herod's misrule, it was so intolerable that the people sent an ambassador to Rome, complaining of what Herod Archelaus was doing. Finally the Romans put him on trial, found him guilty of the crimes the people had charged him with, then removed him from office and exiled him to Gaul. Then the people asked that a Roman governor be appointed to rule Judea.

So the Romans appointed a series of procurators, Roman governors of whom Pontius Pilate happened to be number six. Would that the people today, would rise up and throw the rascals out that are ruining our once great nation.

Now we can understand what the high priests were talking about when they said, "We're not going to get away with our racket if we let this man (Yahshua) continue educating the people. They'll complain to the Romans until the Romans take the rulership of this country away from us." This is the reason these Jews determined to murder Yahshua, not because they disliked His religious doctrines. If Yahshua was just a meek man of sorrows, that the churches try to picture him, the Sadducees wouldn't even have bothered sneering at Him. However, He was a threat to their power and for this they determined to murder Him.

There are similar circumstances today. You can be a thief, murderer or rapist and you can get off with a light sentence. However, if you threaten the money system or the power structure, you could be imprisoned for life on one trumped up charge or another.

It is doubtful, if at any time in history, we could find such a collection of criminals as these high priest, who were part of the Sanhedrin at the time of the trial of Yahshua. Among those scoundrels we can trace is Simon Ben Boethus, who was high priest for some period of time ending in 4 B.C., at the death of the first Herod. Joazar, who was the son of Simon, was high priest from 4 B.C. to 2 A.D. Eleazar, a second son of Simon Ben Boethus, was high priest three months in the year 2 B.C.

Jesus Ben Sie was high priest from 2 A.D. to 6 A.D. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Annas was the first one Yahshua was brought before, for a mock trial. He was high priest from 7 A.D. to 10 A.D... Ishmael Ben Phabi was high priest for nine years, probably 14 A.D. to 23 A.D., and so forth. There were a number of important priests who are largely related to Annas, who later in their turn, became high priests and were also in this chamber of priests.

Next was the chamber of the scribes, chosen from the Levites and the learned laity. One of these was Gamaliel, grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillil, who came from Babylon in 40 A.D.. Gamaliel was the most brilliant of the teachers; among his disciples were Paul, Barnabas and Stephen. He successfully defended the apostles before the Sanhedrin in the year 33 A.D., as you can read in **Acts 5:34-40**.

Others in the chamber of scribes were Simon, the son of Gamaliel, and Onkelos, who wasn't Jewish by birth but was a proselyte. Onkelos was the author of the famous Chaldees Targum of the Pentateuch. A Targum did not purport to be an exact translation.

A Targum was a paraphrase, a restating of the same meaning in the author's own words. A certain amount of paraphrase creeps into almost any translation and a good paraphrase is sometimes pretty close to a translation.

Other scribes were Jonathan Ben Uziel, who was the author of another famous Targum, the Aramaic. Samuel Hakaton, Samuel "the less" who was a bitter anti Christian and Rabbi Zadok were other members. The Talmud reports that Rabbi Zadok fasted for 40 years so that God would not allow the temple to be burned, and asks how he could have known that the temple was threatened with this great calamity. Nobody apparently realized that Rabbi Zadok might have read Daniel and found out about it. Perhaps he heard what Yahshua had said which was recorded in Mark 13:1-2. Another member was Jonathan Ben Zakai, who died in 73 A.D.

These were the principal identified men in the Sanhedrin. In Matthew 23:2-7, Yahshua scornfully said of them, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." Remember that Moses was the lawgiver. It was through Moses they got the detailed laws. These scribes and Pharisees were not contented with teaching the laws of Yahweh, as found in the scriptures; they were proclaiming some new laws. "All therefore whatsoever they bid you to observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not. For they being heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." In the Talmud all sorts of regulations had been worked out.

In the original theory for the existence of the Talmud, you can find a legitimate basis for it. Whenever you have to apply a law to a specific set of facts, you come up against a question, where is the boundary line of the law? What facts come within and what don't. For example, the law didn't allow you to do any sort of commercial work on the Sabbath. This included the fact you could not make a journey to another town on the Sabbath, if it was for a commercial purpose. Even though you wouldn't do anything commercial on the Sabbath, you just wanted to be there bright and early the next morning to start business, you couldn't travel on the Sabbath. Then the arguments began about how much could you lawfully do on the Sabbath. How far could you travel, even for a non-commercial purpose?

