

Here Come the Romans

Julius Caesar was no pushover. Having conquered Egypt, North Africa, Spain, France and Western Germany, he desired next, - Britain. On the 5th of August, 55 B.C., he crossed the English Channel with two divisions of Rome's finest troops. The campaign lasted 55 days. Caesar failed to advance seven miles inland from the beach. Historian Dion Cassius stated that Caesar's original intention was to carry the war into the interior, but finding his forces inadequate to defeat the British in the field, he retreated to the shores of Gaul (France) again.



Julius Caesar bronze statue in Rome Italy

On May 10th, 54 B.C., the next Spring, Caesar tried again. This time he commanded an army embarking on 1,000 ships. The campaign slogged through Britain's interior only 70 miles and was repelled at St. Albans. On September 10th a peace treaty was concluded and tribute of minerals was agreed upon. Roman Aulus Gellius wrote an account of Caesar's battle over Britain and speaks of a blood-curdling British war cry which shook the Romans again and again; "Tori pen i Caesar", "Off with Caesar's Head."

Why would the great Julius Caesar risk his reputation and his army against so strong a foe? We had mentioned that the money should be followed, did we not? Well, it seems that the land of Britain, mostly Wales and the western coast, had valuable mines that had been fought over for several hundred years, and Caesar wanted them.

*"Brittany had significant sources of tin which show evidence of being extensively exploited after the Roman conquest of Gaul during the first century BC and onward. **Devon and Cornwall were important sources of tin for Europe and the Mediterranean throughout ancient times.** Iberian tin was widely traded across the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age, and extensively exploited during Roman times. The Roman armies used tin in many ways; armour, utensils, etc."*¹

*“During the Roman period, massive **gold** veins exploitation took part in the Mendips and Dolaucothi. Further metallic lead pigs originating from Peak District in Derbyshire have been discovered, though the most acquainted site is the Dolaucothi Gold Mines near Pumpsaint in Wales. The gold mines were investigated by Jones and Lewis in 1969. The Roman presence in the area is dated from the beginning of their establishment in Great Britain and for a period of 300 years.”²*

*“In mid-Wales, **copper** was the reason for their early exploitation. S. Timberlake and the Early Mines Research Group in 1986 explored them. Charcoal and stone hammers were found inside the tip of the mine. **The Great Orme Mine exploitation, on the North Wales coast began in the Bronze Age and continued until the nineteenth century.** The dolomitised limestone deposits are rich in copper which early miners extracted mostly by malachite.”³*

Why is this information important to us as we consider Christianity’s introduction to Britain?

ÿ Joseph of Arimathea was a merchant of mines for the Roman Empire as well as a member of the Sanhedrin. According to the Gospels, Joseph believed in Jesus, buried Jesus in his own tomb and (probably) witnessed His resurrection and ascendance along with the 500 witnesses mentioned in the Gospels. It is believed that Joseph had ships that regularly traveled to Britain.

ÿ Another traveler and an Apostle, Simon Zelotes, also went to Britain.⁴

We can trace a timeline of Christianity in Great Britain via the ancient documents and scholarly commentary, from 37 A.D.; just a few scant years after the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost. As a merchant and Decurion of mines, Joseph was a very important man in Israel. As a Decurion, he was one of ten men in Israel who were upper class merchantmen. These ten were public servants appointed by the Senate to serve Roman cities in various capacities. They had to report to and go along with the rule of Rome. Joseph’s ships would have sailed from Caesarea through the Roman Empire, as far as Britain, and brought manufactured wares and goods from the Mediterranean to trade. Then the ships would also be loaded with the ore of Britain, Gaul and Spain which was tribute to Rome. The merchantman (in this case, Joseph of Arimathea) would ferry the ore to the smelting plants of the Roman Empire for a fee, but also would profit from the other trades he had made along the way. Now, consider that this seafaring Decurion of minerals for Rome became a follower of Yeshua during Jesus’ life on earth.

The biblical evidence shadowed this when Joseph went to ask Governor Pilate for Jesus’ body from the cross. Joseph was known and respected. This is why Pilate granted the request. Apparently, Joseph, also being a member of the Sanhedrin, had suspected that the Jewish leaders would kill Jesus and he, with Nicodemus, had already prepared for the burial by storing all the balm (pounds of it) and the strips of cloth for use as he and the disciples lowered the body on that terrible day of Jesus’ execution. The Bible narrative suggests that two members of the Sanhedrin had become undercover disciples of Jesus; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Why else would Nicodemus speak up as he did in Jesus’ behalf, if not. And, why in the world would Joseph risk his very lucrative shipping business, if he too was not a follower?

