

# Contextualizing Prayer for Caesar

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Within certain strains of Christianity in the U.S., the disparagement of the president's policies or of his comportment in office—especially if the president is of the same political persuasion as one's interlocutor—will provoke the rejoinder that Christians are commanded to pray for their leaders, not to criticize them. And while we may feel in our bones that such unwillingness to hold the powerful to account is a shocking abdication of the prophetic witness to which servants of the Gospel have been called, we may, nevertheless, find ourselves without an answer to the retort that we must pray

for our rulers, since this duty is clearly laid upon us in the Holy Scriptures (cf. 1 Tim. 2:2). In this essay I do not wish to deny, nor even to challenge the biblical injunction to pray for our rulers, but I do wish to explore the origins of this commandment and to ascertain the circumstances under which it was given, and, in particular, I will seek to coordinate this duty with Jesus' teachings and to integrate it with his worldview. In doing so, we will find that praying for our leaders in no way implies divine sanction of the deeds of those who are in power any more than the command to pray for one's persecutors implies divine approval for those who mistreat the followers of Jesus.

## **Origins of Prayer for the Ruling Authorities**

The tradition behind the apostolic instruction to pray for Caesar can be traced back to the prophet Jeremiah and the exile of the kingdom of Judah to Babylon. From Jerusalem the prophet wrote to the Jewish deportees, instructing them to behave in the following manner:

...ask for the peace of the city where I have exiled you, and pray for it unto the LORD, for in its peace there will be peace for you. ...For thus says the LORD, when seventy years have been fulfilled for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will establish my word of promise to restore you to this place [i.e., to Jerusalem]. (Jer. 29:7, 10)

The reason Jeremiah instructed the Israelites to pray for the well being of the land of their exile was that for as long as the exile lasted Israel's fortunes would be inextricably bound to the fortunes of the kingdoms that ruled them. When the empire was at peace Israel would be secure; when the empire was ravaged by fire, sword, and famine, Israel would suffer along with the rest. And so Israel should pray for peace rather than for the destruction of their conquerors.



An impression (bulla) from the seal of Baruch, the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah. Image courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Jeremiah's practical wisdom ensured Israel's survival as a minority population within a vast and ever expanding empire. Had the Israelites prayed for the demise of the empire, calling down imprecations upon their captors and curses upon their rulers, they would not have been tolerated for long. Therefore they prayed that the king would rule wisely over a tranquil empire, because a foolish king reigning unsuccessfully over an empire in crisis might look upon Israel as a convenient scapegoat for his failures and misfortunes.

Prayer for the peace of the Babylonian empire did not, however, cancel Israel's desire for liberation from imperial rule. Jeremiah promised that a time of redemption and return would surely come, and this promise sustained Israel during the seventy years of its exile. Precisely because Israel clung to the hope of *divine* deliverance it could pray for the peace of the *human* empires that ruled over them. The exiles did not need to become a fifth column actively working to bring down the Babylonian empire from within, for Israel's redemption and liberation would come at the divinely appointed season. In the meantime it was in Israel's best interest to live peaceably within the empire and to act charitably toward their fellow subjects.

The second stage of development in the tradition of prayer for the imperial rulers coincided with the fulfillment of Jeremiah's promise that the exiles would return to Jerusalem at the end of seventy years. The return to Zion came about as a result of the conquest of the Babylonian empire by Cyrus the Great, who set up the Persian empire in its stead. To gain the loyalty of his new subjects, Cyrus reversed some of the harsher policies of his predecessors,



allowing deported peoples to return to their homelands and to rekindle the flames upon their ancestral altars (cf. Ezra 1:1-4). These new freedoms were granted on condition that the returnees accept Cyrus' sovereignty and continue to pay tribute into his royal treasuries. These terms the Jewish returnees accepted, and to demonstrate their loyalty to their suzerain they agreed to offer sacrifices and prayers on behalf of the emperor in their newly rebuilt Temple (Ezra 6:10; cf. 1 Esd. 6:30). Thus, prayer and sacrifice and tribute to the ruler became intertwined.



