

Supplement 2

The Acts of the Apostles

Various Authors
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Jesus Temple Destruction Prophecy and the Wailing Wall

In three of the four gospels Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple, to the last stone.

Matthew 24:1-2 And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to shew him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, 'See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.'

Mark 13:1-2 And as he went forth out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings! And Jesus said unto him, 'Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.'

Luke 21:5-6 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings, he said, 'As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'

And the destruction of Jerusalem to the last stone, in the gospel of Luke

Luke 19:41-44 And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Even the Pharisees of the time knew that after the Messiah, the Temple and the city would be destroyed, in *John 11:47-48* are making a reference to Daniel 9:26.

John 11:47-48 The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? For this man doeth many signs. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

Daniel 9:26 And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and his end shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined.

Even the historian Josephus described the destruction of Jerusalem (not that the Bible needed a backing up).

Now, why is it that many Christians firmly believe that the Wailing Wall was part of the Temple? This is a statement that can imply that Jesus was wrong.

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What Christians believe is that Jesus prophesied the coming literal destruction and that it was fulfilled, and attested by independent historical accounts outside the New Testament. Whether "Not ... one stone upon another" should be interpreted as a metaphor, or whether the Wailing Wall was included in the prophecy was left as a minor debate.

The ESV Study Bible commentary on Matt 24:1-2 says: The road from Jerusalem to Bethany, where Jesus and his disciples stay each evening, takes one alongside the Mount of Olives, which affords a spectacular view of the temple in the distance.

Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the temple was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Roman army under Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. Not ... one stone upon another may be intended as a metaphor for total destruction, or it may be understood as something that was literally fulfilled in the destruction of the temple building itself (but not the entire Temple Mount, some of which remains to this day).

Commentary by Wayne Jackson:

Shortly before his death, Christ informed his disciples that the Jewish temple would be destroyed, and not one stone would be left upon another. Some claim the prophecy failed. What are the facts?

A skeptic recently claimed that Jesus' prophecy regarding the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem has proved false. It is alleged that when the Romans invaded the city, wreaking devastation in A.D. 70, the temple was not totally demolished. Rather, the "Wailing Wall" is standing yet. Thus, supposedly, the Lord's prophecy was not fulfilled.

Temple History

The original temple was constructed in the days of Solomon, but that structure was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587/6 B.C. (2 Kings 25:8-17). When the Jews returned from the Babylonian Captivity (536 B.C.), the project of rebuilding the temple was begun (Ezra 1:1-4). The work was stalled for several years, but finally was completed in 515 B.C., due to the prophetic urging of Zechariah and Haggai (cf. Ezra 6:15). There was some destruction of Jerusalem's walls again in the days of Antiochus IV (169 B.C.).

Herod the Great (who slaughtered the infants in attempting to eradicate Christ—Matthew 2:1ff) reigned from 37-4 B.C. (a calendar error accounts for the 4 B.C.). One of his ambitious projects was to remodel the temple and expand the surrounding area.

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In a confrontation with the Lord near the commencement of his ministry, the Jews claimed the building project had been underway for forty-six years (John 2:20). It is one of the oddities of history that the temple project was not completed until A.D. 64 — just in time to be destroyed six years later as a result of Jewish rebellion.

Herod's enterprise was phenomenal. The king enlarged the platform area around the temple considerably, building massive retaining walls that were filled in with dirt and stone. The walls had huge stones (one measures 39 ft. long by 13 ft. wide). The area enclosed was about 172,000 square yards. The "Wailing Wall" was a part of this retaining system. The Romans invaded Jerusalem in August of A.D. 70, after a five-month siege. A full account of the bloody conflict is found in Josephus (Wars V, VI). The temple was destroyed on the 10th day of the 5th month, according to Jewish tradition — ironically, the same day of the year upon which Nebuchadnezzar had burned down the first temple, some 656 years earlier!

The Alleged Problem

Let us now address the alleged problem in Christ's prophecy. Does the "Wailing Wall" constitute an argument against the accuracy of Christ's prophecy? It does not. First, Jesus' language could have been hyperbolic, simply signifying a complete destruction. Hyperbole is common to all languages as a technique for matters of great emphasis. Second, this wall actually was a part of Herod's "platform" project to extend the temple compound area. It was not related to the temple structure itself; the disciples asked about the "buildings," not the city walls.

In his book, *The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), Harold Mare, former president of the Near East Archaeological Society, notes: "We do not have any remains of the Herodian temple itself because of the devastating Roman destruction in A.D. 70" (p. 141; emp. WJ).

Another scholar declares: "Strictly speaking, the Temple proper is not a matter of archaeological consideration since only one stone from it and parts of another can be positively identified" (H.T. Frank, *An Archaeological Companion to the Bible*, London: SCM Press, 1972, p. 249). That "one stone" was from the small wall separating the Court of the Gentiles from the sacred compound.

Jesus prophesied correctly!

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Commentary by Norma Robertson

I am often asked the question, "How can you say the Temple was on the Temple Mount when Jesus said not one stone will be upon another? Those walls sure are a lot of stones one upon another." That was put into the minds of a lot of people by Dr. E Martin and now by Bob Cornuke repeating Martin's words. So, they claim the Temple Mount was all Fort Antonia.

I have a few things to say about that. Firstly, Jesus never said anything about the walls, just the buildings. But, that aside, the huge rectangle Temple Mount, with 4 walls all the same height that we see today, are not the walls that actually remained standing after the 70 AD destruction.

What beautiful buildings were they speaking of to Jesus? Herod's Temple. The beautiful white stones he used to build the temple and outer buildings. Jesus was not being shown the walls of the Mount, only the buildings that Herod built.

Jesus was being specific. "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another. By 30 AD the Herodians had built the Temple and all the buildings of the Temple court and the Woman's court, and also Fort Antonia, but Herod the Great died in 4 BC, long before the Southern section of the west wall of the Temple Mount was built. Coins in an old mikveh were found under the foundation stones deep below Robinson's Arch that were dated from 17-18 AD. So, it was Herod's son and grandson that slowly, over the next 70 years, finished building the west wall and also the last court of Herod's Temple called the lower court, according to Josephus. The Lower Court was called "lower" because it was built on a lower part of the hill. The Lower Court contained Herod's Royal Stoa, which was 600 feet long. The work on this lower court was not finished until 66 AD, 36 years after Jesus was crucified. I doubt they had even built the foundation of the lower court when Jesus walked in the Temple. He walked in the lower southern court that had been there since the time of Solomon within those ancient walls (pre-Herodian extended southern court and walls). The lower court with the Royal Stoa on the Ophel was knocked down or disassembled after the destruction of 70 AD.

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What is a retaining wall and why is it still standing?

In this case of the west wall, the retaining wall is part of the construction of a new western court of the Temple. There had never been a western court because Solomon built to the edge of the Tyropoeon Valley. To create a western court The Herodians had to start building the foundations for the wall in the depths of that valley. Behind the wall are arches upon arches in layers. This was done to bring the new west court up to the ground level of the Temple/Priest's court. In the photo below I've marked out where the old Herodian stones, that weren't thrown over, ends. This shows us where the ground level of the Mount was in 70 AD. Only the stones that were above ground level could be thrown down, which they were, but any stones below ground level couldn't be thrown down. So, after the destruction of 70 AD there was no wall above ground level. It was like a plain, as Jesus prophesied it would be.

In 134 AD the Roman Emperor, Hadrian, began building his Temple of Jupiter on the bare Temple Mount. He built a few rows of wall above the Herodian retaining wall and above that the Muslim's continued to build the wall even higher.

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As we round the Southwest corner the ground level stays high but then drops down. This is because the ground level dropped.

Below the red line are Herodian stones and above the red line are Hadrian stones and above the blue line are Muslim stones. These Herodian stones couldn't be thrown over, meaning it was ground level; this is because this is where the Temple was located. The southern wall we see today was actually the inner wall of the sacred area, which included the Temple court, Priest court, Men's court and Women's court.

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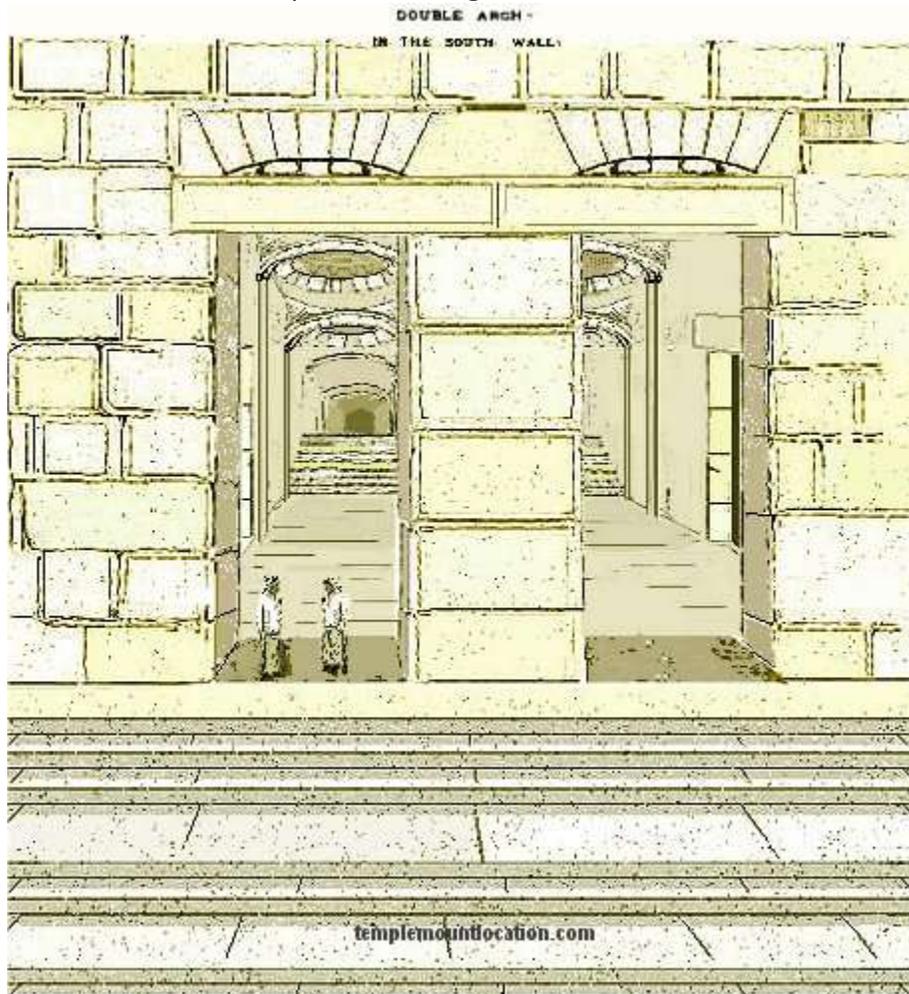


So, after the destruction of 70 AD all a person would have seen of the walls when viewing the Temple Mount was all the retaining stones below the red line on the above photo. As for the rest of the Temple area, and the Temple itself, and Fort Antonia, they were laid even to the ground. As Josephus wrote; you couldn't even tell a Temple had ever been there.

The gate, called Double Gate on Warren's map, was once the location of what Josephus called the Upper Gate. This gate is mostly covered up by the crusader building built against the southern wall (see above photo). This gate still has some Herodian stones at the entrance and arch of the gate. There are steps with the height of 22 feet where one would walk up and then enter the upper gate to make a sacrifice. Inside the upper gate were eleven marble steps that brought one up to the level of the actual threshing floor where the altar was located. Because the threshing floor was set back from the entrance of Upper Gate, this allowed the stones of the walls on either side of the gate to be thrown down.

