

# *Resurrection Life of Jesus Church*

## THE ORIGIN STORY OF JESUS

RLJ-1897

JOHN S. TORELL

JANUARY 29, 2023

### PART 96: INDEPENDENCE LOST

#### **A TIME OF BETRAYAL**

King Alexander Jannaeus and Queen Salome Alexandra had two sons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II. The boys were raised in the palace at Jerusalem and they undoubtedly heard how their father ordered 800 Pharisees to be crucified at a banquet. Just like their father, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II were possessed with demons and there was no love between the brothers.

Aristobulus II was plotting to become the next king and even had plans to oust his mother when she was alive. He made himself a supporter of the Sadducee party, and on many occasions acted like an attorney for them, when he went to his mother and sought favors on their behalf.

Queen Salome ordered the building of many fortresses around Judah which were controlled by the Sadducees to safeguard against the Pharisees. Aristobulus II befriended the Jewish aristocrats and the military leadership with the purpose of obtaining their support when he moved against his brother.

His mother made him the commander of a portion of the Jewish army in 70 B.C. and ordered him to attack Ptolemy Mennaeus, the Egyptian Tetrarch, who was fighting around Damascus. The Jewish prince and his army were subsequently defeated and Aristobulus II returned to Judah and continued to scheme how to become the next king.

When Queen Salome died in 67 B.C., the Sadducee political leaders in Jerusalem made Hyrcanus II the new king since he was already the high priest.

Hyrcanus II realized soon after he became king that he would have to fight and defeat his brother. He was not a gifted military commander and was unable to acquire support from the Pharisees. His army consisted mostly of mercenaries and they mutinied near Jericho and he was defeated before the battle ever began.

Hyrcanus II fled to a fortress in Jerusalem, but when the forces of Aristobulus II captured the temple in Jerusalem, Hyrcanus II surrendered and told his brother, that from the very beginning he never really wanted to be the king. He resigned as king and as high priest in 66 B.C. and submitted himself to Aristobulus II. The two brothers made a peace agreement including a friendship between them. To cement this peace agreement, Aristobulus II had his oldest son Alexander to marry Hyrcanus II daughter Alexandra.

#### **THE IDUMEAN CURSE**

Antipater lived in Jerusalem at this time. His parents had moved to Jerusalem from Idumea. Hyrcanus I invaded Idumea around 105 B.C. and forced them to accept the Jewish religion. Antipater was a pagan raised within Judaism. Historians describe him as a shrewd, ambitious man who wanted to become a political leader.



Antipater befriended Hyrcanus II and informed him that Aristobolus II was making plans to overthrow and kill him. In order to save himself, Antipater suggested Hyrcanus II request help from King Aretas III of the Nabataeans, a fierce people living in northern Arabia and in the south of Judah. Antipater had made an arrangement with King Aretas III and all Hyrcanus II needed to do was set the plan in motion. Hyrcanus II bought into the lie and King Aretas III arrived to besiege Jerusalem with an army of 50,000 men.

## **TROUBLE FROM THE NORTH**

During this time of trouble around Jerusalem, General Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106-48 B.C.) of Rome defeated the Kingdom of Pontus and the Seleucids. He was biding his time, waiting for an opportunity to move south and conquer Judah.

The occasion came when the warring brothers appealed to Rome for help in their civil war. Aristobolus II and Hyrcanus II sent delegations to Damascus to meet with Pompey. Each delegation carried gifts to sway the favor of Pompey.

He met separately with each delegation and Aristobolus' gift of 400 talents of silver swayed him to join the younger brother. Pompey sent Marcus Aemilius Scaurus with a small detachment to Jerusalem who informed King Aretas III that Rome wanted him to leave Jerusalem and return home. The conquest of the Romans was known to all nations around the Mediterranean Sea and Aretas agreed to back off. Aristobolus II decided to take revenge on the retreating Nabateans and they suffered great losses.

## **THREE DELEGATIONS**

The conniving Jews backed themselves into a corner from which there was no escape as Rome began to exert a stranglehold upon them.