The rabbis solemnly decided that one thousand paces were the maximum travel permitted on a Sabbath day, so this was put in the Talmud. In trying

to split non-existent frog hairs of this sort, the rabbis were setting all sorts of very burdensome regulations. Yahshua said, "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogue, and greetings in the markets, and to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi."

The rabbis, to show what they thought of themselves in their own conceited esteem, established some rules, which are found in the Talmud as follows. "If one opposes his rabbi, he is guilty in the same degree as if he opposed God himself. If one quarrels with his rabbi, it is as if he contended with the living God. If anyone thinks evil of his rabbi, it is as if he thought evil of the eternal God." As you can see, these rabbis thought very highly of themselves.

There was one more group found in the Sanhedrin, the chamber of the elders. This was the least influential of the three, but the least evil also. These elders were usually chosen from the wealthy classes and as these were largely Sadducees, there were many Sadducees among them. In the chamber of the elders was Ben Kalba Shevuah, one of the three richest men in Jerusalem. Then there were Ben Tzitzith Hacksab, rich and effeminate, Simon, bold and courageous also learned, and Doras an influential and a cruel and treacherous conspirator. We continue with John Ben John, Dorotheas Ben Nathaniel, Tryphon Ben Theudion and Cornelius Ben Ceron, four ambassadors sent by the Jews to Emperor Claudius in 44 A.D. Also in the chamber of elders were Nicodemus and the other person who we met in the Bible, whom we shall discuss at this time, Joseph of Arimathea.

Arimathea, now called Rhama or Rhamala, is in a village eight miles north of Jerusalem. It was the first stopping place of northbound caravans leaving Jerusalem. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all mention Joseph of Arimathea. **Mark 15:43** says, "Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable councillor, who also waited for the kingdom of Yahweh." **Matthew 27:57** records, "When the evening was come there came a rich man of Arimathea named Joseph, who also himself was Yahshua's disciple".

Luke 23:50-51 records, "And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor, and he was a good man and a just one. The same had not consented to the council and the deed of them. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of Yahweh." **John 19:38** tells of Joseph of Arimathea being a disciple of Yahshua, but secretly for fear of the Jews.

The Bible doesn't record the fact that Joseph of Arimathea was a great uncle of Yahshua, but the fact is well known in the ancient traditions of Palestine. He was an uncle of Mary (Miriam) the mother of Yahshua. Joseph was a wealthy man, as the Bible records, because he was an importer of tin. The King James Bible wrongly translates this brass in most places. Brass is an alloy of zinc and copper, but a far superior alloy bronze, is made of tin and copper. There was a period of a number of centuries when the most important metal, outside of gold and silver for jewellery and money, was bronze.

There was a small amount of tin mined in Spain, but other than this, the known supply of the world, as is mentioned in the Bible, all came from Cornwall in the British Isles. It is recorded in the early British chronicles that Joseph of Arimathea was the owner of some of the tin mines in Cornwall. Joseph also had a fairly extensive fleet of ships in which to transport tin and they also carried other merchandise, so he was a man of substantial wealth.

In the Latin translation by Jerome, which is the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, it mentions Joseph of Arimathea was called Decurio, which is a Roman title, which was given to an officer in charge of a mining district.

In the year 40 B.C., Julius Caesar had made some landings in Britain. By the time of the crucifixion of Yahshua, some 70 years later, the Romans had a very substantial foothold in Britain. Among the Romans, including the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea not only was a wealthy man, but was a respected Decurio and recognized as such by the Romans, so Joseph was a very influential person.

A number of ancient historians mention the trade in tin, with the Mediterranean and Middle East countries. Herodotus, writing about 445 B.C., Pytheas about 352-323 B.C., Polybius about 160 B.C., and Diodorus Siculus, writing in the times of Julius and Augustus Caesar, all mention the tin trade.

The early writers reported that in their day, the source of the tin wasn't known. The Phoenicians had a monopoly in the trade in tin, because the Phoenician mariners were the ones who found where the tin was mined. They were such excellent seamen they could usually elude any other ships that tried to follow them.