*Tomb of Cyrus the Great  
in Pasargadae, Iran. Photographed  
by Mohammad Reza Domiri Ganji.  
Courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#).*

## Prayers for the Emperor in the Second Temple Period

Empires came and went, but this compromise prevailed until the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Selucid emperor who ruled over Israel in the second century B.C.E.<sup>[1]</sup> Antiochus was not content to be a king, perhaps because he was not a particularly successful one, and by way of compensation he styled himself as Zeus incarnate. Eventually Antiochus decided that Zeus must be worshipped throughout his empire including in the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Macc. 6:2). In this way the ancient compromise between the rulers of the empires and the subjected people of Israel broke down. The Temple was defiled with idolatrous worship by order of the king, and many faithful Jews who resisted the royal decree were put to the sword. But a band of rebels led by the Hasmoneans, a family of zealous priests, won an unexpected victory and Israel experienced independence from foreign rule for a time.



Silver tetradrachm bearing the portrait of Antiochus IV Epiphanes on the obverse. The reverse shows an enthroned Zeus being crowned by the goddess of victory. Image courtesy of the [Classical Numismatic Group](#).

The Hasmoneans' success was due in part to bigger troubles faced by the Selucid empire, for it had begun to be overshadowed by a new and rising power in the west: the city of Rome. The Hasmoneans allied themselves with that new power, and accepted their aid (1 Macc. 8:17-32; 12:1-4). More than that, the Hasmoneans admired the Romans' skill with weapons and prowess in

warfare.<sup>[2]</sup> Having achieved independence, the Hasmoneans transformed themselves from priests into kings, and in imitation of their Roman heroes they became cruel and avaricious. No longer seeking liberty for themselves, the Hasmoneans began to dominate others. Those who had once fought for the right to worship according to their ancient tradition, began to coerce their defeated subjects to accept the Jewish religion as their own. But their admiration and imitation of Rome was their undoing, for when the Hasmoneans invited Rome to settle a dispute over the succession to the throne, Rome intervened by making the Hasmonean kingdom a vassal state under the sway of the Roman empire.

The *status quo ante* was reinstated: once more the Jewish people were required to offer prayers and sacrifices in the Temple on behalf of the foreign ruler and to pay tribute to their pagan overlords.<sup>[3]</sup> But this time the compromise was a bitter pill for Israel to swallow; it was not eagerly accepted in gratitude for new freedoms, as had been the case under Cyrus, but came with the loss of Jewish independence and a blow to national pride. It is not surprising, therefore, that many resented the prayers and the sacrifices on behalf of the ruler just as they loathed the payment of tribute, for these symbolized their defeat and disgrace and reinforced their status as slaves.<sup>[4]</sup> A

new ideology took root among the people which claimed that foreign rule was a punishment for Israel's divided loyalties between God and empire. Perhaps redemption would come to Israel if only they devoted themselves single heartedly to God's kingship, acknowledging no other ruler, paying no tribute, offering no sacrifices or prayers on behalf of an emperor who was ignorant of the one true God.

Rumblings of this sort were to be heard throughout the days of Jesus' ministry in the Galilee and Judea. Following the death of Herod the Great, the Romans found his son Archelaus to be an incompetent ruler, and therefore Judea was annexed as a province of the empire. Judea lost its pseudo-autonomous status as a vassal state. With the rallying cry, "No king but God!" an offshoot of the Pharisaic movement attempted to block the Roman census, the first step in assessing the tribute Judea was to pay to Rome.<sup>[5]</sup> The uprising was crushed, but the sentiment could not be killed so easily.