1. Aristobolus II controlled the temple. He sent a delegation to Pompey's headquarters outside Jerusalem with the intent to bribe the general again. He offered a golden vine from the temple, but Roman law officially forbade military officers from receiving gifts, and the golden vine was sent to be a decoration in the temple of Jupiter at Rome.
2. The delegation from Hyrcanus II was led by Antipater. He was a shrewd political hack who knew exactly what Pompey desired. He told the general that if he sided with Hyrcanus II, the older brother would make Judah a Roman province and serve as a vassal king.
3. The third delegation consisting of Pharisees told Pompey that the two brothers treated Judah like it was their personal possession. The Pharisees represented the common people and requested that Judah be allowed to return to the authority of a high priest and a council.

## **POMPEY'S TRUE FACE**

While Pompey pretended to examine the three proposals, he ordered his army to enter Judah in force. Aristobolus II realized that he was trapped and that the Romans were taking control of Judah without a fight. He broke loose from the Roman encampment and returned to the safety of Jerusalem.

Pompey reacted swiftly and ordered his army to besiege the city. Aristobulus II decided to surrender when he realized that Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans. The Sadducees that had previously supported him refused to open the city gates. Hyrcanus II also had support within the city and the two Jewish groups started to attack each other. The forces of the Sadducees holed up in the temple ground for a final defense against the Romans.

## **SLAUGHTER IN THE TEMPLE**

The commander of the temple group believed that God would intervene if they offered a sacrifice. Animals were brought from their pens and priests started a frenzy of mass sacrifices. In the meantime, Pompey ordered his army to take the temple ground at any cost. The Romans attacked with fury and entered the temple ground where they began to methodically kill everyone.

The priests persistently tried to sacrifice and pray even after the Romans soldiers started to kill them. The slaughter of animals halted as another began as one priest after another tried to continue with the animal sacrifice until all were slain.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not intervene. The day ended with 12,000 Jewish fatalities on the temple ground. Pompey and his officers desecrated the temple when they entered the Holy of Holies to see what was there.

## **THE END OF JEWISH INDEPENDENCE**

Pompey installed Hyrcanus II as the new high priest. He was stripped of his kingship and given the title of Ethnarch (ruler of the people). Judah was incorporated into the Syrian province. All the lands and cities of the Hasmonean kings were put under the administration of the Roman governor of Syria.

Aristobulus II and his sons, Alexander and Antigonus, managed to flee from Jerusalem and began to raise up an army in the countryside. After a number of battles with the Romans, Aristobulus II and his sons were captured in 63 B.C. They were taken to Rome and displayed in Pompey's victory parade.

Aristobulus II escaped from Rome in 57 B.C. and returned to Judah to instigate a rebellion against the Romans. It did not go well for the insurgents and he was captured and put in a Roman prison.

In the meantime, civil war broke out as General Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.) fought against Pompey for control of Rome. Caesar released Aristobulus II in 49 B.C. and returned him to Judah to fight against Pompey in Syria.

In the meantime, Antipater had been given advance warning that Aristobulus II was to be released and planned his murder. Members of Pompey's political party poisoned him and his son, Alexander, was beheaded by Scipio, the Roman commander in Antioch.

## **ROMAN CIVIL WARS**

Gaius Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus were both successful military commanders. Caesar led the Roman expansion into modern day France in the west and Pompey pushed east into Pontus (Asia Minor) and the old Persian empire. Each

general commanded a respective army that was loyal to them. The conflict lasted four years.

Pompey defeated Caesar in 48 B.C. at the battle of Dyrrhachium in Greece. Later that year the two armies met again near the city of Pharsalus and Caesar was victorious. Pompey fled from the battle, disguised himself as a civilian, and sought refuge in Egypt. But the Egyptians rejected him and executed him. It is estimated some 60,000 soldiers were killed in the two battles.

Aristobulus II supported Caesar whereas Antipater had convinced Hyrcanus II to support Pompey. Antipater was a shrewd politician and quickly announced that he and Hyrcanus II were now supporting Caesar after the demise of Pompey.