Diodorus Siculus said that the tin was mined and smelted, then the metal was beaten out into thin sheets and cut up into squares. Then it was carried to the island of Ictis, which we can identify as Mount Saint Michael on the Cornwall coast. Then it was shipped across the English Channel to Morlaix in France. Then the tin went overland to the Mediterranean port of Marseilles, from there it was shipped to Phoenicia on the Palestinian coast. So now we know the background of the wealth and importance of Joseph of Arimathea.

Yahshua was crucified about 30 A.D.. The Vatican library contains a manuscript dated 35 A.D. which states that in that year Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus whom Yahshua had raised from the dead, Mary (Miriam), Martha, Marcella their maid, and Maximin the disciple whose sight Yahshua had restored, and some others, were put into a boat without sails or oars, by the Jews. They were towed out into the Mediterranean and set adrift there.

This is recorded by Cardinal Baronius who was the great Catholic Church historian. He lived between the years 1538 A.D. and 1607 A.D. and for about 40 years of this time, he was in charge of the Vatican library. This library is certainly the greatest collection of ancient historical documents in the world.

Baronius was a very careful and exact man. He said, "Better to be silent than to let a lie be intermixed with the truth." What Baronius couldn't

verify, he didn't write in his historical works. He spent some 30 years writing his ecclesiastical annals. In these annals he quotes this Vatican manuscript, which says that these people were put by the Jews, into a boat without sails or oars and set adrift in the Mediterranean and that they finally landed at Marseilles.

The document would seem to indicate that the boat of itself drifted all that distance, which would imply a pretty high speed of drift. While they could get along with scanty provisions, it is entirely possible they were picked up by somebody else and landed in Marseilles. Early records indicate, with the intense persecution that followed the crucifixion and resurrection of Yahshua, that Joseph of Arimathea had been helping some of the most persecuted of the Christians, to escape from the country.

Joseph owned many ships and his ships were regularly plying between the Palestinian coast and the Mediterranean coast of France and then around into Britain. Undoubtedly Joseph's ships had carried a considerable number of these refugees to the port of Marseilles. It is also known that in extremely early times in the Christian era, a very substantial Christian colony existed in Marseilles. This same manuscript, of the year 35 A.D., records that Joseph and his company landed at Marseilles. From there they crossed over into Britain and preached the gospel there, for the rest of their lives.

An important church historian, William of Malmesbury also says that Saint Philip, one of the original twelve disciples and the apostle to Gaul, sent a group of twelve missionaries from France to Britain. The leader of this group was Joseph of Arimathea. It also records that one of the early kings, Arviragus, gave them the island of Avalon and twelve hides of land, which was close to Glastonbury. Twelve hides of land would be equal to about 1,920 acres.

This gift of land, for their settlement there at Glastonbury and the island of Avalon, was given to them tax free, in perpetuity. When Duke William of Normandy, also known as William the Conqueror, conquered England in 1066 A.D., as soon as he had the fighting completed, the next important thing to do was to see about collecting taxes. William sent a group of

officers all over England to get a careful tax roll, the description of all the privately owned lands in England, and what tax they had been customarily paying, this was completed in 1085 A.D.

This record is called the Domesday Book, and it records that the Church of Glastonbury has in its own villa 12 hides of land, which have never paid tax. Here we have official government history confirming this.

Cressy, another church historian, a Benedictine monk who lived shortly after the reformation, had learned many of the traditions of the Benedictine monastery at Glastonbury, where he had lived for a number of years. Cressy records that Joseph of Arimathea died at Glastonbury, July 27, 82 A.D.

St. Gregory of Tours, in his history of the Franks, written between 544 A.D. and 595 A.D., Haleca, Archbishop of Zaragoza, the Chronicon of Pseudo Dexter, and other early historians writers, all unite in saying that Joseph of Arimathea was the first person to preach the gospel in Britain. The apostle Philip was, by all the early records, recognized as being the apostle to Gaul. The early church records call him the Apostle of Gaul. Isadore the Archbishop of Seville between 606 A.D. and 636 A.D., was the greatest man in Spanish church history of his period. Isadore records, "Philip of the city of Bethsaida, whence also came Peter, preached Christ to the Gauls."

Julian, the archbishop of Toledo between 680 A.D. and 690 A.D., the last eminent churchman in gothic Spain before the Moorish conquest in 711 A.D. wrote, "Saint Philip was assigned to Gaul." The Venerable Bede the Great, an early British historian, writing about 673 A.D., says the same. Archbishop Ussher was a great student of church history. When there are dates given in the margin of the Bible, these are the dates computed by Archbishop Ussher. He says, "St. Philip preached Christ to the Gauls." It is worthy to note that there has been a mix-up in the Bible in the understanding of this. This mix-up is not in the writing of it but in the understanding. There is a letter of Paul's to the Galatians. Who are the Galatians? Most of the ministers say this refers to Galatia, a little colony of a few cities in central Asia Minor, called Turkey today.