After the burial of Jesus, we suggest that Joseph stayed in Jerusalem until Pentecost and was a witness at the ascension of Jesus into heaven; present with at least 500 others. Getting back to work organizing his trading business, Joseph would have been excited at his chance to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Empire. He could use his ships and men, who would port in all 10 of the Mediterranean

harbors where he had been trading, to spread the good news of Yeshua and his sacrifice for mankind. Would he not have been particularly interested in telling the Druids of Bretagne that Celi had sent Yeshu to save them? And so, sails caught the wind that “blows as It will” by as early, we believe, as 36 A.D.

The Prince of Evil

However, the trading and the witnessing would get harder and harder as the years progressed. Christians were not welcome in the Empire. They were the brunt of many injustices by Roman rulers; one, in particular, started the ball rolling. In 37 A.D., Gaius Germanicus, otherwise known as Caligula was named Caesar of the Roman Empire. His father had been Caesar Germanica, the general who subdued the western German tribes for Rome. The title of “Caligula” was actually a nickname given to Gaius when he was a boy traveling with his father’s troops. It means, “little soldier’s boot” because he wore a small pair of the regular hob-nailed boots that adult troops wore into battle. He also became a spoiled brat. The name Caligula was as much a taunt as anything else. (As in, “Here comes the little general again in his big man boots.”) Later, as a young man, Gaius was kept away from his father’s troops and in Rome by Emperor Tiberius because he was next in line for the throne and Tiberius kept his friends close and his enemies closer.



Caligula

Caligula’s father died in battle and almost immediately after aged Tiberius’ death, a few years later, Caligula was appointed Emperor. Soon thereafter, someone tried to poison the “little general.” Caligula almost died. In the palace intrigue, people pointed the finger at family, friends and strangers. Many were executed. Finally, in his paranoia, Caligula pointed his own finger, - at the sect of Christians. This was the first official persecution of Christians and Jews in Rome. We do not know exactly what events transpired during that time, but we believe that Joseph of Arimathea is next found making the center of his shipping concern the Isle of Iona on the western coast of Scotland, just north of all the mines in Britain and safely out of reach of Caesar Caligula. Apparently, he continued his business for a few years while avoiding Rome and using his money and influence to build churches in Britain and Scotland. By the locals, he was called a Ceile-De, a friend of God. Other historians have translated the term, “A Certain Stranger.” This was not the actual translation but a descriptive for a foreigner. However, it was the same person. Iona island and the northern Welsh coast of Britain was the birthplace of the “Ceile-des”, “Culdees”, those who followed Celi, their name for the personage of God, the Father.

We have record of a native King of the Britains, named Bran, who ruled from 40 A.D. He was eventually called ‘Bran, The Blessed’ and was termed the first British King converted to Christianity. The actual story of this will be told later, but suffice to say that the British had accepted Christianity within at most 20 years of Christ’s death.

The ancient legends of Great Britain record that, during his last merchant sailing voyage, Joseph picked up an Apostle in North Africa. This was none other than Simon Zelotes; Simon the Zealot, and ferried him to Iona in 42 A.D. to aid in the work in Britain.⁵

According to Glastonbury chroniclers, there was a gravestone for Joseph of Arimathea in Avalon (Iona) in the year 67 A.D. which read: "*Joseph, Ceile-de.*"

Later, Latin scribes of the church added an epithet to the stone,

"Docui, Quievi" - I taught, I have entered my rest."⁶

This was a reference to what the Lord's servants said in Luke 17:10,

"We have done what was our duty to do."

One last thought about Joseph of Arimathea. He is not mentioned in the Bible after his heroic deed in obtaining and burying the body of Jesus in his own tomb. However, we can consider that someone of his caliber who was also devoted to Jesus would not have just gone on simply as a merchant of Rome. Our last clue to his discipleship is in his name. The land called Arimathea is in Northwest Judea in the historic area of the Tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim was the second son of Jacob's son Joseph who became Egypt's great leader. The Hebrew tribal name Ephraim means "increase." From all we have discovered, it seems that **Joseph of Arimathea** was bound in his heart to live up to his name and provide an increase of the Lord's disciples. What better place to settle than the "rustic nation" of Bretagne, off the 'radar' of the Roman Empire with their great civic distractions, and their pagan gods, including Caesar worship?

Chronological Summary of the Beginning of Christianity in Bretagne

37-59 A.D. - Joseph of Arimathea settles. He was referred to as "Ceile-de", "Friend of God" (later spoken as "Culdee")

42 A.D. - Joseph brings Simon Zelotes by ship to Britain⁷

57 A.D. - Joseph travels to the Continent, to the Apostle Philip, to ask for brethren to help build churches and spread the Gospel

58 A.D. - Philip sends 12 disciples to Britain with Joseph (his dear friend, returning) as leader.⁸

As time went on, other Pre-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church also chronicled concerning the Christians in Britain from very early dates. Ÿ Tertullian (AD 155–222) wrote in *Adversus Judaeos* that Britain had already received and accepted the Gospel in his lifetime, writing; "... all the limits of the Spains, and the diverse nations of the Gauls, and the haunts of the Britons—inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ."⁹

Ÿ Hippolytus (AD 170–236), considered to have been one of the most learned Christian historians, puts names to the seventy disciples whom Jesus sent forth in Luke 10, includes Aristobulus of Romans 16:10 with Joseph, and states that he ended up becoming a pastor in Britain.

