

Chapter twelve: The missing names

In the previous chapter, the confrontation described in Galatians was examined to establish that James and Cephas were separate characters, interacting with each other, and that Cephas was accountable to James. It was noted that each apparently belonged to a priestly family, that of Clopas/Cleopas in the case of James and Caiphas/Cephas in the case of Paul's antagonist at Antioch.

A strong case was also made that, rather than this being an unlikely coincidence, there was in reality only one such priestly family, that of the High Priest Joseph Caiphas/Caiaphas. Both persons were, on this understanding, members of it.

It was also argued that the references to characters with the title Cephas would have originally included identifying forenames which have subsequently been masked or eliminated, as Christian scribes over time copied and edited the texts.

The author of Mark used Paul's letters, including Galatians and 1 Corinthians, to provide source material for his gospel account, adapting it to suit his purposes. He also went looking for evidence of characters who were, or could have been, associates of Jesus and then incorporated these into his narrative. He borrowed a group of brothers for the family of Jesus and then may, possibly even without realising it, have used the same group to fill out his list of the apostles.

Mark also wrongly identified 'Cephas' as the same character as Simon who appears in the gospel story as Jesus' closest follower. Although Cephas appears only in mistranslation as Simon Peter or Peter (Petros) in Mark's account, there would originally have been an explicit link through the Aramaic word, as there were with other Aramaic words and phrases which this author used.

While it might be regarded as a matter of conjecture as to why the link was subsequently removed, a good supposition is that retention of the word Cephas (and likewise also the High Priest's title Caiphas which is effectively the same) would have served to point up Mark's mistake.

There are some references to Cephas in 1 Corinthians, but it is only in Galatians that characters with this title have a role in the narrative. Starting from the beginning, I propose to see how the text, as it has survived, may provide indications as to what were the missing forenames.

This is how Paul describes his initial association with the Nazarene Jews, who were followers of Jesus, and with Jewish leader James who supported them:

But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his son in me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except (or, only) James, the brother of the Lord.

In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!

Then, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. But I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard it said, 'The one who was once perse-

cutting us is now preaching the faith he had previously sought to destroy'. And they glorified God because of me.

Galatians 1, 15-24

This passage conveys something that has already been touched upon, Paul's objective to find out more about Jesus. Hence, possibly, the prolonged visit to see Cephas.

It should be noted that there were no actual Christians at this point, only Nazarene Jews supported by James. It was their gatherings, to which Paul was referring, when he wrote of 'the churches (ekklesiae) of Judea that are in Christ'.

Paul was keen to establish that he was not beholden to the apostles, who had known Jesus. Hence his claims not to have previously interacted with them, but to have received his commission directly from God. As will become apparent, Paul preferred to deal with Jewish leaders, portraying himself at least as equal, while at the same time treating these in his letters with vitriol, sarcasm and scorn.

James, as the priestly James and interlocutor of Paul, could not have been brother of the rebel Jesus. The phrase, 'the brother of the Lord', must thus therefore have arisen, as an incorporated marginal note or deliberate addition, by someone copying Paul and misguidedly seeking to identify characters as relatives of Jesus.

There are some odd features about the description of the persons Paul went to see. As it now stands, it reads as an assertion that Paul went specifically to see one character, avoiding all the (avowedly, less important) people who were apostles before him. But, in making the statement, there is an aside indicating that he did actually see James, which rather counteracts the impression that his prime mission was to see Cephas.

Indeed, it is James who would arguably have been the person Paul most wanted to see, as the leader, or among the leaders, who was according to Acts (and also Paul's alternative view in Galatians) able to decide what part of Jewish Law should apply to Gentiles.

Could Cephas here have been the person whom the author of Mark mistook for Jesus's key follower Simon, already in exile? It is hardly likely since that person, as described later in Galatians, is accountable to James and therefore of less consequence than James. In the passage above, Cephas has pre-eminence and James is apparently referred to only in an aside. Presuming 'Simon Cephas' to have been there originally in place of 'Cephas' at this point would thus provide no clarification.

The passage lacks coherence; it evidently jumbles the information on who Paul went to see.

It only makes sense on one interpretation, and this is that Paul is saying that he went to see just one person. But he refers to this person twice, fully at first (before this being later redacted) and then by forename only, in making the point that he went to see no one else.

