

THE FIRST OPEN CHURCH, FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

Part Two, By: Jeffrey Crosby

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This is a continuation in the story of the early followers of the Messiah after the Passion, and the founding of the very first above ground church by Joseph of Arimathea and a band of those who worshiped Christ. They were followers of what was known as 'The Way'. This is one of those stories that has become obscured as a result of the ravages of history. Yet enough of the pieces of the account have survived to make the narrative creditable which will be documented as we go along. It is very much like the genealogy of Christ when the Edomite Herod family burned all the records of the noble families of Judaea, and the writers of the New Testament had to piece together Christ's genealogy from private family records and by word of mouth. *The Church History*, 1:6 by Paul L. Maier, p. 37:

“... So Herod, with no Israelite ancestry and pained by his base origins, burned the genealogical records, thinking he would appear of noble birth if no one were able to trace his bloodline from public documents. A few, however, carefully kept private records of their own, either remembering the names or finding them in copies, and took pride in preserving the memory of their aristocratic birth ...”.

Joseph of Arimathea was Mary's father's brother (as stated in the Talmud), making him Yahshua's great uncle. The Harlein Manuscripts (in the British Museum – 38-59 f, 193 b) further supports this claim that Joseph of Arimathea was uncle to the “Blessed Mary”. It also adds that Joseph had a daughter (aside from his son Josephes), Anna, calling her “consobrina” or cousin of Mary.

“It is quite obvious that the husband (Joseph the widower and carpenter) of Mary died while Jesus was young. Under both Roman and Hebrew law, the next male kin automatically becomes the legal guardian of the family. In this case it was Joseph of Arimathea. Had there been blood brothers this duty would have passed to the eldest. The children of Mary's husband, Joseph, were by a former marriage. The term 'brothers' (and sisters) in the Scriptures was only one of domestic association. We also note their mother was a sister-in-law of Zachariah, making [Yahshua] (and His 'brothers and sisters') full cousins to John the Baptist. (Jerome's *Adiv Jovianum* libri II, compiled in Bethlehem 393 A.D.)” (*The Traditions of Glastonbury*, p. 19, hereinafter TG).

From the record, Joseph was obviously close to Yahshua. He stood by Christ at the trial, claimed the body afterwards and gave up the family tomb. He was always recorded as being a “just man” or “good man”, “honourable”, a “disciple of Jesus”.

The Sanhedrin knew that under Roman law, the offense of treason was a capital offence, punishable only by death. Only the Roman procurator, Pilate, who was Spanish-born yet powerful within his imperial position, could try the case. Jowett alleges in his book *The Drama of the Lost Disciples* (hereinafter TDL) that Caiaphas, the former high priest of the Sanhedrin, had provable knowledge that Pontius Pilate was active in a plot to assassinate Tiberius Caesar. He claims it was because of this factor, through threat of extortion, that neither Joseph, who attempted to intervene at least once at the time of Yahshua’s mock trials, nor Pilate’s wife, who told Pilate to leave Christ’s adjudication alone, could avail over the trial of “that just man” (Matt. 27:19).

Pilate’s wife was Claudia Procula, the illegitimate daughter of Claudia, the third wife of Tiberius Caesar, granddaughter of Augustus Caesar. Pilate knew that the Emperor, against whom he plotted to assassinate, was fond of his stepdaughter (Carlo Franzen, *Memoirs of Pontius Pilate*). Because of his political positioning, he always deferred to his wife’s every whim. For him to disregard her warnings regarding Yahshua shows that as much as Pilate feared Caesar, he feared Caiaphas even more. It was on four separate occasions that he found Yahshua innocent, using a bowl to wash his hands of the entire matter, only to accede to the murderous Sanhedrin. Pilate would later commit suicide over this entire affair (as described in the 29th chapter of the book of Acts, the ‘lost’ chapter supposedly found after the canonization of our Bible). Here it must be noted that the validity of Carlo Franzen’s assassination plot story is not referenced.

Nine out of twelve of the close disciples immediately fled Jerusalem after Yahshua’s arrest in the garden. Of course, Judas was gone. We know Peter and John remained. Peter went into seclusion in Jerusalem and did not witness the crucifixion. It is said that neither John nor Mary, Yahshua’s mother, stayed to witness His expiration. Records reveal that only one out of ten ever survived even the Roman floggings themselves.