Double gate (Upper Gate)

Notice in the illustration the 11 steps within the gate.



The women's court was also at the same level as Upper Gate. Therefore, the stones in that area could be thrown over; all except the bottom row of the wall, which remains today. That row was part of the lower retaining walls.

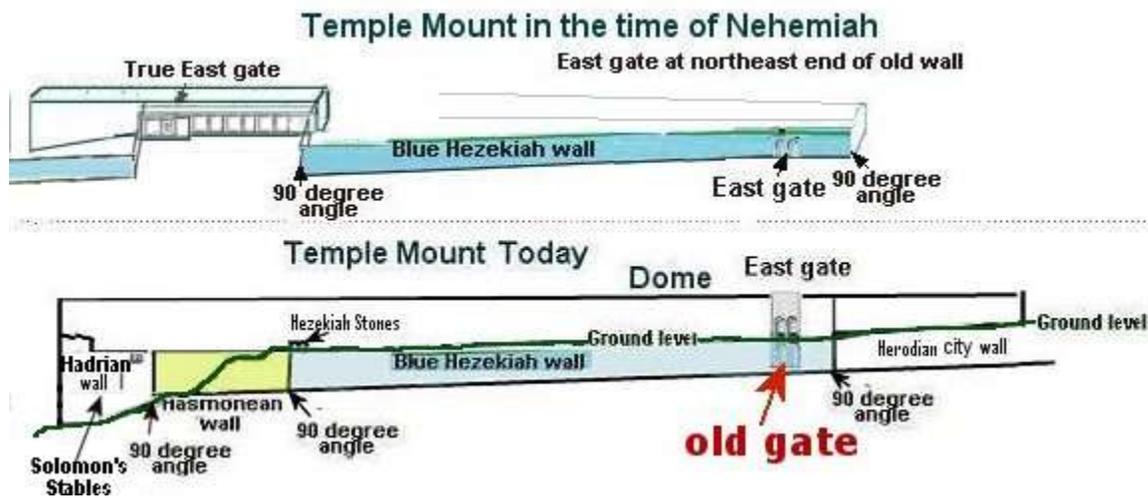
What about the east wall?

Jesus was looking at an east wall built by Solomon, because Herod refused to let his masons rebuild that ancient work, because of the great time and expense involved. (Josephus Flavius Ant. 20:9, section 7) "These cloisters belonged to the outer court (Woman's court), and were situated in a deep valley, and had walls that reached four hundred cubits [in length], and were built of square and very white stones, the length of each of which stones was twenty cubits, and their height six cubits. This was the work of King Solomon, who first of all built the entire temple. But king Agrippa, who had the care of the temple committed to him by Claudius Caesar, considering that it is easy to demolish any building, but hard to build it up again, and that it was particularly hard to do it to these cloisters, which would require a considerable time, and great sums of money, he denied the petitioners their request about that matter."

This is saying the Solomon's porch and Solomon's east wall remained intact. The Herodians just extended it to the north and to the south as they extended the north and south courts. Josephus, when giving measurements of the Temple complex looking at it from the east, called the east wall "Solomon's wall". That 400-cubit (a standard Greek cubit of 18" 400cu = 600') wall cannot be seen today. Part of the 400 cubits was the lower/southern court. The whole Lower Court was burned and thrown down after 70 AD. It was located on the Ophel. All of the fragments of the Royal Stoa were found on the Ophel during the excavations of Benjamin Mazar, which is hard to explain if a person doesn't know the Temple compound went beyond the southern wall of the Temple Mount we see today. When I first started this work I remember, seeing an old news item with a quote by B. Mazar saying "I believe I have found a 600-foot building on the Ophel". I have not seen that quote since then. What this means is that he found hundreds of fragments, spread over 600 feet that were from one building. In this case it was fragments from the Herodian Royal Stoa.

Here is a diagram of the east wall today. It was a city wall. The Temple sat back from the city wall. In the time of Jesus only the yellow and blue walls existed.

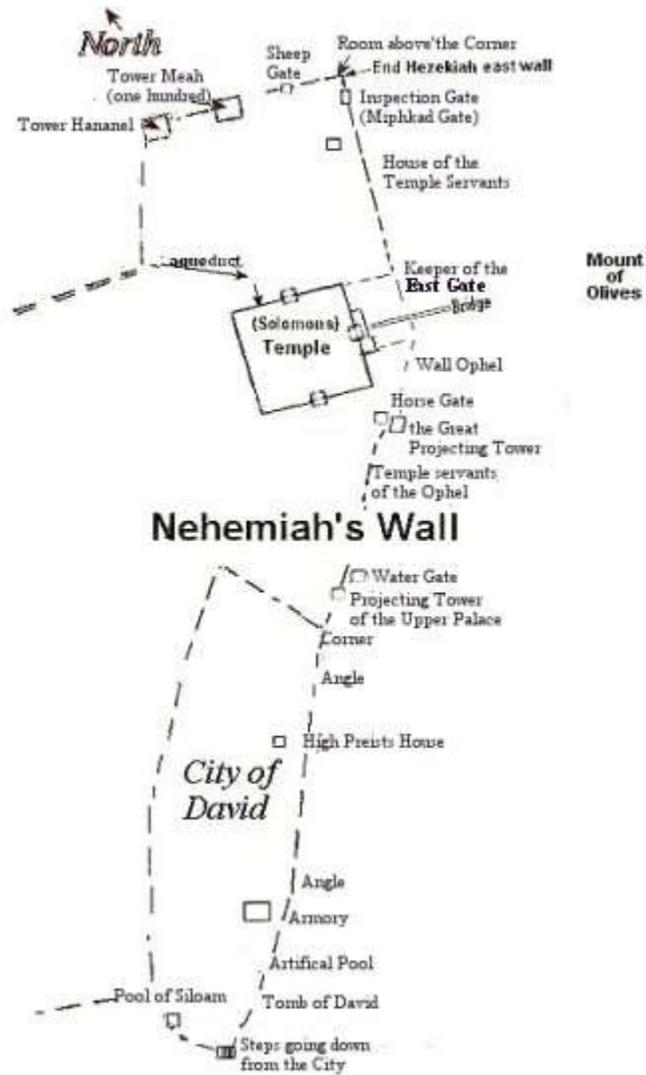
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Hadrian used recycled Herodian stones to build Solomon's Stables (named that by the Crusaders in the 10th century). This created the Southeast corner. When Jesus and some of the disciples were looking at the Temple from the Mount of Olives they saw the upper diagram Blue wall of Hezekiah, along with the extended Hasmonean wall (in Yellow) built around 160 BC. The entire wall above the Hasmonean and Hezekiah wall, was built by the Romans, including the east gate they call the Golden Gate (above the old gate). Above the Roman stones are the courses of Muslim stones. Everyone who has studied knows this Gate was not built by Herod!

The high east wall of today's Temple Mount began as a low City wall that Nehemiah rebuilt. He described the city wall all around Jerusalem (see scripture). That wall was not a wall of the Temple. In fact, Nehemiah did not rebuild any of the Temple walls, only the city walls.

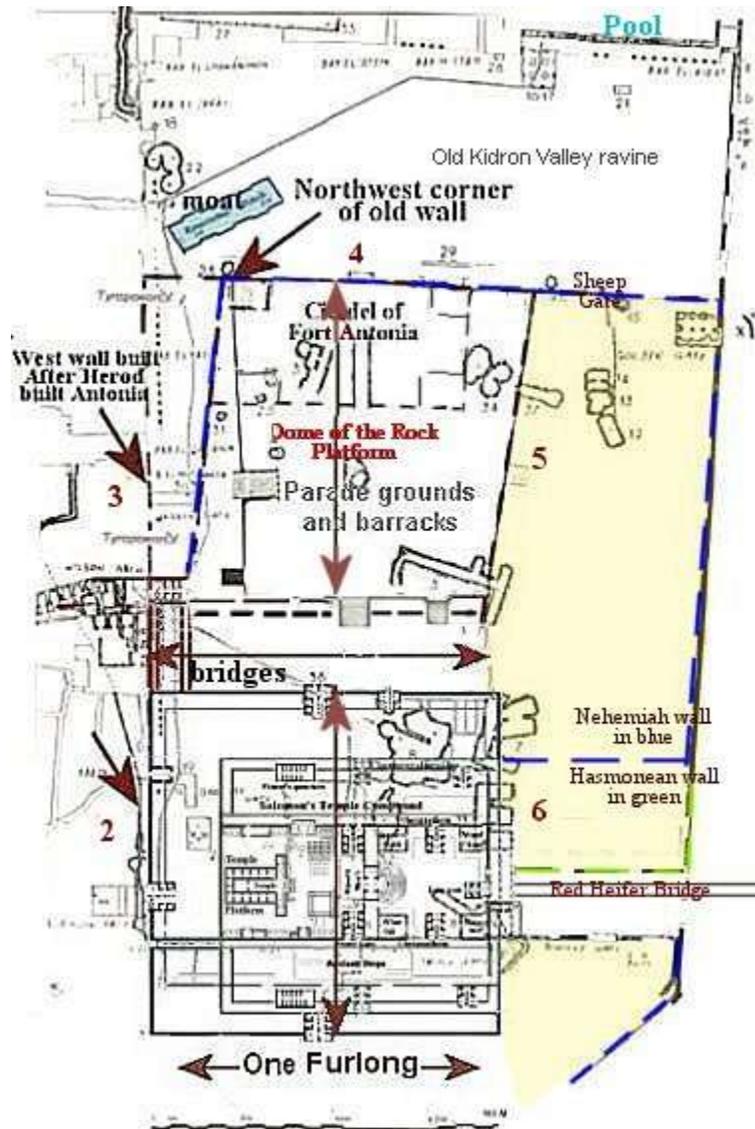
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So how did the Temple Mount become the huge rectangle it is today?

We can thank the Roman Emperor Hadrian for that piece of handy work. I am sure you have heard that the whole Temple Mount was Fort Antonia. That is not true. Fort Antonia only took up a portion of it. Josephus tells us that the Temple and Fort Antonia together measured six furlong around. A furlong is approximately 600 feet, making the combined Temple and Fort Antonia complex 600' x 1200' altogether. We know the Temple was 600 x 600 feet, but Fort Antonia area was approximately 600 x 500 feet with around 100 feet between the Fort and the Temple. The Fort occupied the elevated platform of the Dome of the Rock area. Josephus tells us that Herod built a low wall around the top of the Mountain and filled it in with dirt and covered it with flagstone and there they built the fortress. The Fort overlooked the Temple and the Temple overlooked the city.