The Gauls were an early Celtic people, part of the first migration of Israel out of Scythia. They moved across southern Europe and settled in southern France. Some of them crossed the Pyrenees into Spain, but the majority of them remained in southern France, the early name of which was Gaul. Julius Caesar called it Gaul or the Roman name of Gallia, in his history of his war with the Gauls and the Greek form of the word was Galatia.

While the Gauls were on the march, and fairly early before they had migrated beyond the Balkan area of south-eastern Europe, some of them had decided not to continue going west. They crossed the Black Sea and landed on the northern shore of Asia Minor and moved into the interior. The area was then called Galatia because these people were Gauls, but it was only a small colony of them.

It is the same as if some Britons moved over into one of the little islands off the coast of Britain. You would still consider them Britons, but you wouldn't consider them the major part. The epistle to the Galatians, as a number of people including Archbishop Ussher have pointed out, was written not to Galatia in Asia Minor, it was written to Galatia in Gaul.

Paul has definitely been traced in part of his travels from Rome, right on up the Italian peninsula and over into Gaul, on one of his expeditions there. Twice in the Book of Acts, telling about Paul's journey, it records Paul saying, "I would have gone into Asia but the Spirit expressly forbade me to." The Spirit basically told Paul he wasn't to go out among these Asiatics; he was only to go to Israel, which was then mainly located in Europe.

It is a matter of record that Paul went first to Gaul. It is also of record that he travelled on a number of missionary expeditions to others and he eventually was murdered in Asia Minor. This wasn't the reception Paul got when he was in the real Galatia, in Gaul.

In Britain the religion was that of the Druids and to a certain extent, the Druid religion was also known among the Gauls, on the continent of Europe. The Druids were bitterly slandered by the Romans; Caesar said

the Druids offered human sacrifices. Caesar recorded the Druid's belief that a man only attains salvation, from the consequences of his sins, by the death of another paying the penalty for him. This is the absolute essence of Christianity.

In fact, the Druids were much clearer in their understanding of the entire Old Testament. This included the fact that the Old Testament was prophetic of the coming of Yahshua. They were far ahead in their knowledge than anything known in Palestine.

All over western Asia the most common language was Aramaic, which is a Semitic language quite similar to Hebrew, although not identical to it. So everybody spoke Aramaic. This is the language Yahshua spoke in order to be understood by the people He was talking to. When Yahshua's people decided to branch out into Europe, and go among people who didn't understand Aramaic, learned people who knew more than just their local language, all through Europe and to some extent in western Asia, were Greek.

If you wanted to write up the gospels or some of the letters of Paul, in a language that could be read by the better educated people in Europe, Greek was the language to write them in. The native Greeks had so much contempt for non-Greeks; they divided all humanity into two classes. One class was Greeks, who alone were civilized to their way of thinking. All other people, even the highly civilized Egyptians, were considered barbarians and unworthy of any serious notice. Because of this contempt for other people, the Greeks never bothered trying to get names from other languages accurately.

In the records that we have from early Greek travellers and historians, of their visits into Egypt, there is not one single Pharaoh mentioned by them whose name would give us the remotest idea of what his actual name was, as indicated in the Egyptian historical records. The Greeks just garbled up some collection of sounds and let it go at that. Every time they tried to translate any of these Hebrew names into Greek letters, they botched this up also. In the New Testament we never read of Jeremiah, we read of Jeremy or Jeremias etc.

The first missionaries went to the Druids and said, "We bring you good news of salvation, because Iesous has come and died to pay the penalty for our sins." The missionaries didn't have any converting to do. The Druids told them they had been waiting for this news for centuries, and they were joyous it had happened; now they wanted to hear all about it.

It is then recorded the Druids sent an ambassador over to Marseilles. There they met Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus and some of the others. The Druids entreated the new arrivals to come to Britain and preach there of the accomplished redemption they had been believing and hoping for over the centuries. So Joseph and some of the others went to Britain to teach.