The Essenes, a Jewish sect that emerged sometime during the Hasmonean period, rejected the Temple and its priests as impure. Sacrifices offered on behalf of [Gentiles](#) was one of the reasons they cited to justify their extreme view.<sup>[6]</sup> Since the daily sacrifices for the sake of the emperor became the most regular and conspicuous of the offerings made on a Gentile's behalf, the prayers and sacrifices for Caesar in Jerusalem undoubtedly served to further delegitimize the Temple in the eyes of the Essenes. That a much wider swath of the Jewish population found the prayers and sacrifices for Caesar to be offensive is indicated by the crisis the zealot faction within the Temple administration provoked when they used their objection to accepting offerings from Gentiles as a pretext to halt the sacrifices and prayers on behalf of Caesar.<sup>[7]</sup> The crisis this action provoked sparked the Great Revolt, which resulted the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the cessation of the divine service until the present time.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Assessing Jesus' Attitude Toward Prayers and Sacrifices Offered for Caesar

And what of Jesus? What was his attitude toward prayer and sacrifice on behalf of the Roman emperor? We cannot arrive at an answer to this question directly, since there is no record of Jesus' opinion on this subject. But we may approach the question indirectly by assessing Jesus' attitudes toward the Temple and toward paying tribute to Caesar, which as we have seen, was an issue bound up with that of prayer and sacrifice for the emperor.

First, with regard to the Temple, it is clear that although Jesus was critical of the high priestly oligarchy, his constant participation in the Temple cult and the reverence with which he spoke of the divine service indicate that unlike his Essene contemporaries Jesus did not view the Temple as illegitimate.<sup>[9]</sup> It appears, therefore, that Jesus would not have accepted the extreme view that the sacrifices offered for Caesar voided the Temple's sanctity or nullified the worship that took place within its courts. Even after the Jesus' death and resurrection early disciples continued to gather in the Temple for worship (cf., e.g., Acts 2:46) and it is reported that the risen Lord even made appearances in the Temple (Acts 22:18). These data suggest that the corruption of the high priestly authorities who governed the Temple did not affect the high regard Jesus and his earliest followers held for the Temple itself.

Second, with regard to payment of tribute to Caesar, we do have a record of Jesus' opinion on this matter. Knowing that failure to pay tribute was tantamount to a declaration of war,<sup>[10]</sup> Jesus recommended that the coins bearing Caesar's image should be



*Silver denarius bearing the image of Tiberius Caesar.  
Image courtesy of the [Classical Numismatic Group](#).*

surrendered to Caesar, while the human soul, imprinted with the divine image, should be offered to God (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25).<sup>[11]</sup> I regard Jesus' subversive answer regarding the payment of tribute as of a piece with the radical "ways of peace" Jesus recommended in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>[12]</sup> The picture of Roman imperialism that emerges from Jesus' instruction on the "ways of peace" is not a flattering one. The Roman empire is cast in the role of a violent perpetrator of rank injustice: an oppressor of Israel and a servant of Satan. This picture is consistent with Jesus' disparaging remarks about the kings of the Gentiles (Luke 22:25), which were aimed at the Roman emperor, and with Jesus' apocalyptic vision of the downfall of Satan (Luke 10:18), the angelic patron of Rome.<sup>[13]</sup> Therefore we should not suppose that Jesus' support for the payment of tribute signaled affection or gratitude for imperial rule.

Nevertheless, Jesus was in favor of paying tribute to Caesar because in response to Israel's refusal to pay the emperor would respond by sending against Jerusalem the full force of the legions of Rome. Just as Jeremiah had warned that revolt against the Babylonian empire would lead to the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel, so Jesus predicted that an armed conflict with the Roman empire would lead to the destruction of the Second Temple and to a national catastrophe for Israel, a catastrophe Jesus was eager to avoid.<sup>[14]</sup> Jesus, it appears, had a pessimistically realistic view of the impossibility of successful military resistance to Roman imperial rule.<sup>[15]</sup> War with Rome would only result in devastation for the Jewish people within the empire. Redemption for Israel would certainly come, but by other means than the sword. For in Jesus' view it was acts of mercy toward the despised and the wretched and radical acts of humanity toward the ruthless and cruel that would unlock the divine power of redemption.<sup>[16]</sup> In the meantime, until Israel, humankind, and all God's creation are redeemed, Jesus advocated peace making and love for one's political enemies, just as Jeremiah had



advocated peaceful co-existence under the imperial rule of Babylon.