All of the followers of Christ were persecuted after the crucifixion. Yet as a Roman senator and member of the legislative body of the Sanhedrin, although a disciple of Christ, Joseph of Arimathea freely walked the streets of Jerusalem, at least then. Although Mary was the next of kin to receive the body, particularly in a criminal case, it was Joseph, as the family guardian, who received Pilate’s official sanction for the body so as to bury Him in his garden within his Jerusalem estate. One would not normally seek the body from the Roman procurator, who had no interest in the matter, but rather one would ask the Sanhedrin (over the criminally charged), where the claim had to be before sunset under Israelite law. Both Pilate and Joseph knew that the Sadducees would destroy the body and put it in a ‘criminal pit’, destroying all record of His existence. The Sanhedrin could easily interfere with Mary’s claim for the body of Christ, but not with Joseph’s. It was because of Joseph’s intercession that he became a

doubly marked man to the Edomite infiltrated Sanhedrin and high-priest's office. We must remember from Scripture of their fears of the body being stolen. Yet it was Joseph, Nicodemus (with one hundred pounds of burial spices), Mary Magdalene, and the wife of Cleophas (who was Yahshua's aunt on Mary's side), fearing interception, who took the body for burial.

Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James) and Salome (the wife of Zebedee) went to the tomb when it was still dark on the morning after Sabbath. They saw a young man dressed in white, sitting on the ledge in the tomb. He told them that they must go to Galilee, where they would meet Christ.

Mary Magdalene hurried to inform Peter and John first of the missing body. They in turn went to the tomb, where John picked up the burial linen that Messiah had been wrapped in, which was still intact and stiff from the spices. Then the man in white was gone.

After the crucifixion, the Sadducees requested of Pilate for the Romans to post guard over the tomb, fearing a ruse of the disciples to steal the body. Pilate refused the guards. The Sanhedrin posted their own guards. However, the sepulchre was unguarded when the women arrived early that morning.

Should it have been Roman guards who fell asleep during their post, it would have automatically carried the death penalty, under Roman military custom. Yet this was not so for the Sanhedrin. The priest's guards admitted to falling asleep, finding the stone rolled away from the tomb. The Scriptures are clear that Caiaphas then bribed them to say that the disciples stole the body. Caiaphas then ordered Joseph before the Sanhedrin for questioning, where he accused Joseph of taking the body, and then demanding it back. It is evident that the Sanhedrin did everything within their means to protect that body from coming up missing, yet it was beyond their power to prosecute him. The Sanhedrin did not bother to interrogate Mary (mother of Christ), Peter, John or Nicodemus, or any of the other women.

The Sanhedrin, who were primarily made up of Edomite Jews or mixed Canaanite blood, rather than of the holy seed of any tribe of Israel, set out to exterminate any followers of the risen Messiah Yahshua. They were first known as followers of 'The Way'. Saul led this secret police (like today's Mossad) of the Sanhedrin. Prisons were soon overcrowded with captured victims.

Stephen, defying the Sadducees, preached the Word throughout Jerusalem. Some three to five thousand were being converted on a daily basis (St. Luke). These Judeans were the first converts, members of the holy seed of Israel. This infuriated the Sadducean priesthood.

Stephen was one of the first martyrs as Saul looked on at his public stoning. Saul illegally sought and chased down any followers of The Way outside of his jurisdiction. By the year A.D. 36, many of the followers escaped the holy land. Soon after, Claudius Caesar proclaimed an edict, making it a capital offence to be a Christian. Subsequent emperors would follow this edict. The Romans were to exterminate any and all Christians for the safety of the Empire. There are mentioned (in Scripture) seventy, then one hundred and twenty other apostles, plus many other

disciples who were dispersed by A.D. 36. It would be less than 40 years later when the city would be totally destroyed, the area inhabited by heathens only, when Titus, the son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian would lay waste to Jerusalem, from A.D. 68 to 70. This fulfilled the judgment when Yahshua decreed to the Sadducean Jews, that the glory of the Kingdom shall be taken from them and given to another nation who was worthy, that being the twelve tribes of Israel scattered abroad, including those in 'the Isles'. Saul would soon become converted on the road to Damascus. It was thereafter that Saul, who was known by more than one name, would be referred to as Paul (by Luke's records), where he would then go to the scattered nations of Israel to found the churches.