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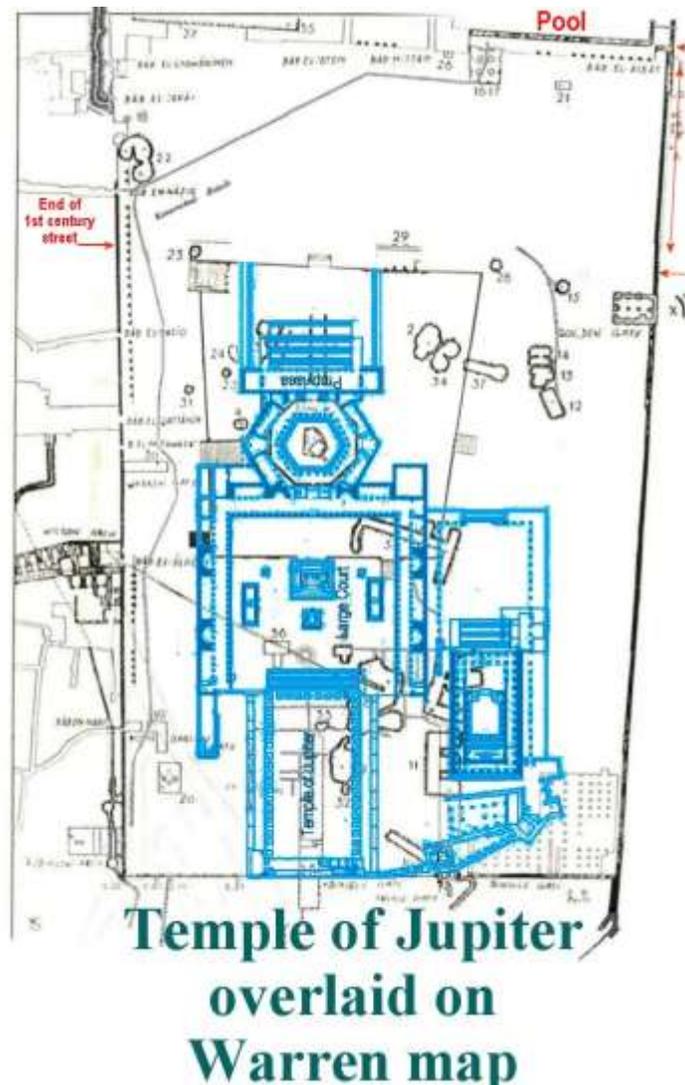


The Temple platform was about 30 feet lower on the mountain than Fort Antonia

In 135 AD Hadrian began the building of a new city, and began work on his Temple of Jupiter. At first the remaining Jews thought he was going to rebuild their Temple and were actually helping him. When they found out he wasn't, they rebelled. If you read Josephus you would understand that Fort Antonia was built on a hill that was 75 foot high, whereas, the Temple was built at a lower elevation on the mountain, on the threshing floor. That is what Hadrian had to deal with. He needed a huge flat surface for his temple complex.

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This is the design of Hadrian's Jupiter temple complex in Lebanon (in blue) laid over Warren's map.



No North Wall found?

If we look at the northern section of the West wall, on Warren's map above, you will notice that there is no Northwest wall at all, and according to Sir Charles Warren he could find no trace of a North wall either. Its border is determined by the wall of the ancient Pool of Israel. The suburbs, called New City by Josephus, had a land bridge connecting it to the eastern ridge so the Jews cut a moat to separate the two hills. The foss of that moat can still be seen on this map north of

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the Dome of the Rock platform labeled "Excavated Ditch". This means the real northern wall was in the same place as the Nehemiah wall, cutting across the mount west to east, along the north end of the Dome of the Rock platform.

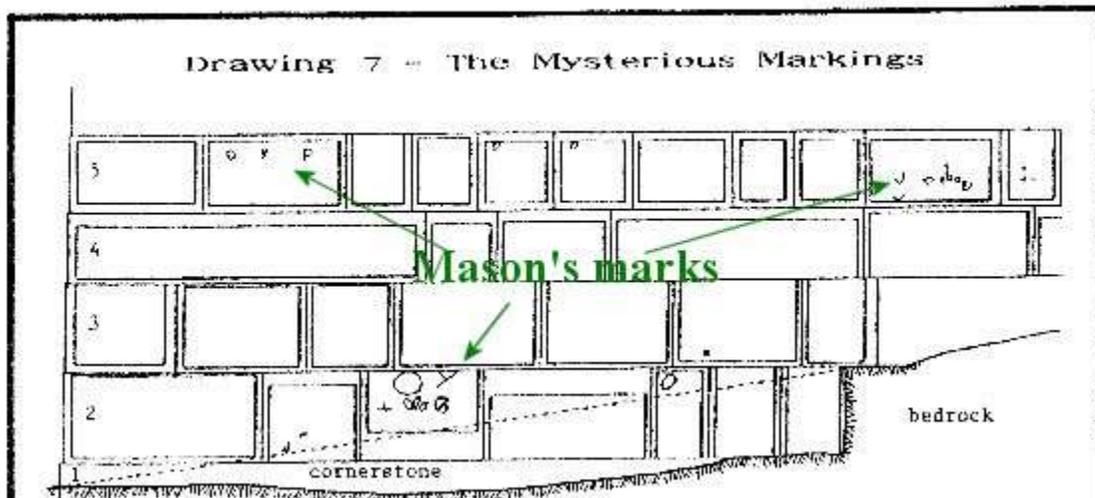
Actually, the Herodian west wall does not go beyond the end of the first century Herodian street, which is opposite the north end of the Dome of the Rock platform.

On the east, the northern part of the east wall, starting shortly after the eastern gate and meeting up with the Pool wall to the north, is part of the third city wall built by Herod Agrippa II. This falsely gives the appearance of a Northeast corner.

What about Solomon's Stables and the Southeast corner?



Not only was the SE corner, all the way to the straight joint, not built by the Herodians, but was actually built of mismatched, recycled, Herodian stones, as we can see in this diagram drawn by Charles Warren. Cap. Warren, in the 1800's, dug a 90 foot shaft to examine the SE section of the east wall. Here is what he found.



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As you can see it is not the beautiful wall of the Herodian builders, but mismatch stone work. The margins around a Herodian stone were chiseled by stonecutters after the wall was built. Because of this all the stones in his wall had matching margins. Not one stone in this part of the southeast corner matches another. That means that the terraced arches of Solomon's Stables was most likely built by Hadrian in 135 AD for the purpose of creating a SE corner at level needed to be able to build his Temple of Jupiter complex.

Triple Gate and Double gate Halls, on Warren's map, were also used for this purpose. The rest of the southern section of the Temple Mount is filled in with fill dirt and rubble, as Warren tells us in his report. (what Warren calls "made earth") What Warren didn't realize is that the threshing floor lay beneath that fill dirt.

Greek and Roman Meteorology

By Liba Taub

August 8, 2017

I've lived in England for about 20 years and ever since I moved here English people have been telling me that weather is one of their very favorite topics of discussion. It turns out that in Ancient Greece and Rome people were interested in weather as well. In fact, the people who were probably the earliest scientists in Greece, the ancient Pre-Socratic natural philosophers, apparently also had quite a bit to say about weather too. They were interested in understanding what causes weather phenomena. The Greek word "meteora" refers to lofty things, to things that are high up. It's that word from which our modern word "meteorology" derives. It turns out though for the Ancient Greeks that the study of meteorology didn't only include what we would call weather phenomena (things like snow, rain, hail, wind), but also included some things that we would regard as astronomical phenomena. For example, comets, but also geological or seismological phenomena; this includes earthquakes. The main way that we know that such an extensive list of natural phenomena were included in the study of meteorology is that when we go to Aristotle's work called "The Meteorology", he tells us at the very beginning exactly what the work studies, and he gives us a very long list of the things I just mentioned and more.

Now, Aristotle's work on meteorology is the earliest full text that survived on the topic from Antiquity. But we know from reading his work that many of his predecessors were interested in meteorological phenomena as well. It's one of the interesting things about reading Aristotle: he gives us a little bit of a history of meteorology, as well as giving his own ideas about meteorological phenomena as well. It turns out when we turn to the very earliest Greek texts, the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems, there are quite a bit of weather in those poems as well. When we read the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Theogony, it looks as if weather is in the control of gods. We see this not only in written texts (these poems), we also see it on vase paintings, Greek vases, we also see it sometimes in statues as well. So, for instance, the Statue of Zeus throwing a thunderbolt. We also find in an early work, one by Hesiod ("Works and Days"), something that looks like a very brief form of weather calendar or farmer's almanac. It turns out that it is probably the prototype, the earliest example of just that – a farmer's almanac, giving us an indication of what we should be doing and when. I would argue that even the depiction of weather phenomena as being under the control of Gods is offering a type of explanation of how weather happens. It doesn't just happen – the Gods are in control of it.

I think, one of the things that really distinguishes the Greek natural philosophers' approach to explaining weather and other meteorological phenomena, including earthquakes, is that they in

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their explanations they wrest control of these phenomena out of the hands of the Gods and instead offer rational, natural explanations. They emphasize that, for instance, thunder and lightning is not due to the Gods. They may believe that Gods exist, but the Gods are not causing the weather. So, for instance, if we look at Epicurus's 'Letter to Pythocles', in which he talks at length about weather phenomena, meteorological phenomena. He makes it very clear that we can have a rational understanding of weather, but it is not due to the Gods. In fact, in Epicurus's worldview the Gods are too busy to be bothered with something as mundane as weather. The Ancient Greeks had explanations that were based on nature for how weather happens. Some of the philosophers, like Epicurus, like Theophrastus, seem to be content with coming up with several alternative possible explanations of different causes for weather phenomena. They were happy with an idea that, in principle, we can explain these phenomena naturally. It doesn't matter whether or not we have one explanation, or the right explanation. This is an interesting approach, I think, to doing science, to explaining nature.

When we look at some of the Hellenistic philosophers after Aristotle, philosophers like Epicurus and the Stoics, part of their aim in doing natural philosophy, in explaining nature was to provide people with a way of feeling, of a sense of calmness, of being free from worry. And they're very explicit about that. And, of course, if you're worried that you're going to be hit by lightning, or if you find thunder very frightening, or if you're worried about torrential rain and you think it's in the hands of the Gods, you may be very worried and feel uncomfortable. But Epicurus, for example, suggests that we don't need to worry about these things – they just happen naturally. And so we shouldn't worry about the Gods.

Not all of the people who wrote about weather were interested explaining it. Some of the Ancient Greeks and Romans were interested in predicting weather, in being able to know what if there was going to be a lot of rain, if there was going to be a lack of rain, how this, for instance, might affect a harvest, etc. And this harkens back to Hesiod's 'Calendar', 'Almanac' and the "Works and Days". And we actually see a very interesting array of calendars that correlate astronomical phenomena with weather phenomena. And we also see many examples of what we might call a farmer's almanac as well, we see them being collected by Ptolemy, the astronomer, who was very interested in this sort of astrometeorological calendar. We also see them in the writings of the Roman agricultural authors, the agronomers. It shouldn't surprise us that farmers are interested in the weather. And Pliny the Elder, who wrote "The Natural History", recounts a story that some merchants actually used weather predictions to help them set the prices for cloaks that they would be selling. If it was predicted to be a harsh winter then they knew that they could raise the price for their cloaks and gain more money. It's interesting because Aristotle tells us in one of his works that Thales of Miletus was the first person who attempted to explain nature, to understand nature. So, in Aristotle's view by our understanding of the word "scientist" Thales of Miletus would be the first scientist.

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Aristotle also tells us a story that Thales used his astronomical knowledge to be able to predict that there was going to be a particularly good grape harvest one year. He thought this was going to happen, and in advance of this grape harvest he bought all of the wine presses to get his hands on. And he made a lot of money renting out these wine presses to other people, who had not predicted such a good harvest. Now, Aristotle is a little bit disparaging of what Thales did, because he said he'd only created a monopoly. But I think that we see here also an early account of someone using weather prediction in a way that's very practical and also economic. For those of us who are interested in understanding how Ancient Greek and Roman people tried to cope with weather of all sorts, there remain a number of texts and also a number of different artifacts, including stone inscriptions that are weather calendars that need to be studied more than they have been. I mentioned Aristotle's meteorology. I don't think that there are many people who study Aristotle's philosophy, who have actually read the work, much less – studied it in detail. There are, of course, exceptions to that, but I would like to encourage and emphasize that there are many works on meteorological phenomena: some of them are prose work, some of them are poetry, and that they're out there and they're waiting for us to study and to learn more about, what the Ancient Greeks and Romans thought about and had to do with trying to understand and control weather.