Since the prayers and sacrifices offered on behalf of Caesar in the Temple were requisite for peaceful co-existence under the imperial rule of Rome, I believe that it is a sound inference to suppose that Jesus approved of this compromise and would not have permitted his followers to jeopardize the people of Israel by attempting to disrupt the long-held tradition of praying for the wellbeing of emperor and offering sacrifices for the peace of the empire.

## **The Apostolic Instruction to Pray for Caesar**

When the apostles enjoined the early Christian congregations to pray for Caesar, we should not imagine that it was because they regarded the emperor as a divinely appointed agent of salvation. Rather, their instruction was a continuation of the tradition of the prophet Jeremiah and their teacher Jesus of advocating peaceful co-existence under imperial rule. Neither the apostles nor the early congregations they founded looked to the Roman emperor with great reverence, nor to the Roman empire with great esteem. Certainly they did not assign the rulers of the kingdoms any role in the unfolding of God's redemption, except perhaps as a restrainer of utter chaos.<sup>[17]</sup> For just as had been the case during the Babylonian exile, when the fortunes of Israel were bound to those of their captors, so in the days of the early church, turbulence within the Roman empire affected all the peoples it controlled—from this the Christians were not immune.

Sacrifice on behalf of the emperor was not an issue the early Christian congregations that sprouted up in Europe and Asia Minor had to contend with, since sacrifice was restricted to the Temple in Jerusalem and therefore beyond their control. But prayers could be offered anywhere, and it appears that prayers for the ruling authorities were expected to be offered in the synagogues of the diaspora.<sup>[18]</sup> It was better for the early Christian



*Behind the stone lions an eagle is carved on a table found near the entrance of the synagogue in Sardis (Turkey). Although this imperial symbol greeted the worshippers as they entered the synagogue, they turned their backs on the eagle in order to hear the reading of the Torah and to listen the homily.*

*(Photograph by Joshua N. Tilton)*

congregations to follow suit in praying for the welfare of Caesar than to arouse suspicion of sedition, for then Caesar might demand sacrifices, not on his behalf but to his person, to allay any doubts about their loyalty. And, of course, honoring Caesar as a god was not something the early Christians were willing to consider.<sup>[19]</sup>

Prayer in the early Christian congregations for Caesar's welfare, then, was a compromise, a means for avoiding violent confrontation rather than a way

of expressing enthusiasm for the Roman Empire. The Christians could pray for the emperor's well being, lest he turn his eye upon the Christians and throw them to the lions. But ever the deepest desire in the hearts of the early Christians was for Jesus to be revealed as the Messiah of Israel and the Lord of all the earth, when Caesar's reign would be no more.

## **An Early Christian Exemplar of Prayer for Caesar**

We have, in fact, a sample of an early Christian prayer for Caesar, intended for public worship where Roman officials could be expected to listen in for hints of conspiracy of treason. This prayer is found in the epistle of Clement, bishop of Rome, and is likely modeled on earlier Jewish prayers for the emperor:

59:3 Grant us to hope on thy name, the source of all creation, open the eyes of our heart to know thee, that thou alone art the highest in the highest and remainest holy among the holy. Thou dost humble the pride of the haughty,

thou dost destroy the imaginings of nations, thou dost raise up the humble and abase the lofty, thou makest rich and makest poor, thou dost slay and make alive, thou alone art the finder of spirits and art God of all flesh, thou dost look on the abysses, thou seest in to the works of man, thou art the helper of those in danger, the saviour of those in despair, the creator and watcher over every spirit ; thou dost multiply nations upon earth and hast chosen out from them all those that love thee through Jesus Christ thy beloved child, and through him hast thou taught us, made us holy, and brought us to honour.

<sup>59:4</sup>We beseech thee, Master, to be our “help and succour.” Save those of us who are in affliction, have mercy on the lowly, raise the fallen, show thyself to those in need, heal the sick, turn again the wanderers of thy people, feed the hungry, ransom our prisoners, raise up the weak, comfort the faint-hearted; let all “nations know thee, that thou art God alone,” and that Jesus Christ is thy child, and that “we are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture.”