The Romans did not Christianize the known world, but rather the Canaanite-jews put the Romans up to opposing Christianity and got away with it for nearly three hundred years! From about this time on we must rely on secular history.

There are many legends from antiquity that proclaim that Joseph of Arimathea and Yahshua, when He was a teen, were linked to the tin mines of Cornwall in the British Isles. One such story relates how Yahshua, while on an expedition with His uncle, working with the miners taught them how to purge the tin of the ore wolframite. Another story tells of how Yahshua and Joseph often anchored their ship in the harbor at the mouth of Camel River and would come ashore for water for their ship. In fact, nearby there is an ancient well that, since time immemorial, is still called the "Jesus Well". It was always regarded as having healing powers. For centuries pilgrims came to the well where the remains of a chapel which was erected over it are still discernible. Records of its existence go back to at least the thirteenth century which refer to it, but even then the date and origin are unknown.

Another Cornish link of their visits to the Isles is found in the almost unknown "Place Manor Church" of St. Anthony-in-Roseland. "In the pre-Norman stone arch over the South Door of the Church is carved a story in ancient pictographs. The carvings are over 1000 years old and display an anchor, a Lamb and Cross insignia, the Lamb of God. The story told by the carvings is of Jesus and His uncle coming to Place for tin. Their boat got into difficulties, during a storm, and washed ashore on the headland where the modern lighthouse now stands. The local inhabitants (operating the trading post there) brought Joseph's boat into the lee of the headland by Place. While repairs were being made, Joseph and Jesus stayed there, and before they left they erected a little shrine with an account of their visit there" (TG p. 29). These carved pictographs are similar with Egyptian and Phoenician symbols. Similar symbols are found on a doorway of a temple at Denderah, in lower Egypt, belonging to the later Hyksos dynasties. An archaeologist (whose name is not mentioned by Capt) has interpreted these carvings to confirm that Yahshua not only came to Place, but also records His birth and the date of His suffering. Part of the interpretation shows "The Lamb and the Cross are facing the sun – This means that He was here in the early years of His life. His future was before Him. Because He is on the left of the center line (of the carvings) – it means He was here in December" (*The Story of Place*, by Edward Harte)

Capt erroneously feels that the Hyksos Dynasties were Hebrew Phoenicians in origin, and that because the Hebrews in fact have been established in the Isles centuries before Christ, there should be no mystery as to the use of Phoenician symbols in Cornwall, then stating: "Logically, we may suppose that after thousands of years contact with the Phoenician traders, the Cornish people would have been greatly influenced by their civilization." However, the Hyksos were in fact Kenites, of the tribe of Cain, and not "Hebrew Phoenician." (See "Kenites", *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, volume 3, page 782). Regardless, this influence extended even to the early Celts worshipping the same gods. Thus, the Celtic Priesthood was initiated into their rituals – learning and using the symbolic (esoteric) signs of the Phoenicians. This knowledge continued on down the ages and into the early Christian times. Just as the Phoenicians used Ogham script (an early form of linear writing), so did the early Celts" (TG p. 32).

Here I must make mention that there are other sources within the Identity teachings which claim the Phoenicians were in fact Canaanites who, as records show, are of the cursed seed forevermore. Actually, because Canaanites lived along the Mediterranean coast, in the areas of Tyre and Sidon when the Israelites came into the Promised Land, and because they came to live in that area, they would often be incorrectly referred to as "Phoenicians" also because of the purple dye that was manufactured and shipped out of their ports (Phoenicia being in reference to the dye itself). This area was where the tribe of Asher settled, with the tribe of Dan to their north. Dan has always been known for its excellent seafaring abilities, and of course Asherites lived at the port cities. So for this reason some have confused the Phoenicians, who were Shemitic and Hebrew, with 'Canaanites', yet such an idea is absolutely erroneous. Actually the Israelite tribes that can be identified with the Phoenicians are Dan, Asher, Zebulun, Gad and Naphtali.