One of the questions that I'm often asked when people know that I'm interested in Ancient Greek and Roman meteorology, they ask me, whether or not people were able to predict the weather any better than we are today. And I say that we actually have quite a lot of evidence about weather predictions, for instance, being linked to birds, for instance, and different signs of nature, weather signs indicating what weather will be coming, but we don't have any accounts to my knowledge of people saying; "Yep, I got that right".

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History and Culture of Israel in the 1st Century

By Salem Acuff

January 11, 2023

Political Setting

- The Roman government practiced **syncretism**, accepting that all religious beliefs, philosophical teachings, and government systems are ultimately compatible, or a reflection of, a larger system – the Roman system. They practiced one of the first “one country, two systems” policies – pronouncing that all people had religious freedom, political freedom, and freedom of thought, yet maintaining strict control.
- The Jews held much distrust and often hatred for the Roman Empire. Do you recall what King Herod did to the baby boys in Bethlehem? (Matthew 2:6) Herod was also responsible for placing forbidden idols within the Jewish temple.
- Jewish citizens were under the authority of the Jewish court system (the Sanhedrin), yet all rulings for the death penalty were sent to the Roman government.
- The Jewish religious and governing system was divided between two parties: the Pharisees – the ‘people’s party’, taught the law and traditions of Israel’s patriarchs, and were strictly conforming to Jewish law; and the Sadducees – the wealthy and conservative leaders who rejected the traditions in favor of political and religious cooperation with the Romans.

Economic Setting

- The economy of first century Israel was supported by three key segments: agriculture of olives, figs, grains, dates, and vineyards; trade fostered by Israel’s key location on the Mediterranean Sea; and large government building projects sponsored by King Herod.
- There was a very large disparity between rich and poor.
- **Upper Class**- made up of the temple priests and priestly aristocracy
- **Middle Class**- comprised of traders and merchants, artisans (stonecutters, masons, sculptors) and craftsman (metal, wood, cloth dye). The Pharisees (another Jewish sect), sages, scribes, and teachers were also a part of the middle class. Jesus family would have been middle class citizens.

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- **Low Class-** made of laborers (weavers, stone carriers, slaves [non-Jewish person taken into slavery because of debt]), and the unemployable (lepers, blind, insane, crippled, etc.)
- The Roman government required heavy taxation of its people. Farmers would be taxed up to 50% of their salary. This does not include the sacrifices that were required to be made at the temple.
- During the first century, the temple courtyards had often become a marketplace – local merchants would sell sacrificial animals at excessive cost in order to turn a profit from the tourists or religious seekers that would come to the temple.

Cultural Setting

- Language- The common language in the Roman Empire was Greek. However, at the time it was common for Jews to also use Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin. Jesus' everyday language was Aramaic.
- Village Life- The hub of a village was the marketplace and shops. And for a Jewish village, the synagogue was a central meeting place, and the seat of the local Jewish government.
- Houses were all purpose 1-2 room squares, with dirt floors, flat roofs, low and narrow doorways, and front wooden doors. Often people would sleep on flat roofs during hot nights. The houses were arranged around a central shared courtyard where neighbors performed daily chores (cooking, laundry, etc.) in each other's company. Water was carried in from a public well and stored in a courtyard cistern. Lighting was provided by earthenware oil lamps. People slept on mats, and owned limited personal goods.
- Milk and meat could not be stored together. Jews had a great deal of emphasis on their beliefs and traditions. One such tradition is the dietary restrictions known as kashrut, also known as keeping kosher.
- Jews ate only two meals, breakfast and dinner.
- Salt was important, and valuable, in Jesus' time. It made food less bland. It also preserved foods. That was why salt was so valuable. It made foods storable. Romans even traded with it. There is a saying in the Bible about salt.
- Most foods were boiled or stewed in a big pot and seasoned with salt, onions, garlic, cumin, coriander, mint, dill, and mustard. Food was sweetened with wild honey or syrups from dates or grapes. Food was generally served in a common bowl and eaten by dipping in with the fingers

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- A man wearing only a inner garment was said to be naked (e.g., 1 Samuel 19:24, Isaiah 20:2–4).
- The biblical expression “to gird up the loins” meant to put on the belt, thus freeing the lower legs to permit work and easy walking. The expression signified that the person was ready for service; it is largely equivalent to the modern expression, “roll up your sleeves.”
- The Outer Tunic was worn as a protective covering; people did not go out in public without some sort of outer tunic. Jewish men had tassels (called *tzitzit*) attached to the corners of their mantles, reminding them of the constant presence of the Lord’s commandments.
- General Physique: Most Jews were fairly small in stature, light-skinned but tanned from sun. Most had black or brown hair worn long, and most men wore beards
- Family Structure: The husband was the spiritual and legal head of the house. Children were instructed early to honor their parents. A Jewish family lived by very strict moral, social and religious rules. Parents, unmarried children, and a married son and spouse would often all live under one roof.
- Jesus’ Family life: Joseph (Jesus’ father) was a carpenter, making their family a part of the middle class.

Religious Setting

- The **Pharisees** were rabbis who believed the Temple was unnecessary and Torah was the most important aspect of Jewish life. They worshipped in synagogues, interpreted the Torah, and most notably, believed in the importance of oral law (Torah she’bal peh). This group believed that God gave us instructions orally at Mt. Sinai, and those laws were just as important as the laws written in the Torah. The Pharisees were the lower class citizens and lived in the worst conditions in Jerusalem. Finally, the Pharisees didn’t really like living under Roman rule. The Pharisees’ Judaism is what we practice today, as we can’t make sacrifices at the Temple and instead we worship in synagogues.
- The **Sadducees** were the wealthy upper class who were involved with the priesthood. They completely rejected oral law, and unlike the Pharisees, their lives revolved around the Temple. The Sadducees’ job was to make sacrifices and maintain the Temple’s purity. Although the Sadducees were the most involved with the Temple, they were also the most Hellenized Jews, and respected Greco-Roman civilization and rule. The Pharisees and Sadducees made up the Sanhedrin, a council of seventy men who made all the

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decisions for the Jews. The tie-breaker was the high priest, who was called the nasee. In modern Hebrew, nasee means president.

- The third sect, **the Essenes**, actually left Jerusalem to live in a kibbutz-like compound in Qumran (near the Dead Sea). Their secluded desert community was dedicated to prayer and study in preparation for the return of the Messiah. They were obsessed with purifying themselves for the Messiah, and constantly went in the mikvah, the Jewish ritual bath. We were able to see the Dead Sea Scrolls which were used by the Essenes. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Qumran and are the oldest copies of the Tanakh ever discovered. It was so cool to see how far back our traditions go, and to be able to pick out the familiar letters on the scrolls.
- Finally, the **Sikarim** were zealots who completely opposed Roman rule. The Sikarim were ready to kill all the Romans and any Jews who didn't help them overthrow the Romans. The word "sikarim" actually means "little dagger"; this group was named for the daggers that they would use to kill people. Josephus described them as a bunch of bandits and robbers. He opposed this group and the feeling was mutual. The Zealots spoke of Josephus as being a traitor. The most famous story involving the Fourth Philosophy was their stand atop the mountain of Masada. In this story, eight hundred Jews committed suicide rather than being taken alive by the Romans.

Educational Setting

- For the first century Jew, religion, law, history, ethics and education were inseparable. Through both written (Torah) and oral (Mishna) law, teaching was passed from generation to generation. Rabbi's (teachers) and synagogues were highly esteemed aspects of society.
- Young Jewish boys started formal education at the age of 5, learning to read and write. At age 10, boys would start to learn the Jewish law. Formal education was complete by age 18. Young girls would learn at home from their mothers and other women. Young men were educated by a Rabbi (teacher) from the local synagogue.
- At the highest level of education, a scholar would go to a great or renowned teacher and become a disciple, often learning through daily discussions and activities. These men were known according to who their teachers were– "from the school of...."
- Jesus studied at the synagogue – in one instance when Jesus was 12 years old as recorded in Jesus' biography by Luke, the author says "*They (Jesus' parents) found him (Jesus) in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.*" (Luke 2:46-47)

The Latin Language

By J. E. Lowe

1923

There was once a language called Indo-European, also known as Indo-Germanic and Aryan. Latin is considered to be one of the oldest Indo-European languages. The Indo-European language family includes Greek, Sanskrit, and Germanic languages. Indo-European is now lost; but we know more or less what it was like from a comparison of the daughter languages of which Indo-European was the mother. Two of these languages were Greek and Latin, which exhibit as many curious similarities and differences as we should expect to find between two sisters.

For example, where Latin has an initial *s*, Greek has an aspirated vowel—e.g., the Latin for six is *sex*, the Greek, (*hex*); cf. English sextant and hexagon. Again, where Latin has the voiced labial (*b*), Greek has the unvoiced (*p*): thus, Latin *sub* (under) = Greek *viro* (*hupo*); Latin *expello* (expel) = Greek (*ekballo*), etc.

Latin was the language spoken by the Latins, who were the inhabitants of Latium, a province of Italy of which Rome was the capital. In very early days Italy was made up of several different states, which were always at war with one another; each state spoke its own dialect or patois. Gradually the Romans gained the upper hand in Italy, and imposed the Roman or Latin dialect upon the tribes they conquered. Thus Latin became the language of all Italy, and finally of the Roman provinces, such as Gaul, Spain, Africa, and Asia Minor.

In its early stages the Latin language was heavy, clumsy, and uncouth. There are some curious examples of this old Latin (it is called *prisca latinitas*) still to be seen on ancient statues, tombstones, etc. Greece was far ahead of Italy in learning and culture.

About the middle of the third century B.C., a Greek named Livius Andronicus was taken prisoner in war, and brought to Rome to act as tutor to the children of some of the leading men there. This Livius Andronicus, although he was a Greek, was the first to attempt any serious composition in Latin. He translated several plays from the Greek, as well as the Homeric poem, the *Odyssey*.

Under the influence of Andronicus, a literary circle was formed at Rome, and gradually plays, poems, and prose works were produced in Latin, but always modeled on Greek originals. (Satire

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was the only kind of writing which was essentially a Roman production.) In the hands of this literary circle the Latin language soon became less clumsy and uncouth, as each new writer aimed at greater refinement and polish. But the mass of the Roman people cared more about fighting and farming than about literature, and continued to speak the old rough Latin.

Thus it came about that from the time of Livius Andronicus, two kinds of Latin existed side by side: the Latin of the literary and cultured classes, called *sermo urbanus*, or the language of the town, and the Latin of the ordinary people, called *sermo vulgaris*.

The first century B.C. is known as the Golden Age of Latin Literature. In this period Cicero, orator, statesman and philosopher, brought literary Latin to its zenith, and developed a prose style which became at once the envy and despair of all subsequent Latin authors. No writing, either before or since, has had such a powerful and lasting influence upon the prose style of the literature of Western Europe. The greatest poet of the Golden Age was Vergil, author of the *Aeneid*, an epic poem which became the Bible, as it were, of the pagan Romans. To this age belong, also, the poets Horace, Propertius, and Ovid, the historian Livy, and the famous general Julius Caesar, who has left us Commentaries on his two great wars.

The Golden Age, which ended, roughly, with the death of the Emperor Augustus in A.D. 14, gave place to what is known as the Silver Age. In this period the literature lacked both deep feeling and spontaneity; style developed at the expense of matter, and a brilliant artificiality replaced the purity of the Golden Age.

By the second century a new influence had crept in: it had become fashionable to talk Greek. Even the children of the upper classes learnt to chatter it with their Greek nurses. Thus literary Latin began to die out, though the mass of the people still continued to use the *sermo vulgaris*.