<sup>60:1</sup>For thou through thy operations didst make manifest the eternal fabric of the world; thou, Lord, didst create the earth. Thou that art faithful in all generations, righteous in judgment, wonderful in strength and majesty, wise in thy creation, and prudent in establishing thy works, good in the things which are seen, and gracious among those that trust in thee, O “merciful and compassionate,” forgive us our iniquities and unrighteousness, and transgressions, and shortcomings. <sup>60:2</sup>Reckon not every sin of thy servants and handmaids, but cleanse us with the cleansing of thy truth, and “guide our steps to walk in holiness of heart, to do the things which are good and pleasing before thee” *and before our rulers.* <sup>60:3</sup>Yea, Lord, “make thy face to shine upon us” in peace “for our good” that we may be sheltered by thy mighty hand, and delivered from all sin by “thy uplifted arm,” and deliver us from them that hate us wrongfully. <sup>60:4</sup>Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth, as thou didst give to our fathers who called on thee in

holiness with faith and truth, and grant that we may be obedient to thy almighty and glorious name, *and to our rulers and governors upon the earth.*

<sup>61:1</sup>*Thou, Master, hast given the power of on behalf sovereignty to them through thy excellent and inexpressible might, that we may know the glory and honour given to them by thee, and be subject to them, in nothing resisting thy will. And to them, Lord, grant health, peace, concord, firmness that they may administer the government which thou hast given them without offence.* <sup>61:2</sup>*For thou, heavenly Master, king of eternity, hast given to the sons of men glory and honour and power over the things which are on the earth; do thou, O Lord, direct their counsels according to that which is “good and pleasing” before thee, that they may administer with piety in peace and gentleness the power given to them by thee, and may find mercy in thine eyes.* <sup>61:3</sup>*O thou who alone art able to do these things and far better things for us, we praise thee through Jesus Christ, the high priest and guardian of our souls, through whom be glory and majesty to thee, both now and for all generations and for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Clem. 59:3-61:4; emphasis added)*<sup>[20]</sup>

Regarding this prayer, we should note that the rulers of the empire are not accorded pride of place in its order of priorities; the petition for the rulers comes almost as an afterthought in a prayer that God’s glory, reign and majesty be revealed to all the world. None of the redemptive works described in the opening paragraphs are attributed to the emperor or his governors. The emperor’s role is extremely limited, and it is not his wisdom or his justice or his military prowess that find expression in his prayer, rather it is the human frailty and fallibility of the emperor and his ministers that are emphasized by the petitions. When it is recalled that Roman emperors accepted divine honors, and styled themselves as the saviors of the earth, then we begin to see that the petitions and even the arrangement of the prayer subvert imperial



propaganda.<sup>[21]</sup>

The petitions, when examined critically, betray a deep distrust of the rulers. The petitioners knew that the rulers were self-aggrandizers who loved nothing so much as to be lavished with praise and honors. Therefore the prayer for the rulers begins by acknowledging that all the privileges the rulers enjoy are simply a reflection of the majesty and glory of God (*1 Clem.* 61:1). The petitioners regarded the rulers as rash and intemperate, given to unnatural lusts and desires, therefore the prayer requests that God will grant “peace, concord, and firmness” to the rulers “that they may administer the government...without offense” (*1 Clem.* 61:1). And since the petitioners were aware that their rulers hated nothing so much as those who exposed their arrogant boasting for the lies they were, and were known to devise cruel punishments for any who pricked their thin skins, they prayed that the rulers might “administer with piety and gentleness the power given to them” (*1 Clem.* 61:2).

Although the petition that the Christians might be obedient to the rulers is repeated twice (*1 Clem.* 60:2; 61:1), the context in which this petition is made must not be ignored. Obedience to God is always mentioned before obedience to the rulers, and it appears that the intention of the prayer is that obedience to God might be compatible with obedience with the rulers. In other words, the Christians were eager to avoid a confrontation in which they must choose between God and Caesar.<sup>[22]</sup> In such a contest the Christians were committed to obeying God rather than the emperor, but they knew their lives might be forfeit and they would rather not be put to the test.

We find, therefore, that the kind of prayer for the rulers and authorities the apostles envisioned and the actual petitions that were offered by the early Christians were not substantially different from those advocated by the prophet Jeremiah. Peaceful coexistence in the hope of redemption from

imperial rule remained the intention of the early Christian prayers offered on behalf of the emperor.

