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Information on how the early Christians prepared and/or fled from the destruction of Jerusalem?

Asked 5 years ago Modified 5 years ago Viewed 6k times

▲
2 Does anyone have any information regarding how the early Christians prepared or handled the destruction of Jerusalem? Such as how long before hand they fled and what did they take and where did they go and what did they do afterwards?

▼ Please site sources if you have them as I am very interested in reading more into this topic. Thank you very much!



early-church

jerusalem

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edited Feb 15, 2020 at 13:26



Ken Graham ♦

76.1k 7 58 183

asked Feb 13, 2020 at 13:10



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215 5 13

1 I seem to remember that Foxe's Book of Martyrs has a section on it. – Nigel J Feb 13, 2020 at 13:55

Handsome is as handsome does – KorvinStarmast Feb 19, 2020 at 16:26

2 Answers

Sorted by: Highest score (default) ⚡

▲
2 There was a brief window of opportunity for Christians to flee Jerusalem between 69 C.E. when Vespasian returned to Rome and before March 70 C.E. when his son Titus laid siege to Jerusalem. Here is a brief extract from an article that sets the scene:



The siege and conquest of Jerusalem was the climax of the Great Revolt, which began four years earlier with a number of attacks by Jewish rebels in the Land of Israel against Roman authorities. After Syrian-based legionnaires failed to put down the unrest, responsibility for quelling the rebellion fell to the Roman general Vespasian,

accompanied by his son Titus. They slowly made their way south from the Galilee beginning in 67 C.E., conquering town after town. When Vespasian returned to Rome to become emperor in 69 C.E., Titus took over the leadership of the counter-offensive. Titus began his assault on Jerusalem in March of 70 C.E. with the help of four Roman legions who trapped between 600,000 (according to Tacitus) and 1 million people (the estimate of Josephus) in the city. The residents' situation was significantly worsened by the fact that the Jewish extremist group, the Sicarii, burned the Jewish population's stocks of food as part of a strategy meant to force them to fight the Romans rather than negotiate surrender...

By this point in late August of 70 C.E., many Jews fled the city and others moved to the upper city to make a final stand. The upper city fell on September 7 (although some sources say it happened September 26)...

According to Josephus, the former Jewish general who defected to the Romans and became the great historian of the "Jewish Wars," Titus killed most of the residents of the city, and ordered the razing of all but its tallest structures. Source: [This Day in Jewish History 70 C.E.: The Roman Siege of Jerusalem Ends](#)

Another source says the siege of the city began on 14 April 70 CE, three days before the beginning of Passover that year. According to Josephus, Jerusalem was thronged with many people who had come to celebrate Passover. The article below gives a detailed description of events leading up to the destruction of the Temple, and makes this observation:

The Roman legions quickly crushed the remaining Jewish resistance. Some of the remaining Jews escaped through hidden tunnels and sewers, while others made a final stand in the Upper City. Source: [Seige of Jerusalem \(Wikipedia\)](#).

There is an interesting comment in the New Living Translation study Bible regarding Mark 13:14-16 where Jesus warns those in Judaea to flee to the hills. The signal to flee, described by Jesus in Mark 13:14 was "a sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing where he should not be." This could have been in 69-70 C.E. when the Zealots appointed an unqualified person as the high priest of the nation and "came into the sanctuary with polluted feet" (Josephus, War 4.3.4-8). Jesus said they had to flee without waiting to pack up their goods.

The early church historian Eusebius tells of a prophetic oracle given to the Jerusalem church that caused them to flee the city before its destruction (Eusebius, 'Church History' 3.5.3). Believers were to flee from the approaching Roman army as soon as they saw the sign of 13:14. The Roman army did not practice a swift "blitzkrieg" kind of warfare. Their movement tended to be cautious, methodical, and relentless. Jesus warned against playing a waiting game to see how things would develop. (NIV Study Bible)

As for the manner in which Christians fled Jerusalem before Titus and his legions surrounded the city, Ken Graham has provided excellent sources of information. One thing seems clear; the warning given by Jesus to his disciples was to get out fast and not to hang about, packing up.