It is this *sermo vulgaris* which finally developed into the different European dialects which we now call Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Roumanian, and so on. For example, the literary Latin word for a horse is *equus*; but the common word was "*caballus*," from which, we get *caballo* in Spanish, *cavallo* in Italian and Portuguese, *cheval* in French, *cal* in Roumanian, and such derivatives as *cavalry*, *cavalier*, *cavalcade*, etc., in English. These different dialects were known as the Romance (or Roman) languages, and a romance was originally merely a story written in one of these dialects.

The language of the early Church was Greek; thus we find that the New Testament and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers were all in Greek and not Latin. It is in Africa that Ecclesiastical

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or Church Latin first developed. The inhabitants of that country had learnt to speak the *sermo vulgaris*, or common Latin; they did not understand Greek. About A.D. 160 Tertullian was born at Carthage, and was converted to Christianity about the year 197. He first wrote in Greek, but soon abandoned it in favour of Latin, in order that he might be understood by the common people. His Latin is a mixture of the literary Latin, which was taught in the schools, and the *sermo vulgaris*. He coined a great many new words.

By the third century a Latin translation of the Bible was in circulation, and St. Augustine tells us that everybody who possessed a Greek manuscript tried his hand at turning it into Latin. Thus the need for one authoritative Latin version became imperative.

Towards the end of the fourth century Pope Damasus commissioned St. Jerome, the leading scholar of the day, to bring out a new Latin edition of the Bible. This was the famous Vulgate, which was finished in the year 405. It marked the end of ancient Latin, and the complete establishment of mediaeval Latin. From this time onward Latin became the universal language not only of the Church, but also of the State. Scholars of all nationalities could meet and converse without difficulty, since in Latin they had a common language. Thus we find, for example, Erasmus coming to England at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and finding a place at once in the friendship of such men as More, Colet, Grocin, and Charnock, though he knew no word of English. (Erasmus held the living of Aldington in Kent, but resigned it in 1512 because he could not discharge the duties of a parish priest, owing to his inability to speak the language.)

The Latin which is taught in schools to-day is the literary Latin of the Golden Age: we call it Classical Latin. Ecclesiastical Latin differs from it chiefly in being much nearer to the *sermo vulgaris*, and is, therefore, not so artificially refined and polished as the *sermo urbanus*. But by the end of the fifth century "the Latin speech that was rhetorical, unsympathetic, and hard, had been softened by emotion, lifted on the wings of prophecy, made something with a soul in it, and a sacred tongue." (Canon Barry, "The Holy Latin Tongue." *The Dublin Review*, April, 1906.)

The chief writers of Ecclesiastical Latin are Tertullian (second century), St. Cyprian (third century), Lactantius and St. Ambrose (fourth century), St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Leo the Great (fifth century), the Venerable Bede (eighth century), St. Bernard (twelfth century), St. Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century), and Thomas a Kempis (fifteenth century).

The Greek Language

By GreekBoston.com

2022

One thing that is fascinating about the Greek language is that when you look at the Indo-European language chart, Greek stands on its own. Nearly every language in that family, whether it is Latin or Germanic, developed into other languages over time. For example, Spanish, French, and Italian, were derived from Latin.

Yes, the Greek language has its own branch of the Indo-European language tree. However, that doesn't mean that the language itself hasn't changed and evolved since ancient times. What follows is an overview of the history of the Greek language.

Mycenaean Civilization

The earliest surviving texts of the Greek language can be traced to the Mycenaean Civilization around 1300 BC. Once this civilization collapsed, the Linear B script of the Greek language pretty much disappeared. It was then replaced by writing inspired by the Phoenicians.

Ancient Greek Classical Period

During the Classical Period of Ancient Greece, the language developed into several dialects. The two major dialects of that time period were called Ionic and Attic. Attic was spoken in the Athenian city-state. Eventually, the two dialects morphed into a form of Greek known as the Attic-Ionic dialect.

Hellenistic Greek

During the Hellenistic period, the Greek language developed into what we now know as Biblical Greek. This is the Greek language with which certain parts of the New Testament were written. Prior to that, however, Hellenistic Greek was the language spoken during Alexander the Great's time. He spread the language so far east that it was adapted by most of the ancient world as a second language. This dialect of Greek is also referred to as "Koine".

Backlash against Koine

During the "Koine" period of the Greek language, there were people who longed for the classical period. They held the Attic dialect as the highest standard of Greek. This developed

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into a period known as “Atticism”. This movement greatly influenced Greek literature and continues to do so to this day.

Byzantine Greek

Directly following Hellenistic Greek and Atticism, Byzantine Greek took place during the rule of the Byzantine Empire. This empire began when Constantinople was established in 330 AD and fell in 1453 AD when the Turks defeated the city. Today, Constantinople is known as Istanbul. This led the Greeks into a dark period of Ottoman rule that lasted four hundred years.

Modern Greek

During the Ottoman rule over the Greeks, the language slowly evolved into the Greek that we know today. It is interesting to note that the island of Crete managed to prevent the Ottoman Empire from controlling them until 1669 AD. Modern Greek folk literature can be traced to the poetry and literature that came from this island prior to their occupation.

After the Ottoman Empire fell in 1830, the Greek people sought to establish their standard Greek dialect. The Greek dialects spoken in Athens and the Peloponnese became the standardized language spoken in modern Greece. However, even now, the language continues to change and evolve – especially with outside cultural influence being more prevalent.

History and Evolution of Greek

www.greeka.com/greece-culture/language

Since language constitutes one of the most important elements of Greek culture and its best transmitter, it is interesting to see, in brief, how the Greeks speak today, how the Ancient Greek language became the modern one known today.

Here is a brief history of the Greek language to help us understand its changes and its evolution. Modern Greek is a descendant of the Ancient language and is affiliated to the part of the Greek or Hellenic branch of Indo-European.

We propose below information about the evolution and history of the language in Greece. From the first written language to the language used in the 20th century.

The First written language

The first written Greek letters were found on baked mud tablets, in the remains of the Minoan Knossos Palace of Crete island. This language is known as Linear A and it has not been fully decoded till today. The most famous example of Linear A is written in the famous Phaistos Disc. In the 12th century BC, a new language started to develop, called Linear B, where each drawing symbol is a consonant-vowel combination. Linear B dates from the Mycenaean civilization. In the late 9th and early 8th century BC, the language found was based on the Phoenician syllabary, written from left to right and back again. This form of the inscription is the closest to the modern language of today.

The Classical Period

During the Classical period (6th-4th century BC), the territory of Greece was divided into numerous states and each one had its own dialect. The two more important dialects were the Ionic and the Attic. During this period, Athens established itself as the political, economic and cultural center of the Greek world, and therefore the Attic idiom started to be used as a common language.

After the expeditions of Alexander the Great, Attic dialect was also expanded in the depths of the East and it was spoken by millions of people. This gradually led to a mixing dialect which was the beginning of the koine, or common dialect, mostly known as the Hellenistic Koine. This type of language survived through centuries and became an official language of the Roman Empire later on. The koine is the original language of the New Testament and the basis for the

development of Medieval and Modern Greek. This language was developed all through Byzantine times.

Katharevousa and Dimotiki

With the creation of the modern Greek State in 1829, the question of the language, as an important part of the nation-building process, had to be resolved. After about 4 centuries of Ottoman occupation, Greece had mostly an oral culture due to all these centuries of different dominations. The question was the choice of language used in administration and education. One of the suggestions, to re-use the Attic language, was very attractive, especially because all the Western Europe was charmed by the Ancient Greek culture, and it would have been a great stimulus for the philhellenes. It proved impossible from a practical point of view.

So, the Greek scholar Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), suggested reforming the spoken language of those times on ancient principals. This suggestion was accepted and the katharevousa (meaning purified language) was created. The theme became politicized: a distinction rose between the Katharevousa, which became the high-style language associated with official functions such as governmental affairs, education and religion, and the dimotiki language (popular language) used by common people in their everyday life.

20th-century language

In the 20th century, the Greek language debate took a huge political significance: academics were sacked for using Dimotiki, riots were taking place in the streets and a lot of people were claiming that Katharevousa was being used as an instrument of denying access to education to the common people. Nationalist governments like the dictator of the Junta, Ioannis Papadopoulos, favored Katharevousa. The struggle between the proponents of Dimotiki and Katharevousa raised various social attitudes and political positions.

The theme was eventually solved in 1976, with actions of the after dictatorship government. Dimotiki language was adopted in education and administration and it has been kept since then as the formal language of modern Greece.

The last thing worth mentioning is that most regions in Greece have their local oral dialects, never used as writing means. Every region has, of course, its local accent.

History of Astrology in Rome

By Jothishi

A study of Roman history shows that the ancient Romans had a very complicated relationship with astrology. While on one hand, the Roman emperors discouraged astrology, on the other hand they shrewdly used it as a political tool. In a political climate with ruthless leaders, even astrology was an excellent weapon. In fact, one cannot separate Roman history from astrological allegories and backstories.

Criticism and Policies against Astrology

As with most big empires, Rome absorbed the intellectual findings and philosophies of the territories that it conquered. When Rome annexed Greece the Romans were influenced by the philosophies, myths and practices of the Greeks. The Roman greatly encouraged and appreciated Greek philosophy. They viewed Greek astrological practices with hostility and disdain. Greek astrology at first did not flourish in Rome. In addition to this hostility, the Romans were also followers of the philosophies of Plato. Cicero had also critically exposed the inaccuracies in the predictions of the Chaldeans. He quoted an earlier work by Ennius that was written in 200 BCE that was highly critical of astrology. These arguments against the practice of astrology continue even till date.

Believing in Greek astrology did not make tactical sense for the rulers of Rome. Greek astrology was something that was out of their control and they were loath to allow the spread of something potentially popular that they could not manipulate or control. They discouraged any 'alien' belief or practice and banished its practitioners from the Roman empire.

This policy continued over a period of time. The emperors issued thirteen decrees between 44 BCE and 180 CE to banish astrologers. This shows that the practice of astrology persisted in the Roman Empire despite the lack of encouragement. The rulers and the higher levels of military leaders and government followed Plato's philosophies. Astrology still held its own with the ordinary citizens and the lower-ranked members of the military.

Astrology as a Political Tool

The Roman Emperors curbed the popularity of astrology not because they disbelieved it, but because it was a powerful tool. They wanted to keep it out of the hands of the common citizens. There are records of the emperors of Rome having had experiences in their lives that convinced them of the power of astrology. An astrologer recognized Augustus as the future emperor

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before he came to power. He published his horoscope after coming to power and minted coins that bore the representation of his sign Capricorn.

Tiberius who succeeded Augustus was an astrologer himself. He learned astrology when he was in exile. He was extremely harsh with astrologers. When an astrologer could not predict that his own life was in danger, Tiberius had him thrown into the sea. However, he trusted Thrasyllus' competence and gave him the position of court astrologer. Thrasyllus was a master at astrology and the author of an astrological textbook, *Pinax*. So, we see that the Romans had respect for astrology but little patience with inefficient astrologers and charlatans. Thrasyllus' son Tiberius Claudius Balbillus succeeded his father after his death in 36 CE. He was the astrologer to Claudius, Nero and Vespasian. He also authored the work *Astrologumena*, on the length of life.

Romans believed at that time that the astrologers talked to God. The Roman rulers were intent on limiting this tool to their own use. However, Romans did not accord astrology the absolute power, unlike the Babylonian rulers. Romans also used other forms of divination for decision making.