## Conclusion

The apostolic injunction to offer prayers for the rulers was the continuation of a tradition beginning with the Babylonian exile of praying for peace in order that the Jewish subjects of the empire might not suffer on account of the whims of the emperor while Israel awaited its redemption. When the command to pray for the rulers is thus contextualized, then we may begin to understand what kinds of prayer the apostles intended the early Christian communities to offer on behalf of their rulers. The apostles did not enjoin the early Christians to pray that the emperor's plans for domination might succeed, or that their rulers' desire for amassing greater power and riches and praise would be satisfied, or that they would fulfill some divinely ordained mission. The early Christians were simply to pray that the emperor's violent and erratic impulses would be held in check and that the rulers' self-centered interests would be diverted toward the common good, so that the participation of the early Christian communities in Jesus' mission of redemption would not be hindered. It thus becomes clear that praying for Caesar—and for his counterparts in the present day—and prophetic witness are not contrary impulses, but in fact go hand in hand.



Click [here](https://wholestones.org/2017/09/10/contextualizing-prayer-for-caesar/) to return to the [Whole Stones](https://wholestones.org/) blog.

# Notes

**[1]** A reference to prayers and sacrifice offered in the Temple on behalf of Ptolemaic emperors is found in the *Epistle of Aristeas* §45. An allusion to prayer and offerings for the emperor of the Selucid empire is likely found in Baruch 1:11. The dating of this [pseudepigraphical](#) work is uncertain. It may have been composed prior to the reign of Antiochus IV, or it may have been composed after the death of Antiochus IV but prior to the foundation of the independent Hasmonean state. On the dating of Baruch see George W. E. Nicklesburg, “The Bible Rewritten and Expanded,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT II.2; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 89-156, esp. 145-146.

**[2]** On the Hasmonean admiration of the Romans, see David Flusser, “The Roman Empire in Hasmonean and Essene Eyes,” in his *Judaism of the Second Temple Period* (2 vols.; trans. Azzan Yadin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007-2009), 1:175-206.

**[3]** According to Josephus prayers and sacrifices were offered on behalf of Caesar twice a day in the Temple (*Bel.* 2:195-197). Josephus also referred to the sacrifices offered on the emperor’s behalf in *Ap.* 2:75-77, where he stated that the sacrifices were offered at the expense of the Jewish people. Philo (*Legat.* §317) described the sacrifice for the emperor as consisting of two lambs and a bull, but he also claimed, contrary to Josephus, that the sacrifices were paid for by the Roman emperor (*Legat.* §157, 317). Since Philo was occasionally given to rhetorical flourish rather than factual accuracy, it may be that Josephus’ testimony regarding the funding of the sacrifices made for Caesar is the more reliable. On Philo’s tendency to stretch the truth, see Daniel R. Schwartz, “On Drama and Authenticity in Philo and Josephus,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 10 (1989/1990): 113-129.

**[4]** On tribute as a symbol of enslavement, see Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28:69; Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-1984), 1:196-201; *Jos. Ant.* 18:4. See also Graham Burton, “Government and the Provinces,” in *The Roman World* (2 vols.; ed. John Wachter; London: Routledge, 1987), 1:423-439, esp. 426.

**[5]** On the origins of the militant nationalist offshoot of the Pharisaic movement, see *Jos. Ant.* 18:1-10, 23-25.

**[6]** On the Essenes’ objections to offerings from Gentiles, see 4QMMT<sup>a</sup> [4Q394] 1 I, 6-12.

**[7]** On the Zealots’ objection to sacrifice on behalf of Gentiles, see Daniel R. Schwartz, “On Sacrifice by Gentiles in the Temple of Jerusalem,” in his *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992), 102-116.

**[8]** See *Jos., Bel.* 2:409-410.

**[9]** On Jesus’ attitude toward the Temple, see Peter J. Tomson, “The Centrality of Jerusalem and its Temple as Viewed by Clement of Rome, Luke, and Jesus,” *Analecta Bruxellensia* 5 (2000): 97-112; idem, “The Centrality of Jerusalem and Its Temple in Earliest Christianity,” *International Rennert Guest Lecture Series 11* (2002).