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edited Jun 17, 2020 at 8:57

answered Feb 15, 2020 at 12:21



Community Bot

1



Lesley

34.4k

10

55

142

+1 Good information is always worth adding! – Ken Graham ♦ Feb 15, 2020 at 12:43

Thank you. I reckon you should get best answer, though! – Lesley Feb 15, 2020 at 12:49

Not sure on that. Yours has a more personal flare to it and I like that. I am the more matter of fact type.

– Ken Graham ♦ Feb 15, 2020 at 12:52



2



Information on how the early Christians prepared or fled from the destruction of Jerusalem?

Eusebius and **Epiphanius of Salamis** cite a tradition that before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 the Jerusalem Christians had been miraculously warned to flee to Pella.

[Flight to Pella](#)

The fourth-century church fathers Eusebius and Epiphanius of Salamis cite a tradition that before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 the Jerusalem Christians had been miraculously warned to flee to Pella (Tabaquat Fahil) in the region of the Decapolis across the Jordan River. The flight to Pella probably did not include the Ebionites.

The authenticity of this tradition has been a much debated question since 1951 when S. G. F. Brandon in his work *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* provided strong arguments against it, arguing that the Jewish Christians would have been allied to their compatriots, the Zealots; only after the destruction of the Jewish Christian community would Christianity have emerged as a universalist religion. The Christian-Zealot alliance has hardly been taken seriously in theology, but the historicity of the flight to Pella has been controversial ever since.

Ancient sources

The people of the Church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ traveled from Jerusalem, so that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea..." — Eusebius, *Church History* 3, 5, 3

This heresy of the Nazoraeans exists in Beroea in the neighbourhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokaba (Chochabe in Hebrew). From there it took its beginning after the exodus from Jerusalem when all the disciples went to live in Pella because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege. Because of this advice they lived in Perea after having moved to that place, as I said." — Epiphanius, [Panarion](#) 29,7,7-8

For after all those who believed in Christ had generally come to live in Perea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis of which it is written in the Gospel that it is situated in the neighbourhood of the region of Batanaea and Basanitis, Ebion's preaching originated here after they had moved to this place and had lived there." — Epiphanius, [Panarion](#) 30, 2, 7

So Aquila, while he was in Jerusalem, also saw the disciples of the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith and working great signs, healings, and other miracles. For they were such as had come back from the city of Pella to Jerusalem and were living there and teaching. For when the city was about to be taken and destroyed by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should remove from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella, the city above mentioned in Transjordan. And this city is said to be of the Decapolis." — Epiphanius, [On Weights and Measures](#) 15

As for how and when this happened, we may never truly know, even if it is true at all.

A PROPOSED SCENARIO OF JERUSALEM CHRISTIAN ACTIONS AS THE ROMANS THREATENED THE CITY

Did the Jerusalem Christians flee to Pella just before the Romans destroyed their city? There is no way to know for sure. We can only deal in probabilities. If we accept as reliable the accounts of Eusebius and others, the issue is settled. If, as did Brandon, one begins by doubting those records and seeks reasons for supporting that skepticism, the answer to the question will most certainly be, "No," for when evidence is incomplete, selected and biased reading and interpretations of data can usually yield the desired conclusion.

Between these two are other options, including evaluating carefully both the primary sources and their critics. In addition, beyond the direct evidence there may be circumstantial, which although a bit oblique and supplementary, may be relevant. It is evidence of this type that we seek to add to the investigation of the Pella tradition.