Astrology as a Weapon

There are further records of the use of astrology by the Roman emperors. Domitian was a ruler who studied the horoscope of others to see if they were any challenge to him. He had them murdered if they were. On the contrary, the emperor Hadrian used astrology to identify a good successor. Septimius Severus painted his birth chart on the palace ceiling but without the vital information as to his ascendant. This was to ensure that no one would use the birth chart against him.

Equating the Roman Emperor with the Sun

When Rome was a republic, Romans worshipped the Sun. When it became an empire, the rulers associated the sun with the emperor. The rulers exploited this to the fullest. They attempted to make the sun the ruler and centre of the government. Records show that Augustus gave credit to Apollo for his victory. Nero compared himself to the sun and even used the name *Helios Basileus*. He compared his authority to the brilliance of the sun and minted coins that featured him wearing a crown that emitted sunbeams. The emperors Caligula and Commodus also compared themselves to the Sun. The emperor Hadrian ordered the building of the Pantheon, a temple dedicated to the planetary deities. Emperor Antoninus Pius in 158 CE

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conducted an event called the Sol Invictus to celebrate the winter solstice as the victory of the unconquered sun.

The Emperor Septimus Severus constructed a shrine to the seven planets and placed himself in the centre as the sun. Emperor Elagabalus changed his name to allude to the sun; Heliogabalus.

The rulers of the Roman Empire fully exploited the history of sun worship by the people. The emperors alluded that they were the embodiments of the sun. They encouraged public worship and ceremonies to glorify the sun. This was more than an ego-building exercise. It was a way of assuring the extreme respect and religious devotion of their subjects.

Julius Caesar as a Comet

Julius Caesar's adopted son Octavian used astrology and iconography very cleverly throughout his reign. He was later called Augustus. There was a comet seen in the sky during the time of mourning for Julius Caesar. Though comets were generally seen as ill omens, a contrary story was promoted. It was thought that the comet was the soul of the late Julius Caesar ascending to become a god. In one sweep Julius was deified.

Octavian then declared war on the assassins of Julius Ceasar and won. He commemorated the win by dedicating a Roman temple to Mars. He promoted the idea that his father was a god and closely associated himself with it. Octavian minted coins featuring the sacred comet as well as the profiles of Octavius and his father. Octavian referred to himself as the son of the deified one. He used a mixture of astronomy, astrology and iconography to strengthen his power.

Astronomica

Manilius' poem *Astronomica* is a work on astrology. In his dedication, he portrays the rule of Octavian (known then as Caesar Augustus) as celestially ordained. He goes further to enhance and support Octavian's iconography and the deification of Julius Caesar.

Octavian then proceeded to enter into a bitter rivalry with Mark Antony (supported by Cleopatra) for a decade. They fought along ideological and cultural lines with many references to the gods. Manilius wrote the first book of the *Astronomica* in 9 CE. Two years later Octavian (Augustus) banned individual consultation with an astrologer. This was also a strategic move on his part. He was in his seventies and did not want to fuel any speculation about his death. Tiberius succeeded him and ushered in a good period for astrology. Manilius finished the poem *Astronomica* during Tiberius' reign. The chapters of the poem written at this time praise the

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sign of Octavian, Libra. This is a shift from all the praise and iconography of Capricorn encouraged by Octavian.

Conclusion

We see through the history of the ancient Roman Empire that the emperors either had great faith in astrology or at the least realized just how much power it had to sway public opinion. Roman emperors did not discourage the practice of sun worship but instead also manipulated it to make the emperor equal to the sun. It was a very clever use of astrology to further political gain and ambition. They used their signs and birth charts along with myths about their being destined for greatness as tools.

Roman emperors used astrology to justify their rule. The fact that the emperors used astrology to identify and eliminate their competitors shows the power that astrology had in general public opinion. The Roman emperors were also aware of the dangers of astrology being used as a tool against them which is why they ensured that it was by law kept out of the reach of its citizens and was only the privilege of the rulers. We have the valuable works of *Astronomica* by Marcus Manilius and the *Tetrabiblos* by Ptolemy Claudius from the Roman Empire.

Comets in Ancient Cultures: The Harbinger of Doom or Messengers of the Gods?

By StrangeSounds.org

April 16, 2020

Comets have inspired dread, fear, and awe in many different cultures and societies around the world and throughout time. They have been branded with such titles as “the Harbinger of Doom” and “the Menace of the Universe.”

Within last month, extremely promising Comet ATLAS appeared in the night sky, but later disintegrated. Just before its fragmentation, another new bright space object, now known as Comet SWAN, was discovered by astronomers.

Comets have been seen as omens of disaster and messengers of the gods.

So why is it that comets are some of the most feared and venerated objects in the night sky? Why did so many cultures cringe at the sight of a comet?

When people living in ancient cultures looked up, comets were the most remarkable objects in the night sky. Comets were unlike any other object in the night sky. Whereas most celestial bodies travel across the skies at regular, predictable intervals, so regular that constellations could be mapped and predicted, comets’ movements have always seemed very erratic and unpredictable.

This led people in many cultures to believe that the gods dictated their motions and were sending them as a message.

What were the gods trying to say?

Some cultures read the message by the images that they saw upon looking at the comet.

For example, to some cultures the tail of the comet gave it the appearance of the head of a woman, with long flowing hair behind her. This sorrowful symbol of mourning was understood to mean the gods that had sent the comet to earth were displeased.

Others thought that the elongated comet looked like a fiery sword blazing across the night sky, a traditional sign of war and death. Such a message from the gods could only mean that their wrath would soon be unleashed onto the people of the land.

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Such ideas struck fear into those who saw comets dart across the sky. The likeness of the comet, though, was not the only thing that inspired fear.

Ancient cultural legends

Ancient cultural legends also played a hand in inspiring a terrible dread of these celestial nomads.

The Roman prophecies, the “Sibylline Oracles,” spoke of a “great conflagration from the sky, falling to earth,” while the most ancient known mythology, the Babylonian “Epic of Gilgamesh,” described fire, brimstone, and flood with the arrival of a comet.

Rabbi Moses Ben Nachman, a Jew living in Spain, wrote of God taking two stars from Khima and throwing them at the earth in order to begin the great flood.

Yakut legend in ancient Mongolia called comets “the daughter of the devil,” and warned of destruction, storm and frost, whenever she approaches the earth.

Stories associating comets with such terrible imagery are at the base of so many cultures on Earth, and fuel a dread that followed comet sightings throughout history.

Comets: Harbingers of doom

Comets’ influence on cultures is not limited simply to tales of myth and legend, though. Comets throughout history have been blamed for some of history’s darkest times.

In Switzerland, Halley’s Comet was blamed for earthquakes, illnesses, red rain, and even the births of two-headed animals.

The Romans recorded that a fiery comet marked the assassination of Julius Caesar, and another was blamed for the extreme bloodshed during the battle between Pompey and Caesar.

In England, Halley’s Comet was blamed for bringing the Black Death. The Incas, in South America, even record a comet having foreshadowed Francisco Pizarro’s arrival just days before he brutally conquered them.

Comets and disaster became so intertwined that Pope Calixtus III even excommunicated Halley’s Comet as an instrument of the devil, and a meteorite, from a comet, became enshrined as one of the most venerated objects in all of Islam.

Were it not for a Chinese affinity for meticulous record keeping, a true understanding of comets may never have been reached.

Chinese astronomers

Unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese astronomers kept extensive records on the appearances, paths, and disappearances of hundreds of comets. Extensive comet atlases have been found dating back to the Han Dynasty, which describe comets as “long-tailed pheasant stars” or “broom stars” and associate the different comet forms with different disasters.

Although the Chinese also regarded comets as “vile stars,” their extensive records allowed later astronomers to determine the true nature of comets.

From Hollywood to doomsday cults

Although most human beings no longer cringe at the sight of a comet, they still inspire fear everywhere around the globe, from Hollywood to doomsday cults. The United States even set up the Near Earth Asteroid Tracking (NEAT) program specifically to guard us from these “divine” dangers.

However, although they were once regarded as omens of disaster, and messengers of the god(s), today a scientific approach has helped allay such concerns. It is science and reason that has led the fight against this fear since the days of the ancients. It is science and reason that has emboldened the human spirit enough to venture out and journey to a comet. It is science and reason that will unlock the secrets that they hold.

But science is slow... And we may have no time left. With the recent uptick in unusual earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, plagues, the Corona pandemic and the new comet discoveries, we may indeed link those bright space objects to doom and natural disasters. Be prepared!

Seven Greco-Roman Mystery Cults

By Zar dudu

June 13, 2017

The ancient Greco-Roman mystery religions were a group of secret cults that worshiped lesser-known gods outside the official pantheons. Because members were banned from discussing their beliefs and practices with outsiders, details of their activities are now scarce, but scholars speculate that initiates were given some form of secret knowledge, handled sacred objects, and acted out sacred stories to gain favor with their deity and to secure a better afterlife.

While participation in these cults is believed to have ended with the rise of Christianity, their influence is still evident in society's widespread fascination with secret societies and the occult. Here are seven of the most influential Greco-Roman Mysteries and some of what little we know about them.

CULT OF CYBELE

Cybele, or Magna Mater, came to Greece around the 5th century BCE from the ancient Indo-European people known as the Phrygians. She was believed to reside on mountaintops where, accompanied by lions, she ruled over the natural world. She is often depicted—as she is above—holding a primitive tambourine, which is fitting, since rituals associated with her included loud, percussive music and frenzied dancing. Worshippers of Cybele also participated in the taurobolium, a ritual bull slaughter that according to one (admittedly hostile) late Roman account involved initiates positioning themselves below the bull and showering in its blood.

The cult of Attis was a later addition to the Cybele mythos. Attis was a mortal who spurned Cybele's romantic advances and was punished with madness, causing him to cut off his own testicles and die. Eventually, Cybele had a change of heart and petitioned Zeus to allow Attis to be resurrected. As a result, all priests of Cybele during this era performed the same cutting, often publicly, in hopes of being reborn one day themselves.

CULT OF SABAZIOS

The cult of Sabazios originated with the Phrygians and Thracians of Eastern Europe but was known in Greece by the 5th century BCE. Sabazios is depicted as a nomadic horseman, often battling a serpent. Like many of the gods worshiped by mystery cults, there are no surviving

myths related to him—only a brief historical reference saying that his initiates practiced ritual serpent handling. There are also several somewhat mysterious examples of metal sculptures called "hands of Sabazios," which have symbolic items decorating the palm and fingertips, such as snakes, frogs, lizards, human figures, pinecones, and lightning bolts.

ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

The Eleusinian mysteries were the longest-running and most popular of the mystery cults. They were devoted to the worship of the goddess Demeter, who was believed to have given agriculture to humans, bringing them into civilized existence. The most prominent myth associated with Demeter is the kidnapping of her daughter, Persephone, by Hades. Demeter's search eventually brought her to the ancient Greek city of Eleusis, and to the underworld. It was said that during this time her failure to attend to the crops caused the fall season, but when she emerged with Persephone she was able to attend to the crops again, ushering in the spring.

Though details are scarce, it is believed that this myth was acted out in ceremonies at Eleusis, with the symbolic harvesting of grain being a focal element. Some suspect this was done while initiates were under the influence of hallucinogens. The Eleusinian mysteries were abolished by the 4th century CE by the Roman emperor Theodosius the Great.

A cult also developed around Despoina, the daughter of Demeter and Poseidon, said to have been conceived while both parents were in the form of horses. This has led some to believe she was the vestige of an ancient equine goddess. The details of her worship are unknown, and even her name is not exactly accurate—her true name was only told to initiates, none of whom ever repeated it.