The missing forename of Cephas here was thus James! This explanation eliminates the clumsy construction, the roundabout description and the apparent downgrading of James in the hierarchy of people Paul wanted to meet.

Here is how the passage would arguably have read:

Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with [James] Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except (or, only) James...

This now makes sense, entirely accords with Paul's intent, restores what is otherwise a random aside and resolves what we know to be missing in this passage, the forename of the character with the title Cephas.

The interpretation is also consistent with the understanding already reached, that there was one High Priestly family, described with the variants Caiphas/Cephas and Clopas/Cleophas and that James was a member of it. Moreover, as a member of that family and perhaps having served as deputy/temple captain, James could well have been regarded by Paul as someone with information on the rebel Jesus.

It does not appear however, from what Paul actually wrote about Jesus, as if he gained much in this respect from his protracted stay in Jerusalem.

The remaining references to Cephas to be discussed, including some already touched upon, occur in the next chapter of Galatians:

Then, after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them, though only in a private meeting with the ones seeming to be something, the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain.

So, not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. But, because of (in defiance of) false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus so that they might enslave us, so that they might enslave us – we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

But from those seeming to be something (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality), those seeming to be something contributed nothing to me.

But, on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, *just as Peter had been for the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me for the Gentiles)* and when James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, recognised the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

They asked only that we should remember the poor, which was the very thing I was eager to do.

But, when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him face to face because he stood condemned. For, before certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But, after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision party. And the other Jews joined in this pretence, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

But, when I saw that they were not acting correctly in respect of the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas, before them all, ‘If you as a Jew, live like a Gentile, and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’

Galatians 2, 1-14

Paul’s take is that he was not summoned to Jerusalem but ‘went up according to a revelation’ and only privately to ‘the ones seeming to be something’ (so, bypassing those whom Paul did not deem even to be his equals). But he also complained of ‘false brothers’ brought in to spy on him and he felt that it necessary to affirm that one of his group, Titus, was not ‘compelled to be circumcised’.

It is evident that, even at this early stage, Paul was under some pressure. Acts records that Paul’s followers later sought to persuade him not to go to a further meeting in Jerusalem, for fear that his life was threatened. As, indeed, this proved to be the case. Paul was first discip-

lined by Jewish elders for teaching against Jewish Law, and then dragged from the Temple by an angry mob.

Paul's view of the dispensation, which he claims he was given in respect of Gentile god-fearers, differs from what appears to be an account of the same meeting given in Acts. This also has senior Jewish figures in Jerusalem debating what rules should be followed by Gentile god-fearers, with the question of circumcision in both accounts being one of the matters of contention. But in Acts, James lays down what should be required, in a restatement of the old Noahide laws for god-fearers. It was not a question, as Paul would have it, of who should go to whom, since James and the other elders were in any case Jews. It was a question of what should be required of god-fearers under the auspices of Judaism.

There were, around CE 50, yet to be any distinctly identifiable Christians. What Paul was doing was attempting to assert autonomy, for his adapted brand of Jewish monotheism for Gentiles, framed against a dispensation by Jewish elders which he claimed he had been given but which, it would seem, had not actually been made.

There is some confusion in the available manuscripts and, by extension in the minds of those who were writing them, over the identities of Peter and Cephas. One early manuscript has Peter in place of Cephas, as one of the 'pillars', and also in place of the next reference to Cephas, but retains Cephas for the final reference.

That makes no sense because it is very clear that it is the *same* person whom Paul is accusing of hypocrisy in the final two paragraphs – for first eating with Gentiles and then withdrawing from eating with Gentiles, thus living like a Gentile while demanding that Gentiles live like Jews.

So, a choice has to be made. Compilers of the 'critical text' of the New Testament have gone with the manuscripts that make the three references all to the same character Cephas, and I would concur with this.

It should be noted that Paul wrote his letters a couple of decades before Mark and so, in principle, have precedence. But the earliest available manuscripts of Paul are later than Mark and it is likely also that much of the editing of Paul took place in awareness of what the author of Mark had written. The confusion which editing introduced (specifically in the papyrus manuscript p46), I would argue arose through Mark's mistakes in deciding that the Cephas (κηφας) in Paul's letters referred to Jesus' follower Simon and must have derived (as a nickname) from the Aramaic for rock. There is evidence of a chain in faulty reasoning from Simon through Simon Cephas to Cephas and then Petros/Peter.