The British Prince Arviragus offered Joseph land and protection against Roman molestation, as the Roman emperors were already starting to try to stamp out Christianity. Even as early as the times of Augustus and Tiberius, they were beginning to deify their Roman emperors as soon as they died. A Roman emperor was then a god, with his own temple to be worshiped as such. Among the pagans, if they already had seventeen gods why not eighteen, no particular reason to complain about that, it was all right.

However, Christianity refused to recognize any god but the one true God, Yahweh. Here was political opposition as well as religious opposition. The Romans were hostile to Christianity, pretty much from the beginning, for this reason. Philip ordained Joseph of Arimathea as the apostle to Britain. Then Prince Arviragus gave Joseph twelve hides of land, which amounted to 1,920 acres, at Glastonbury.

Joseph's son Josephus, went with his father to Britain. In the years 38 A.D. and 39 A.D., Joseph and his group of followers, built their first church. Among the Britons, when they didn't time to construct a stone building, or an elaborate one, it was common practice to build a timber frame to support the roof and all the roof framing. Then they filled in the walls with wicker, this was commonly known as wattle. Then the wattle was plastered over with clay.

The district near Glastonbury and this island of Avalon was a river marshland. Recently, during some excavation, some of these wattle huts have been dug up, quite well preserved. So this first church was a wattle structure, plastered over with clay. Later the outside of these wattle huts was covered with a thin sheet of lead, as a protection against the weather. In the year 630 A.D., as part of the great monastery structure there at Glastonbury, St. Paulinus built over this first wattle church, the beautiful stone chapel of St. Mary's.

This magnificent chapel was destroyed by the fire which burned down the entire Glastonbury Abbey in the year 1184 A.D. Up to the time of the fire, preserved within this St. Mary's chapel, was this little original, lead covered wattle and clay church. This is not myth, this is well preserved historic record.

Besides Cardinal Baronius, there was Alford, who was the other foremost Catholic Church historian. This information is based on his statements in the Vatican library. Alford also records that Joseph of Arimathea was the apostle to Britain and the first to introduce Christian teaching there.

The Roman Catholic Church has tried to foster the myth that St. Augustine, who was sent from Rome to Britain in the year 596 A.D., went there as missionary to a pagan country to convert the British people to Christianity. There isn't the faintest word of truth in this, as the Vatican records themselves show. A long time before Rome could claim to be Christian, Britain was officially a Christian nation by government decree.

Augustine was sent to Britain in 596 A.D., at a time when the popes were trying to consolidate their power. The Catholic Church, as we know it today, was just coming into existence and the popes were searching for recognition. These popes were nothing but the bishops of Rome and there were bishops in all the important centres.

There was the Bishop of Carthage, on the shores of North Africa and the Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. There were bishops in other important cities in western Asia. Every time the bishop of Rome got to throwing his weight around and trying to give orders to these other bishops, they

whittled him down to size by reminding him he didn't have any authority at all outside of Rome, they were running affairs in their own areas. This is all well-known church correspondence.

Remembering the tradition of the times, when the Roman Empire governed all the then known civilized world, the popes were ambitious politicians. They were grasping for power, but they didn't have this power consolidated as yet. They sent Augustine to Britain to persuade the large and important church in Britain, to accept the supremacy of the Pope. This is all Augustine had to do with it he didn't convert Britain to Christianity.

At great church councils of the Roman Catholic Church, the representatives of the various countries were accorded honour according to the date their country had received Christianity. The earliest that had accepted Christianity were recognized as the more important and entitled to greater honour. There was a great deal of jealousy towards Britain, on the part of some of the representatives of the other countries. Several times some of these other countries tried to be recognized as entitled to a position ahead of Britain. The Vatican's own records show that at the Council of Pisa, in the year 1417 A.D., at the Council of Constance in the year 1419 A.D., and the Council of Sienna in 1423 A.D., the Roman Catholic Church recognized that the Christian church in Britain was the earliest of all Christian churches. As such, the English church was entitled to be honoured accordingly.

Joseph of Arimathea introduced Christianity in Britain in the year 36 A.D... Christianity, under that name, was officially proclaimed as the National Church of Britain by an edict of King Lucius in the year 156 A.D. This was done at Winchester, which was the capital city of Britain at that time. Tertullian of Carthage, one of the great early Christian writers wrote, "The Christian church extends to all the boundaries of Gaul and to parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans but subject to Christ." The Roman records show that the Roman expedition to conquer Britain had as its principle purpose, the stamping out of Christianity. The Gauls were Christian, so when Julius Caesar went on his expedition to conquer Gaul for Rome, the Britains sent Gaul a lot of troops for their defence.