Perhaps the situation and unfolding events were something like what follows. The Jerusalem Christian community was centered on the southwest hill of Jerusalem, now

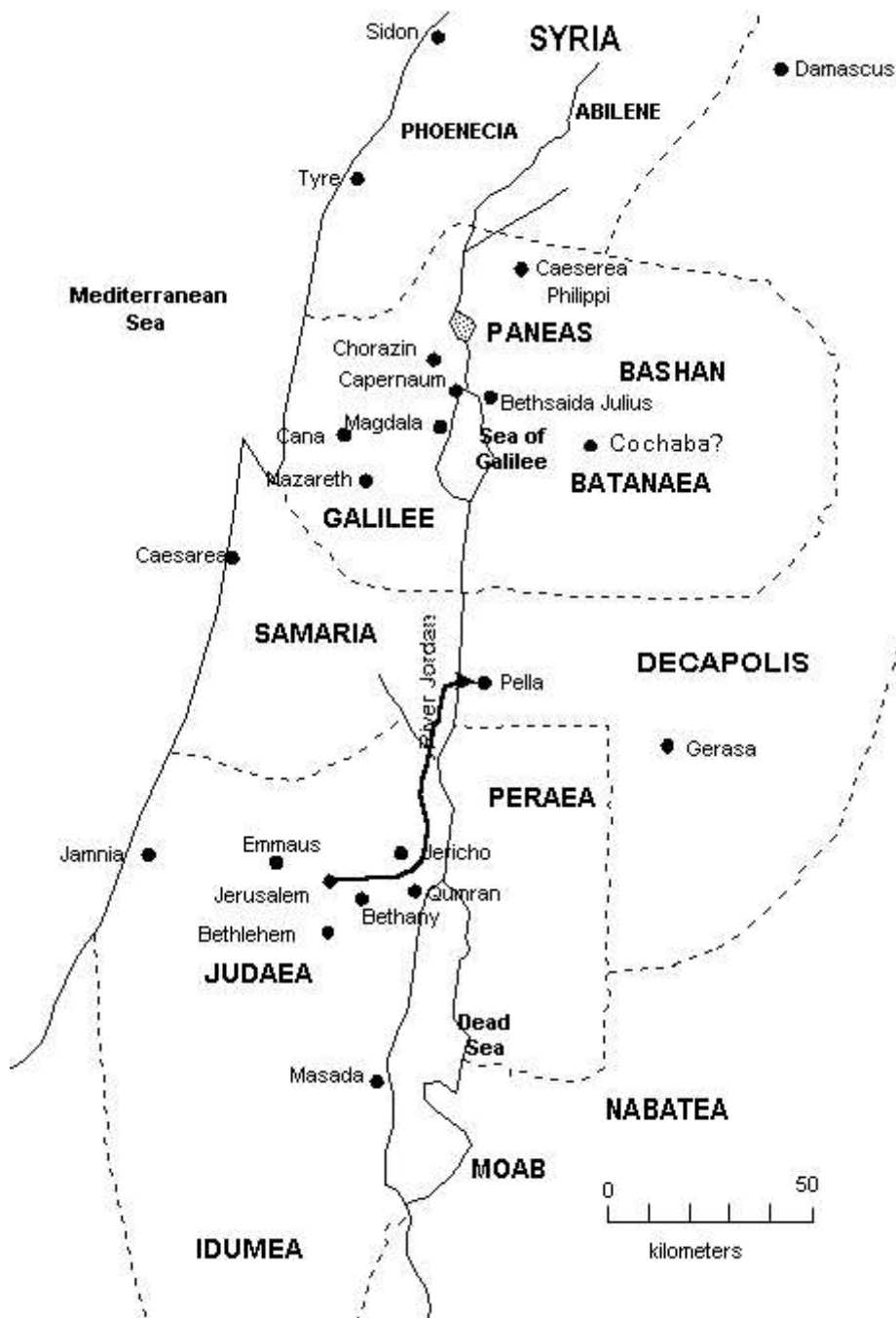
called Mt. Zion. In all probability it was here they had eaten the last passover meal with Jesus, were together when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and may have constructed their own synagogue. This location, although containing such "up scale" residences as the palace of the high priest, the Christians probably shared it with others who were a bit out of the mainstream of Jerusalem life Jewish groups, such as the Essenes.