The Aramaic word for rock (כִּיפָא) while sounding similar to the High Priest's title (קִיפָא) to a Greek speaker, differs in its initial letter in the original Aramaic. It has a kaph, rather than a qoph. What Paul wrote in transliteration in Greek, κηφας, might have been taken either way.

Another choice which has to be made is in respect of the references in the passage to 'Peter' and his supposed 'mission' to the circumcised, that is Jews. This does appear to refer to the activities of Simon, the follower of Jesus depicted in Acts as running an expansionist Jewish Nazarene ekklesia. But, for all the reasons already given, this person would not have been known to Paul as Petros. This latter was a product Mark's misplaced misinterpretation of Cephas, as arising from the Aramaic for rock.

When Paul was writing, that mistake had yet to happen. If Paul had referred to this character at all, he would simply have written Simon.

The best explanation, I suggest, is that a subsequent editor of Paul's letter, perhaps intending to be helpful, provided the entire explanatory elaboration which reads as an interpolation (in italics, in the passage above).

Paul did not write, and would not have written, any of the references to ‘Peter’ since this is an invention of Mark, arising from his mistaken perception and dates from a time some years later than Paul’s letters. Paul did know and write about characters called Cephas, which was a title for which there was no direct translation in Greek and which is one reason why he did not provide a translation from the Aramaic, as he usually did for Aramaic words.

Misapprehension by the author of Mark was one source for scribal confusion. What may also have contributed is what appears to be the case, that Paul was referring successively in his letter to two characters, both called Simon. This is as he wrote the text, or as it has been edited.

The first character was the Nazarene Simon, presumed follower of Jesus, who set up a fundamentalist Jewish ekklesia. The second Simon had the title Caiphas/Cephas, was a member of the High Priest Joseph’s family and was accountable to James. He was also arguably brother to James (thus, part of the same family) and the person who took over from James as episkopos (overseer), looking after the interests of Jews in Jerusalem, following the failed uprising. So, who then were the three persons ‘seeming to be pillars’, to use Paul’s sarcastic reference to the characters that he had to deal with in Jerusalem? In Acts, only James is mentioned among Jewish elders meeting to decide what rules should apply to Gentile God-fearers in the diaspora. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, two others are also apparently cited, Cephas and John.

Cephas, as it has been established, should and would have had a forename. On this basis, Paul could have had to deal in Jerusalem with a triumvirate of James and Simon Cephas and John. The forename then subsequently lost in the rewriting of this scenario is Simon, while the title Cephas applies to both James and Simon.

The other possibility is that the phrase originally read as James Cephas and John, referring to only two characters instead of three. In which case, nothing will have been lost - though a linking word KAI (and) will have been added. The editor of the passage assumed a mistake had been made, failing to register that James Cephas could have been – and was – a single character.

Given that Simon Cephas was accountable to James and of lesser significance, at least until he succeeded James, it is my view that Paul would have seen just James and John as the persons of circumstance with whom he had to deal.

What should not need to be reiterated is that ‘James, Cephas and John’ (or James Cephas and John) could not, for a number of reasons, have been the three followers of Jesus: James and John, who were sons of Zebedee, and Simon (wrongly) called Peter. This is because James, son of Zebedee, had some twenty years previously been caught and executed by Herod Agrippa 1. It is also because Simon had, at about that time, been forced to flee into exile. It is also furthermore because those facing Paul were senior figures, with some power in the Jewish hierarchy, as opposed to being associates of a rebel from Galilee in a failed rebellion.

John could, incidentally, have been one of any number of figures. But I suggest as one possibility, Jonathan, who succeeded Joseph as High Priest and remained influential after the end of his tenure. He was however assassinated, according to Josephus, in the late CE 50s.

Returning to the passage from the second chapter of Galatians, we can now fill in the eliminated names and see from our textual time machine what Paul/Saul may originally have written.