MITHRAISM

Mithras is perhaps best known for being worshipped by the Roman army as the protector of the empire, but his origins can be traced to the earlier Persian god Mithra, and he is probably related to the Hindu god Mitra. There are no surviving myths about Mithras, whose cult was established in the Roman world by the 1st century CE, and everything we know comes from images in underground temple-caves called mithraeum. These images generally depict the god stabbing a bull in the neck and meeting the sun, with the two of them dining on the bull together. Occasionally, a scorpion is depicted stinging the bull's testicles as a dog licks the bull's blood.

CULT OF ISIS

Isis is a goddess of Egyptian origin who developed a wide following in Greece and Rome after about 300 BCE. She had prominent temples, a dedicated priesthood, and devoted followers. She was believed to influence fertility and agriculture, but as her worship spread to new areas, this changed to fit the needs of her followers. Her most well-known myth deals with the death of her husband, Osiris, and her efforts to resurrect him. This myth was ritualistically acted out by initiates of her cult, who shaved their heads, wore linen uniforms, and played Egyptian percussion instruments called sistrums.

Closely related to the cult of Isis was that of Serapis. A lover of Isis, he was equal parts Greek and Egyptian, and is thought to have been introduced as a way to unify the two cultures. Harpokrates, the son of Isis and Serapis, is often depicted holding his finger over his lips—as if to remind their initiates not to reveal their secrets.

CABEIRI MYSTERIES

The Cabeiri were a group of gods worshiped primarily on the Greek islands, most prominently on Samothrace and Lemnos, as well as elsewhere in Greece and Asia Minor. They were most commonly depicted as Axiocersu and his son Cadmilus, although sometimes depictions included two females, Axierus and Axiocersa. Popular with seamen, initiation into their mysteries promised safety from the misfortunes of the sea, and their worshippers also engaged in purification and fertility rituals. Their secrets were well-guarded, so little else is known about them and their followers.

DIONYSIAN MYSTERIES

Dionysus, the god of wine, represented the primitive nature of humans, which his followers believed was accessible through wine's ability to lower inhibitions. He was also believed to have power over death, as a result of being torn to pieces by titans and then resurrected by his father, Zeus. Like the other mysteries, a great deal about his worship remains unknown, but some aspects were practiced publicly—frenzied, drunken orgies, the playing of instruments called bullroarers, and the sacrifice of animals using a double-headed axe followed by the drinking of their blood mixed with wine. In art, Dionysus is often depicted in a procession of satyrs and women wearing animal skins, with ivy wrapped around their brows and holding staffs with pinecones on top.

The Dionysian mysteries eventually evolved into the Orphic mysteries, which were established by about the 5th century BCE. These cults dealt with the worship of Orpheus, a legendary musician who was said to have established the Dionysian mysteries. The Orphics, as they are called, lived an ascetic lifestyle, leaving behind the decadent practices of their predecessors. They believed that humans were divine, created from the ashes of the titans who murdered Dionysus. Unfortunately, they also inherited the titan's sins, for which they had to atone. Some of their rituals included the actual or symbolic dismembering of a person representing Dionysus, who was then understood to be reborn.

References

Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Collection of Ancient Texts

By Georg Luck

Review by Valentin Bewick

Magic, miracles, daemonology, divination, astrology, and alchemy were the *arcana mundi*, the “secrets of the universe,” of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In this path-breaking collection of Greek and Roman writings on magic and the occult, Georg Luck provides a comprehensive sourcebook and introduction to magic as it was practiced by witches and sorcerers, magi and astrologers, in the Greek and Roman worlds.

In this new edition, Luck has gathered and translated 130 ancient texts dating from the eighth century BCE through the fourth century CE. Thoroughly revised, this volume offers several new elements: a comprehensive general introduction, an epilogue discussing the persistence of ancient magic into the early Christian and Byzantine eras, and an appendix on the use of mind-altering substances in occult practices.

Also added is an extensive glossary of Greek and Latin magical terms.

In *Arcana Mundi* Georg Luck presents a fascinating — and at times startling — alternative vision of the ancient world. “For a long time it was fashionable to ignore the darker and, to us, perhaps, uncomfortable aspects of everyday life in Greece and Rome,” Luck has written. “But we can no longer idealize the Greeks

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with their ‘artistic genius’ and the Romans with their ‘sober realism.’ Magic and witchcraft, the fear of daemons and ghosts, the wish to manipulate invisible powers — all of this was very much a part of their lives.”

Greek and Roman Necromancy

By Daniel Ogden

Review by Valentin Bewick

In classical antiquity, there was much interest in necromancy—the consultation of the dead for divination. People could seek knowledge from the dead by sleeping on tombs, visiting oracles, and attempting to reanimate corpses and skulls. Ranging over many of the lands in which Greek and Roman civilizations flourished, including Egypt, from the Greek archaic period through the late Roman empire, this book is the first comprehensive survey of the subject ever published in any language.

Daniel Ogden surveys the places, performers, and techniques of necromancy as well as the reasons for turning to it. He investigates the cave-based sites of oracles of the dead at Heracleia Pontica and Tainaron, as well as the oracles at the Acheron and Avernus, which probably consisted of lakeside precincts. He argues that the Acheron oracle has been long misidentified, and considers in detail the traditions attached to each site.

Readers meet the personnel—real or imagined—of ancient necromancy: ghosts, zombies, the earliest vampires, evocators, sorcerers, shamans, Persian magi, Chaldaeans, Egyptians, Roman emperors, and witches from Circe to Medea. Ogden explains the technologies used to evocate or reanimate the dead and to compel them to disgorge their secrets. He concludes by examining ancient beliefs about ghosts and their wisdom—beliefs that underpinned and justified the practice of necromancy.

The first of its kind and filled with information, this volume will be of central importance to those interested in the rapidly expanding, inherently fascinating, and intellectually exciting subjects of ghosts and magic in antiquity.

The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun

By Roger Beck

Review by Valentin Bewick

This volume is a study of the religious system of Mithraism, one of the “mystery cults” popular in the Roman Empire contemporary with early Christianity. Roger Beck describes Mithraism from the point of view of the initiate engaging with the religion and its rich symbolic system in thought, word, ritual action, and cult life.

He employs the methods of anthropology of religion and the new cognitive science of religion to explore in detail the semiotics of the Mysteries’ astral symbolism, which has been the principal subject of his many previous publications on the cult.

Drawing Lots to Select Matthias

By Bill Echols, Jr.

January 15, 2023

In Acts 1:15-26, we see that Peter convinced the others to replace Judas Iscariot, the Betrayer, who committed suicide. Peter quoted from a passage from Psalm 109:8 that stated 'May another take his office [or position]'.

Peter and the others proceed to set limits on who can be nominated as replacement:

1. He must have walked with Jesus since the baptism of John, and
2. He must have witnessed the resurrection by viewing the ascension of Jesus.

Two are nominated: Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. After lots are drawn, Matthias is added to the eleven.

Some contemporaries of the Apostles did not accept Matthias as an Apostle because Jesus did not select him when He was selecting the others at the beginning of His ministry or during the forty days He walked the Earth after his resurrection. Clement of Alexandria noted in his *Stromateis* vi.13:

Not that they became apostles through being chosen for some distinguished peculiarity of nature, since also Judas was chosen along with them. But they were capable of becoming apostles on being chosen by Him who foresees even ultimate issues. Matthias, accordingly, who was not chosen along with them, on showing himself worthy of becoming an apostle, is substituted for Judas.

Apostle Paul defends himself as an apostle several times because he met God-ordained requirements for being an apostle. See Galatians 1:10-24 and 2 Corinthians 1:15, 3:1-2 and 2 Corinthians chapters 6 and 11 where Paul presents his credentials. These requirements are not the same that Peter and the 120 men and women in the room selected in picking a replacement.

First thing of note: Matthias is never mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament and, in contrast to the eleven Apostles, even his ministry locations and means of death are disputed in secular history.

1. The tradition of the Greeks says that St. Matthias planted the faith about Cappadocia and on the coasts of the Caspian Sea, residing chiefly near the port Issus. [Butler, Alban. "Saint Matthias, Apostle", *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints*, D. & J. Sadlier, & Company, 1864].

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2. According to Nicephorus (*Historia eccl.*, 2, 40), Matthias first preached the Gospel in Judaea, then in Aethiopia (by the region of Colchis, now in modern-day Georgia) and was crucified.
3. An extant Coptic Acts of Andrew and Matthias, places his activity similarly in "the city of the cannibals" in Aethiopia. [See "Egyptian Colony and Language in the Caucasus and its Anthropological Relations," by Hyde Clarke, 1874, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2841305>].
4. A marker placed in the ruins of the Roman fortress at Gonio (Apsaros) in the modern Georgian region of Adjara claims that Matthias is buried at that site.
5. The Synopsis of Dorotheus contains this tradition: "Matthias preached the Gospel to barbarians and meat-eaters in the interior of Ethiopia, where the sea harbor of Hyssus is, at the mouth of the river Phasis. He died at Sebastopolis, and was buried there, near the Temple of the Sun." [Jacquier, Jacques Eugène (1911). "St. Matthias". In Herbermann, Charles (ed.). *Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 10. New York: Robert Appleton Company.]
6. Alternatively, another tradition maintains that Matthias was stoned at Jerusalem by the local populace, and then beheaded (cf. Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclesiastique des six premiers siècles*, I, 406–7). ["The Traditions of Matthias". Earlychristianwritings.com.]
7. According to Hippolytus of Rome, Matthias died of old age in Jerusalem.

The second thing to note is that the method of drawing lots for selection is flawed. Lots are drawn to promote randomness; that is one method God uses to resolve disputes and promote evenness of decisions. See Proverbs 16:33 and Proverbs 18:18. The problem with drawing lots, named *cleromancy*, in this case, is that it leaves no option for neither to be selected. Users of drawing lots are assuming some deity is making the decision whereas when the drawing of lots was used by the Israelite leaders, they were using God's nature law of randomness to make the decision (See Leviticus 16:8 [scape goat selection] and Joshua 18:2, 6 [dividing the land inheritances fairly]).

Sortes were a frequent method of divination among the ancient Romans [Smith, William (1870), "Sortes", in Smith, William (ed.), *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, vol. 1, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, pp. 1051–1052]. The method involved the drawing of lots (sortes) to obtain knowledge of future events: in many of the ancient Italian temples, the will of the gods was consulted in this way, as at Praeneste and Caere [Regarding the meaning of sors see Cicero, *De Divinatione* ii. 41].

These sortes or lots were usually little tablets or counters made of wood or other materials and were commonly thrown into a sitella or urn, filled with water. The lots were sometimes thrown like dice [Suetonius, *Tiberius* 14]. The name of "sortes" was in fact given to anything used to

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determine chances, [compare Cicero, *De Divinatione* i. 34] and was also applied to any verbal response of an oracle [Cicero, *De Divinatione* ii. 56 and Virgil, *Aeneid* iv. 346, 377].

Consider the selection game of 'Rock – Scissors – Paper'. Without setting a limit to the number of times played, a winner must be selected; there is no mechanism for no party to be selected. And that is what is intended when a random selection process is used.

This use of drawing lots does not disallow God from interfering with the nature randomness process when He chooses e.g. the selection of Jonah 1:7. This interference was for the specific purpose to get Jonah moving towards preaching to the people of Nineveh. Did God interfere with the natural random selection of Matthias? There is no necessary inference indicated.

Furthermore, there is no justification in assuming God interferes with His natural Law of Randomness often. That is why He created that law.