If indeed the Jerusalem Christians fled the city, we do not know whether they did so in mass, in small groups, or as individuals. Furthermore, the time of this exodus has been variously placed. Most likely are following the Jewish victory over Cestius Gallus (A.D.66/67), or in the period following the temporary withdrawal of Vespasian to await developments in Rome (A.D. 68/69). The latter would seem more logical to me. They would have already seen Jerusalem "surrounded by armies" (cf. Luke 21:20) and presumably been free to travel toward Jericho since the Tenth Legion had pretty much left the area and was already established on the Mount of Olives; in any case, at this point in time Roman military activities had been halted.

They probably left the city through the Essene (or possibly the Tekoa) Gate, into Hinnon and on to the Kidron Valley. Although it is likely they would have avoided the Roman road, there were a number of more secluded routes through wadis and other paths open to them. This had been an escape route used before, for example by kings David and Zedekiah, and into the plain south of Jericho (the Buqeiah).

Upon arriving in the Jordan Valley the friendly terrain to the north and the desire to move away from Jerusalem could have invited travel in that direction. As they neared Scythopolis they crossed the Jordan and settled in the region of Pella. Later, some remained in the Pella-Decapolis region and formed the nucleus of both the orthodox and heretical Christians found there in following centuries. Others returned not only to Jerusalem, to their old area on the southwest hill.

Those who returned brought with them a bridge between the original Jewish Christian community and the predominantly Gentile church which had arisen by the beginning of the second century. The Jerusalem-Jewish Church, weakened though it was, provided continuity with the historical Jesus and the apostles for wider Church. Their presence and their ties with the past made it unnecessary for Christianity to be "virtually reborn." The "Mother Church," frail from her experiences and limited by her environment, was back to help guide her children and grandchildren in the narrow way, the way of the truth and the faith which, through her had been "once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). - [Did Jerusalem Christians Flee to Pella?](#)



Map of the Decapolis showing the location of [Pella](#).

A more diverse series of archeological pictures of Pella, Jordan can be seen [here](#).

Pella (Ancient Greek: Πέλλα, Hebrew: פחל) is found in northwestern Jordan, at the modern town of Tabaqat Fahl, 27.4 (طبة فحل) km (17 miles) south of the Sea of Galilee. Pella represents one of circa ten Decapolis cities that were founded during the Hellenistic period and became powerful under Roman jurisdiction. With a history extending back into the Bronze Age, Pella expanded to its largest state during the Roman period. It is located in the Jordan Valley, 130 km (80 miles) north of Amman, and is half an hour by car from Irbid, in the north of the country. Today, the city's sizable collection of ruins are excavated by archaeologists, and attract thousands of tourists annually.

First Christians: the "flight to Pella"

From what is known as the "**flight to Pella**", around the time of the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, a Jewish sect of Nazarenes made their way to Pella and settled in the city, which thus became a Jewish Christian hub, during the early days of Christianity. According to Epiphanius, the disciples had been miraculously told by Christ to abandon Jerusalem because of the siege it was about to undergo. Epiphanius claims that after the destruction, some returned to Jerusalem. Similarly to Epiphanius, Eusebius of Caesarea recounts how Pella was a refuge for Jerusalem Christians who were fleeing the First Jewish–Roman War in the 1st century CE. Pella is alleged to have been the site of one of Christianity's earliest churches. According to Historian Edward Gibbon, the early Church of Jerusalem fled to Pella after the ruin of the temple staying there until their return to Zion during the reign of Emperor Hadrian making it a pilgrimage site for early Christians and modern Christians today. - [Pella, Jordan](#)

They were fortunate to have fled, for at one point Titus was crucifying some 500 Jews a day after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, according to [Josephus](#).



Image of mass [execution by crucifixion](#), somewhat similar to the ones used by Romans.

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answered Feb 13, 2020 at 23:16



Ken Graham ♦

76.1k 7 58 183