**[10]** On non-payment of tribute as an act of war, see *Jos., Bel.* 2:402-404. See also Burton, “Government and the Provinces,” 423; Martin Goodman, *The Roman World 44 BC-AD 180* (London: Routledge, 1997), 100.

**[11]** On Jesus’ opinion regarding tribute to Caesar, see Randall Buth, “[Your Money or Your Life](#)” at [JerusalemPerspective.com](#); R. Steven Notley, “[Give](#)



[unto Caesar’: Jesus, the Zealots and the Imago Dei”](#) at [JerusalemPerspective.com](#); Joshua N. Tilton, *Jesus’ Gospel: Searching for the Core of Jesus’ Message* (Jerusalem Perspective, 2013), 55-57.

**[12]** On the politically subversive “ways of peace” advocated by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, see my discussion in [“A Mile on the Road of Peace.”](#)

**[13]** On the politically subversive message of Jesus’ vision, see Joshua N. Tilton, [“Like Lightning from Heaven \(Luke 10:18\): Jesus’ Apocalyptic Vision of the Fall of Satan,”](#) at [JerusalemPerspective.com](#).

**[14]** The parallels between Jesus and Jeremiah are fascinating and worthy of a fuller discussion. Both prophets predicted the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem at the hands of the great imperial powers of the day, and both believed that only repentance could avert national disaster. Jeremiah was opposed by a priest named Pashhur, and there is evidence to suggest that Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest who handed Jesus over to the Romans to be executed, was a descendant of Pashhur, the nemesis of Jeremiah the prophet. See David Flusser, [“...To Bury Caiaphas, Not to Praise Him,”](#) at [JerusalemPerspective.com](#) [reprinted in his *Jesus* (3d ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001), 195-206, esp. 197 n. 9, 200 n. 20]; Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, [“The History of the Resettlement of Two High Priestly Families in the Second Temple Period”](#) (trans. Joshua N. Tilton).

**[15]** On Jesus’ realistic pessimism regarding warfare, see David Flusser, [“The Times of the Gentiles and the Redemption of Jerusalem”](#) (trans. Joshua N. Tilton), under the subheading “Solidarity with Israel,” at [JerusalemPerspective.com](#).

**[16]** On acts of mercy as the catalyst for redemption, see R. Steven Notley, “The Kingdom of Heaven Forcefully Advances,” in *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and*

*Tradition* (ed. Craid A. Evans; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 279-322.

**[17]** See Rom. 13:4. This was also the rabbinic view of the divine purpose for the Roman empire's existence. According to Hananyah the prefect of the priests, who was second in command in the Temple at roughly the same time as Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, "Praying for the peace of the [Roman] empire is obligatory, for were it not for the fear of it a man would swallow up the life of his neighbor" (m. Avot 3:2).

**[18]** On Jewish prayers for the ruling authorities offered in the Diaspora, see Ernst Bammel, "Romans 13," in *Jesus and the Politics of his Day* (ed. E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 365-383, esp. 372-374.

**[19]** On the refusal of early Christians to offer sacrifice to Caesar, see Pliny the Younger, [Letters](#) 10:96.

**[20]** Translation according to Kirsopp Lake, *Apostolic Fathers* (2 vols.; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1912-1913), 1:111-117.

**[21]** For a different take on this early Christian prayer for the ruling authorities, see Barbara E. Bowe, "Prayer Rendered for Caesar? 1 Clement 59.3-61.3," in *The Lord's Prayer and Other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era* (ed. James H. Charlesworth, Mark Harding, and Mark Kiley; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1994), 85-99.

**[22]** See Polycarp's response to the proconsul who ordered him to renounce his faith: "we have been taught to render honour, as is meet, if it hurt us not, to princes and authorities appointed by God" ([Martyrdom of Polycarp](#) 10:2). Nevertheless, Polycarp would not obey the orders of the authorities to

blaspheme Jesus, his king.