This was that he was claiming a right to canvass Gentile god-fearers in the diaspora, just as others in Jerusalem looked after the interests of circumcised Jews. He claimed parity with, and a dispensation from, Jewish leaders whom he saw as no more than his equals. These in-

cluded James Cephas, the person he also went initially to visit in Jerusalem. Paul also found himself at odds with Simon Cephas who was, I have argued, accountable to, brother of and ultimately the successor to James.

Paul claimed in his letter that all he was required to do in return was 'remember the poor' which, in the context, probably meant raising money for the zealous, Nazarene Jews who pooled their property and for that reason were known as the poor ones. This is as were their successors, the Ebionite Jews.

Paul/Saul wrote his letters from about CE 40 – 60. These were subsequently edited and collated. The first draft of Mark appears to have been generated just after the end of the failed Jewish uprising, so around CE 75.

By this time, an originally possibly real, zealous Nazarene Jewish leader Simon had been retrospectively transformed. This Simon acquired a fictitious name Petros, due to Mark's mistake, and then the equally fictitious attributes of being first head of a Christian Church centred on Rome. Around the end of the first century of the beginning of the second century, Christian editors looking again at Paul's letters could not comprehend (or maybe could not contemplate), against this background, any references to a James Cephas or to a possible, alternative Simon Cephas.

These would have drawn attention to the fact that it was not a case of one person with a nickname meaning 'rock' but several people with a family title. They adopted the expedient of making simple changes to eliminate the associations between these names.

This is how and why forenames that would have gone with the title Cephas in Paul's letters were removed, while leaving the structure of the discourse still intact in the passages from Galatians examined above.

So, this then really is it. Our forays back in time have taken us back to the duplicitous Paul and the high company he kept, to the story-teller who was the author of Mark and the mistakes and misrepresentations he made, to a priestly Jewish family whose place in the record has been obscured and whose destiny was denied.

We have seen the creation of a Jewish tale, turning death and defeat into the fulfilment of prophecy, the transformation of a Jewish messiah into a sacrificial saviour, the adaptation of Jewish Law for Gentiles and ultimately for Christians. We have seen, progressively over centuries, the doctrinal rewriting of ancient texts, to make it all fit.

The study of these texts is our time machine.

Hope you have enjoyed the ride.

And thanks for coming along.

Further reading

The present work draws from the published material listed below, some of which provides greater detail.

Please note that, as my research and analysis has progressed, I have developed a more critical appreciation of the conventional positions taken in respect of the character James, with whom Saul/Paul is described as interacting in Acts and Galatians, and also Simon, called 'Peter' in Mark and Acts.

I now take the position that the James, who wielded considerable authority as a Jewish leader, cannot also have been either the brother of a crucified messianic rebel Jesus or a member of the Nazarene sect, to which Paul was accused of belonging and of which Jesus and then his follower Simon (in the gospel narrative) were apparently leaders.

The evidence from Acts and other sources indicates that the Nazarenes looked up to the priestly Jewish leader James and that, in return, James may have looked out for their interests.

My understanding in respect of Simon (follower of Jesus in the gospel narrative) is that he is distinct from another Simon who assisted James and that he was also wrongly attributed the Greek name 'Petros', as a result of Mark's misunderstanding (or, possibly, conscious misrepresentation) of an Aramaic title, Cephass/Caiphass.

In respect of these matters, please rely on the analysis in my more recent publications, *Who Was Cephass?*, published by Blue Cedar, *Simon Peter and Cephass: Two Persons and One Fiction?* and *God's Wrath and the Brother of the Lord* published online at www.theinventionofjesus.com and this present work, *The Textual Time Traveller*.

The Invention of Jesus, Watkins, 2013

The Women who Went to the Tomb, The Heretic, vol 3, 2013

Two Blind Beggars, The Heretic, vol 9, 2016

The Lost Narrative of Jesus, John Hunt, 2016

Another Scribe, or Another Exemplar? JGRChJ, vol 13, pp 111-128, 2017

Who Was Cephass? Blue Cedar Publishing, 2022

Simon Peter and Cephass; Two Persons and One Fiction? online, 16 6 2023, at www.theinventionofjesus.com

God's Wrath and the Brother of the Lord, online, 25 05 2024, at www.theinventionofjesus.com