Quoting from the *Ensign Message*, p. 25: "By the eleventh century B.C. the tribe of Asher alone of sea faring men, under the name Phoenician, had passed out of the Mediterranean, coasted along Spain and Gaul, established a trade with the 'tin islands', the Scilly Isles and Cornwall (*Universal Encyclopedia*). The 'Phoenicians', we now realize, who, according to many writers, made settlements in Britain, were of the Israel tribe of Asher, and were not of the "accursed Hamitic race of Canaan ... The reputed colonization of Cornwall by Phoenicians rests upon the same assumption as that of 'Phoenician' Ireland, [whose nomenclature] ... are without foundation in historical fact." Bruce Hannay in his *Race Origins* states "The Phoenicians were Israelites."

But returning to what has been found in Place, this "Ogham" script is Phoenician in origin. There is a panel in the Spry Memorial Chapel (in the North Transept, [the opposite end of the aforementioned carvings]) of the Place Manor Church. Experts in ancient writing agree that these particular writings are no later than the end of the first century A.D. or at the latest, the beginning of the second century. The inscription tells the same story as the other stone carvings over the South Door. It starts with the ancient sign of "Ichtus," the fish. To the early Christians, "Ichtus" stood for "Jesus Christ-God-Son-Saviour," the first letter of each letter spelling "Ichtus", which is the

Greek word for fish. Below the fish is found the top portion of a ship with its sails furled, meaning the ship was at anchor. Next is Messiah Yahshua's head crowned in thorns, showing the inscription was after His crucifixion. If in fact Yahshua once stayed here, these inscriptions are a memorial to that.

In 1835 the lighthouse in Place was built upon the foundation of an ancient chapel dedicated to St. Ann (Yahshua's grandmother), who came from Brittany, across the English Channel.

St. Just, in Cornwall, has their own legends of Yahshua coming there as a young man. One of the traditions is about a stone that Yahshua stepped on when He first landed there. In 1932, a flat stone was found by workmen cleaning out a blocked culvert coming from what is known as the "Christening Well" since times of antiquity. The stone was covered with unintelligible markings. The local inhabitants think this is indeed that stone of legend, marked at a later date after the identity of Yahshua became known to them. Even before this stone was found, the "Holy Legend" was that Yahshua, as a young boy, came there with His uncle Joseph. Nobody would express any doubt about Christ coming to St. Just.

On ancient Ordinance maps of western Cornwall, two rich tin mines had the names "Corpus Christi" (Body of Christ) and "Wheel of Jesus" (wheel being an old Cornish word for 'mine'). Found around this area are numerous Celtic crosses, called "Tunic Crosses." They are found by roads and churches here and nowhere else in the British Isles. On one side of these stone cut crosses is a crudely cut Christian cross. On the other side is a young boy dressed in a knee-length tunic, a youth with out stretched arms in an attitude of blessing, likely commemorating Yahshua's visits there as a young boy with His uncle Joseph.

Just north of Glastonbury, in Somerset County in Cornwall, are the tin, lead and copper mines of the Mendip Hills. Traditions there relate that Joseph came to the Mendips and was accompanied on several occasions by the boy Yahshua. At the parish Church of Priddy, atop the Mendips, they say "As sure as our Lord was at Priddy." They sing a carol which professes "Joseph was a tin merchant," and goes on to describe his arrival by boat from the sea.

It is believed in Glastonbury that Yahshua even built a secluded dwelling place out of wattle, and that this place was preserved for some time thereafter. Capt says: "They preserved His dwelling as a 'sacred spot'." Later, when Jesus' uncle Joseph of Arimathea (the Nobilus Decurio) and his companions returned to settle there after the Passion of Christ, they found that dwelling, the "Home of God" still standing. Only this could explain the two mysterious titles, which in the earliest times clung to Glastonbury – "Secretum Domirui" (The Secret of the Lord) and "Domus Dei" (The House of God). This brings us back to our story in Jerusalem, when Joseph took the battered body of our Saviour from the cross and laid it to rest, and the events that followed, giving cause to leave Palestine.

Another traditional though sparsely substantiated tale is that in A.D. 36, Joseph of Arimathea and others with him were set out in a boat without sail or oars in the Mediterranean Sea, where they drifted to Marseilles, in Gaul (today's France), and from

there travelled on into Britain, where Joseph and others would preach the Gospel, where Joseph would eventually die of a full life (Cardinal Baronius, *Ecclesiastical Annals*, Vatican Library). We will pick up our story here next, where there is a mass of corroboration to support this story, by Greek and Roman authorities and others, which, if true, must come as a shock to most Christians today. It is now the reader's responsibility to review this evidence, and determine its value! More to come.