Caesar accepted the duo and confirmed their position in Jerusalem and Judah, ordering the sea port of Jaffa to be returned to their control. The second son of Antipater was Herod (72 B.C. to 4 A.D.), who would become known as Herod the Great and he was made the governor of Galilee in 47 B.C.

Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. and a new civil war broke out. Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus contended with Octavian, who would become the next ruler of Rome known as Caesar Augustus (63 B.C to 14 A.D.) This was the man that ruled when the Son of God was incarnated in Bethlehem.

Antipater had joined the losing party again, but as a good politician with no scruples, he went with a recommendation from Hyrcanus II to meet the new ruler as a delegation of Jews asked the Romans to remove Antipater from power. Dirty politics prevailed and Antipater and his sons were once again reinstated while part of the Jewish delegation was executed.

## **MORE BLOODSHED**

It took a number of years before Octavian could consolidate all the power to himself. He initially had to share power with two other men and it made the Roman occupation of the East very weak.

The last son of Aristobulus II, Antigonus, fled to the old Persian empire with a large Jewish population. When he realized that the political and military situation had deteriorated in Judea for the Romans, he enlisted the political leadership of the Eastern Jews to amass a Parthian army to invade Judea.

The Roman garrison in Judea was defeated and Antigonus lured Hyrcanus II and Phasaël, a son of Antipater, into his camp to negotiate with them. Herod's older brother committed suicide when he recognized it was a trap and Antigonus cut an ear lobe from his uncle, effectively disqualifying him from being high priest since a high priest could not have any deformities. Hyrcanus II was taken east by the Parthian army.

Antigonus entered Jerusalem victoriously in 40 B.C. and proclaimed himself king and high priest. He took the name of Mattathias and reigned for two short years.

## **HEROD'S COMEBACK**

When Antigonus invited Hyrcanus II and Phasaël to the peace conference, Herod sensed something was amiss and took his family south into the Negev desert. He left

them in a fortress and traveled to Egypt to see Mark Antony, but he had left for Rome and Herod boarded a ship that brought him to the capitol.

Herod was well received by Octavian and Antony and they agreed to make him king over Judea. He was confirmed by the Roman senate and orders were given to the military in Syria to send an army to take control of Judea. Jerusalem was besieged for three months and there was a great slaughter when the Roman army took the city in 37 B.C. Herod begged the Romans to stop killing in order to have some people left to rule, but he did request for Antigonus to be executed, putting an end to the Hasmonaean kings.

Herod I as he was now known feared that Hyrcanus II would return to Jerusalem and depose him. He decided to have Hyrcanus II killed and sent a delegation to Parthia in 36 B.C., inviting the old high priest back to Jerusalem. Hyrcanus II traveled to Jerusalem and in 30 B.C. Herod charged him with plotting to take over Jerusalem with the Nabateans and attempted regicide. With this false accusation, Herod ordered the execution of the 80 years old Hyrcanus II.

## **SUMMARY**

This action-packed message covered a period of 37 years. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit exercised partial control over the different nations, whereas Lucifer pretty much had free reign as his minions played with the people groups.

We should pay close attention to what the apostle Paul said when he wrote about the removal of the Restrainer (Holy Spirit) prior to the Antichrist. **2 Thessalonians 2:6-7**

One thing stands out as we have examined the rulers of different nations; they were all possessed by powerful demons. Murder and betrayal were common. There was no regard for human life. When Caesar and Pompey fought for power, it didn't bother them that 60,000 countrymen died and many were crippled afterwards.

Lucifer was king of the earth in the time before Christ. He did not deviate from the way he ruled the earth prior to Adam and Eve. **Isaiah 14:16-17; Ezekiel 28:16-19; Revelation 12:7-17**

The different Jewish men who held the office as high priests were not holy. They were filled with greed, lusted for power, and possessed by demons. They were not men of prayer and did not live a sanctified life. They were wolves in sheep's clothing that devoured the flock they were supposed to shepherd. **Jeremiah 23:1-2; Ezekiel 34:1-10; 44:6-10**

There was no love of God as Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II were more than happy to battle it out for supremacy.

God preserved a remnant, but the majority of the Jewish men and women were just as bad as the pagans around them. **Isaiah 10:22-23**

***Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!***