The Mosaic Law says that divination is sinful; therefore using the drawing of lots to ascertain God's intent, or any other 'deity' is sinful. The early church practice of *Sortes Biblicae* is sinful; this 'biblical lots' is a method of divination where by the Bible is opened randomly and the first words which one sees are interpreted as predictive. The practice was common in late antiquity and had pagan precedents in the *Sortes Homericae* and *Sortes Vergiliana*. It was nevertheless condemned by numerous church councils, including in Gaul alone by those of Vannes (465), Agde (506) and Orléans (511) [Bruce M. Metzger, "*Sortes Biblicae*", in Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1993)].

There is no reason for man to assume a replacement for Judas was necessary. The misconception of twelve Apostles matching the twelve-tribes-should-continue means that when James was killed by Herod a replacement for him should have taken place; however, there is no record of that occurring. As a matter of fact, Jesus selected Saul to be His apostle to the Gentiles; as we saw earlier, Paul strongly defended his apostleship.

Lastly, be careful when you read the text of the Bible. Do not assign your ideas and biases to the Scripture; let it speak for itself. This assumption that God approved Matthias as an Apostle is not proved in this passage or in Acts 2:14 even though righteous men did the praying, the believing that God answered their prayer, and the preaching.

Why the 120 did not receive the Holy Spirit on Pentecost

By A. Wade Little

January 22, 2023

Some faiths believe in modern day miracles. They believe not only the Apostles received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 but the 120 persons who were gathered with the Apostles in the upper room in Acts 1:15 received the Holy Spirit also.

There is an important English [language] rule that we use as a guide when reading the Bible; that rule is called the 'antecedent of the pronoun'. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary definition is:

Antecedent – A substantive word, phrase, or clause whose denotation is referred to by a pronoun. A word or phrase replaced by a substitute.

An example: The Jones family went to the football game last week. There were about 1000 people there. The weather was bitter cold and they came down with the flu.

We understand the Jones family is the subject of the story. They are 'antecedent'. The pronoun *they* refers to the Jones family coming down with the flu, not the 1000 people who were in attendance at the football game at the same time.

And that brings us back to Act 1:2; "... given orders to the Apostles whom He had chosen." In this case, the Apostles are the antecedent and is referred to by pronouns: verse 3 *these* (NAS), "*them* over a period of forty days"; verse 4 "gathering *them* together", commanded *them* not to leave Jerusalem; verse 5 " but *you* shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit"; verse 6 "and so when *they* had come together *they* were asking him ..."; verse 7 "it is not for *you* to know ..."; verse 8 " But *you* shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon *you* and *you* shall be my witnesses ..."

In these verses it is easy for us to understand the pronouns refer back to the Apostles mentioned in verse 2 and so it continues throughout the rest of the chapter.

Verse 13 names the eleven Apostles and continues on with all of the pronouns referring back to the Apostles. Verse 17 "for he (Judas) was counted among *us*"; verse 21 "... the Lord Jesus went in and out among *us*"; verse 22 "... taken up from *us*", "become a witness with *us* of His resurrection"; verse 26 "... and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles"; chapter 2 verse 1 (which is a continuation of chapter 1) states "and when the day of Pentecost had come, *they* (the Apostles) were *all* to gather in one place."

So we can see the Apostles are the subject to whom the Holy Spirit was to be given.

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This rule is used to make things easier for us to understand the Bible. When the antecedent is established, all pronouns that follow, with few exceptions, refer back to the original subject, antecedent, until the antecedent changes.

Those who embrace modern day divine manifestations of the Holy Spirit believe the 120 persons gathered in the upper room received the Holy Spirit along with the Apostles even though the Apostles were the subject matter under consideration the entire chapter.

Also these people believe 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 will happen but since we all can receive divine power of the Holy Spirit, the miracles to be done away with mentioned in 1 Corinthians will happen after Jesus comes again to reign a thousand years.

Very briefly, it is very important for us, and especially young people, to be taught *WHY* we believe what we believe.

The Holy Spirit in Action

By Bill Echols, Jr.

January 15, 2023

In the American Standard Version of Acts there are fifty-six references to the Holy Spirit. By comparison to other portions of the New Testament the special significance of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts can be demonstrated. The combined sixty-eight chapters of the Synoptic Gospels contain only thirty-four references to the Holy Spirit. The pertinent ones for this discussion are quoted below:

Acts 1:15-17

At this time Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (a group of about 120 people was there together), and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry."

Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a noise like a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And tongues that looked like fire appeared to them, distributing themselves, and a tongue rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out.

Acts 2:14

But Peter, taking his stand with the other eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, know this, and pay attention to my words.

Acts 2:38-39

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

Acts 8:12-17

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[They] believed Philip as he was preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were being baptized. Now even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was repeatedly amazed.

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they would receive the Holy Spirit. (For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:44-48

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had also been poured out on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter responded, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:6-8

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, after being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; and passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.

Acts 20:22-23

And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that chains and afflictions await me.

Acts 21:4, 10-11

After looking up the disciples, we stayed there for seven days; and they kept telling Paul, through the Spirit, not to set foot in Jerusalem ... As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And he

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came to us and took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

Acts 22:11

But on the following night, the Lord stood near him and said, "Be courageous! For as you have testified to the truth about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome also."

Beginning with the conversion of Cornelius as detailed in Acts 10, we see from verses 44 through 48 quoted above that ALL those Gentiles present that heard the Gospel *received the Holy Spirit*. Notice this happened before they were baptized. This special outpouring showed God desired the Gentiles be brought into His kingdom.

In Acts 1:14-15 the antecedent changes when we learn that Peter is in the company of 120 Jewish believers. At the beginning of Acts 2 we see that ALL were gathered together in one place and ALL were filled with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, we see in verse 14 the antecedent ALL changes to 'Peter and the other eleven'. We conclude the 120 Jewish believers were filled with the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the later incident with the Gentile believers.

It is important to understand that although Pentecostal doctrine teaches special gifts of the Holy Spirit exist today, and use these verses as a proof text, we should not try to alter what the Bible passage says; that is, that only the Apostles received the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost events. Instead, our proof text to show that spiritual gifts are gone today is 1 Corinthians 15.

Examining Acts 2:38, we see that repentant believers receive two things upon coming up out from the watery grave of baptism: remission of sin AND the gift of the Holy Spirit. All believers today receive both remission of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8 shows that the believers in Samaria received the gift of the Holy Spirit after they were baptized; but the gifts (plural) of the Holy Spirit were not received until Apostle Peter and Apostle John arrived and prayed for the Samaritan believers. Therefore, we know there is a difference between the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' and 'gifts of the Holy Spirit'.

The 'gifts of the Holy Spirit' are various and detailed in scriptures outside of Acts. But we can see from Acts 8 that after the Holy Spirit came upon the first Gentile converts, they could speak in tongues and exalt God. Therefore, the least conclusion we can draw upon for the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' we gain upon baptism is the ability to exalt God for the ability to speak in tongues is no longer needed (1 Corinthians 15). We have the full Gospel of love.

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We see from the other scriptures quoted above that Paul submitted his will to the Holy Spirit and did not travel to Asia at that point in time. And Paul continues submitting when he traveled to Jerusalem knowing he would be arrested and jailed; Jesus comforts him there telling him that he has to testify in Rome. Submitting means that resisting the Holy Spirit is possible. Ephesians 4:30-31 says *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”*

During Stephen’s sermon as recorded in Acts 7:51, he says *“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”* Unbelief hinders the will of the Holy Spirit in you.

John 20:19-23

Now when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were together due to fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, “Peace be to you.” And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be to you; just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”

Unbelief may explain why even though Jesus breathed on them after his resurrection (since Thomas was missing from this meeting, did he get left out?), the Apostles were still confused in Acts 1 when they questioned Jesus about restoring the kingdom. Instead, this passage may simply indicate these Apostles would receive the special gifts of the Holy Spirit after his ascension. After all, Jesus had indicated several times that He had to leave for the Comforter (Holy Spirit) to come in full power e.g. John 16:7.

Let the Holy Spirit operate in the manner the Holy Spirit desires.

What is the difference between *Baptism by fire* and *Baptism for sin remission*

By Tom Bowen and Ed Prescott

January 22, 2023

In Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16, John the Baptist says *“He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”*, likely addressing each of the two groups of people in the audience; those being baptized as they confessed their sins AND the *“brood of vipers”* (the Pharisees and Sadducees). Consider too the following paragraph in both gospel accounts which describe a threshing; a gathering of the wheat and the burning of the chaff in unquenchable fire. Other scriptures associate fire and judgment e.g. Mark 9:44, 2 Peter 3:10, Jude 7 and Revelation 20:11-15.

Another thought is that it may include a baptism of suffering Jesus underwent and the suffering His disciples experienced as they followed His example. Luke 12:50 speaks of a *“baptism to undergo, and how distressed I [Jesus] am until it is accomplished!”* This is similar to the *“cup that I am about to drink”* as recorded in Matthew 20:22. Additionally, several scriptures speak of refining by fire as trials e.g. Psalms 66:10, Zechariah 13:9 and 1 Peter 1:7.

Baptism for sin remission is the *“washing away of sins”* as in Acts 22:16, *“a burial”* in Colossians 2:12, an *“appeal to God for a good conscience”* in 1 Peter 3:21, a *“clothing/putting on Christ”* in Galatians 3:27, a necessity of salvation in Mark 16:16, and a *“participation in Christ’s death”* in Romans 6:3.

Roman “French” Toast

By Jennifer Drummond

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A savory and sweet dish from biblical times to make at home

People love sweets, and the Romans were no different. However, Apicius and his *De Re Coquinaria* (On the Subject of Cooking) does not contain an abundance of what we would term sweet dishes or dessert recipes. A few survived, including this “French” toast recipe, which is an odd mix of sweet and savory. It is possible many more were lost to the ravages of time.

Apicius’s recipe and its modern adaption were sourced from *Around the Roman Table: Food and Feasting in Ancient Rome* by Patrick Faas. It is an easy recipe to be sure, although a bit time consuming.

Roman “French Toast”

Another sweet dish: cut the crust from the best African mustaceum bread and soak it in milk. When it is saturated, bake it in oven, but not for too long to avoid drying it out. Remove the bread when it is hot, and pour honey over it. Prick holes in it so that it absorbs the honey. Sprinkle with pepper and serve.

Unlike modern French toast, this Roman version does not contain egg and requires a specially baked loaf of bread. The bread is simple: if possible, it’s important to weigh the flour, as it ensures the right consistency (baking is a science after all). The additions of pepper and cumin are a bit odd to our modern palates; I suggest being liberal with the honey.

We hope you enjoy this Roman “French Toast” with your family and friends.

Ingredients for the Bread:

One packet (about 2¼ tsp) of yeast

1 tbl honey

Water (about ¼ cup, but follow instructions on the packet)

500g (about 4 cups) flour

Supplement 2

2 tsp ground anise seed

2 tsp ground cumin

1½ cup white wine or white grape juice



Instructions:

- (1) Mix honey into water. Dissolve yeast in honey-water and allow it to sit for about 10 minutes.
- (2) Add flour, anise seed, and cumin.
- (3) Use white wine/white grape juice to moisten the dough. Add about ½ cup at a time. I used 1½ cups. Knead the dough. Then leave it to rest for 2–3 hours.
- (4) Preheat the oven to 350° F and bake for 30 minutes. (The crust should not be too firm when you take it out.)

Ingredients for the “French” Toast:

Milk (about 2 cups, depending on your dish size. Enough to soak the bread thoroughly)

Pepper (to taste)

Honey (to taste)

Instructions:

- (1) Once the bread has cooled, remove the crust and cut the loaf into slices or cubes. Soak in milk until soft.

Supplement 2

(2) Remove from milk and bake at 350° F until brown (about 20 minutes)—be careful they don't dry out.

(3) When done, remove from oven, drench with honey, and sprinkle with pepper.
Bon Appetite!