Caesar's own records show that his first expedition into Britain, was to punish them for being allies of the Gauls.

Caesar was on this expedition something like three weeks. He returned with his boastful statement, "*Vini, vidi, vinci*. I came, I saw, I conquered." But Caesar's political opponents said, "I came, I saw, but I didn't stay." Caesar had been driven out in three weeks. Here was Britain, the principle seat of Christianity. The records of the Roman emperors, who sent their armies there to conquer Britain, show that it was primarily to stamp out Christianity.

The English, as well as Roman records record that the British put up such a ferocious resistance, the Roman armies never even got to Glastonbury. These armies were never able to molest the seat of Christianity in Britain. Sebellius, another early Christian writer, writing around the year 250 A.D., writes this. "Christianity was privately confessed elsewhere, but the first nation that proclaimed it as their religion and called it Christian, after the name of Christ, was Britain."

There is similar recognition of this given in the writings of St. Jerome, the same man who translated the Bible into Latin. Jerome's Latin translation is the official Bible of the Catholic Church. Jerome wrote about 378 A.D., Arnobius about 400 A.D., Chrysostom, patriarch of Constantinople wrote in 402 A.D. and Polydore Vergil, an eminent Catholic churchman who wrote during the period of the quarrels between the Pope and King Henry VIII of England, all these writers are in agreement with each other.

Remember, these were Catholics who officially claimed that Rome was the source of Christianity. Therefore they weren't likely to forge lies to show that Britain was ahead of them. Polydore wrote, "Britain was of all kingdoms the first to receive the gospel."

Britain's greatest early historian Gildas, writing about 520 A.D., wrote this. "Joseph introduced Christianity into Britain in the last year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." This would make the time 37 A.D. or 38 A.D. Remember that Joseph didn't land in Britain until 36 A.D. Then he had to

devote some time getting organized and then send his party as missionaries throughout the country, so these dates work out.

The Emperor Constantine, who was the first Roman emperor to even tolerate Christianity, was of British heritage. He was the son of a Roman father and a British mother; his father was the Roman commander in Britain at that time. Constantine was raised to manhood in Britain and learned a great deal there.

There is a legend about his battle, when he was trying to become emperor of Rome. The legend says that Constantine saw a vision of the cross with this motto, "In this sign conqueror". In 313 A.D. Constantine issued his first Edict of Toleration. This edict declared that the people of Rome were free to worship in any religion of their choice including Christianity, not excluding paganism.

It was quite a few years later that he made Christianity the official religion, deposing paganism. Constantine convened the Council of Nicea in the year 325 A.D., to compel the divided Christian church to agree on their doctrines. There was a great split in the Christian church at that time, so the Council of Nicea was convened.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy didn't begin its earliest formation until 350 A.D. For practically 300 years after this, the Bishop of Rome was not recognized as being the universal bishop of all Christendom. He was the bishop of Rome and Italy respected his authority, but other areas had their own bishops.

With Britain officially a Christian nation in 156 A.D., and the Catholic Church coming into existence by degrees between 350 A.D. and 610 A.D., we can see that Britain is where Christianity gained its first foothold in the civilized world.

In closing, it should be stated that history records that Nicodemus was in the group of people with Joseph of Arimathea, who came to Britain after the crucifixion.

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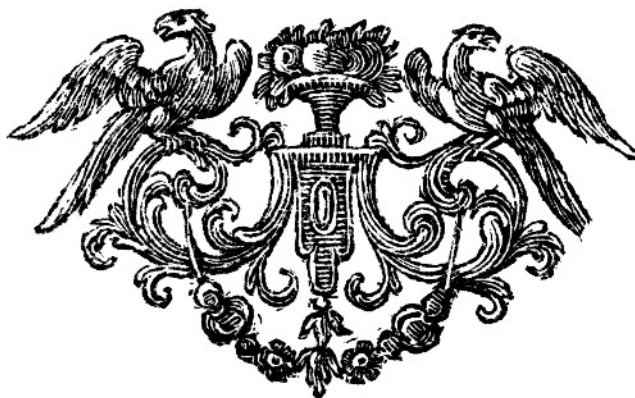
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