Ÿ Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260–340), one of the earliest and most comprehensive of church historians, wrote of Christ's disciples in *Demonstratio Evangelica*, saying that "some have crossed the Ocean and reached the Isles of Britain"

Ÿ Saint Hilary of Poitiers (AD 300–376) also wrote that the Apostles had built churches in the second century and that the Gospel had passed into Britain many years earlier.

Summary of the Church Beginning in Bretagne

So, we have established that there was a Society of Christian churches in northern Britain during the first century, the first of whom were preaching Christ and building more churches around the same time that the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem took place in about 50 A.D. (This was the council that was an assembly of the Apostles and elders wherein they released Gentile converts from the necessity of circumcision and other observances of the Mosaic ceremonial law.) It is interesting to note that this council was called during the first “controversy” of the Church; wherein “the church fathers” were trying to “protect” Christianity.

Do you see the beauty and irony of God’s plan. The Jewish Apostolic religious leaders were struggling with the sins of the Jews in their selfish turn of religion before Jesus was born. The Britons had none of this sectarian strife between Jewish Christians and Gentiles. They were told that the Kingdom was a spiritual one until Jesus would come again and that His Church was to be one of coming together to encourage one another and then go out to preach a salvation by faith in His name; Sola Fide. They were told that when He was ready to leave for heaven, Jesus had promised his disciples the “Spirit of Truth” who would lead them into all truth. The Britons were specifically told that Jesus said the coming of the Spirit of Truth was to be the prearranged sign that His followers should now go out from Jerusalem to “the uttermost parts of the earth.” All of these teachings are evidences of the fact that this new Church was to be a spiritual entity founded and directed by the third part of the trinity, the Holy Spirit. JUST AS THE DRUIDIC PRIESTS HAD PROPHESED.

So, there was little controversy in this ‘rustic land.’ The evidence suggests that Druids became converts to Christianity by the thousands and tens of thousands within the first century.

The Apostle Paul Enters the Scene

Most Christians know that the Apostle Paul was a Roman citizen. Modern biblical scholarship believes that Paul had a Jewish father and mother who were wealthy citizens of Tarsus. The following is how it most probably developed from there. Paul’s father was in the tent-making business and taught young Saul (his Jewish name) the lucrative family business. His mother saw to it that he was nurtured in the Jewish faith at home. Historians surmise that sometime in Paul’s childhood his father died and his mother remarried a high-level Roman citizen and gentile. Within that marriage, a half-brother to Paul was born. He was Rufus Pudens Prudentinus and was taught Roman ways. He became a powerful man in the area of Tarsus and was acquaintances with Roman royalty. Meanwhile, older brother Paul had already begun his journey on the Jewish Pharisee route while his mother and brother stayed among the gentiles in the area we know today as Southern Turkey.

When Paul had his Damascus Road experience, he turned to the way of Christ Jesus and we have an excellent story of his conversion in the biblical book of Acts. What we don’t see filled in from this account is the answer to what happened to Paul during more than a decade that he disappeared from sight immediately after he met with Peter and James in Jerusalem. We do know that the Bible tells us

that he went back to Tarsus. Here he is back home again. It would not stretch the imagination much to say that he employed his tent-making skills and taught all who were in his household about Jesus Christ and his miraculous conversion that had taken place. It may be that, during this time, his mother and Rufus were influenced by Paul toward Christianity. Now, let's park Paul's family there for a few pages.

Back to Ancient Bretagne

We turn to the conflict that was almost a continual state of war between the British and the Roman Empire during the first century. In the year 50 A.D., while Paul is beginning his 3rd missionary journey and is called from Troas to Greece, the Romans are in a pitched battle with the King of the Welsh Celts, Caractacus. Through 10 years and many battles on British soil, the Romans lost tens of thousands of men. The conflict dragged on so much that no less than two Roman Generals requested to be relieved of command. Historians tell us that Emperor Claudius even travelled to the embarkation point in France to oversee the troops. He was livid that a simple, pagan king and rabble-rouser could stymie the Roman Empire for years and endanger Rome's valuable mining operations. Finally, after a decade of battles, the Romans routed the Celts and Caractacus was on the run in 52 A.D. He ran northeast to the adjoining kingdom of Isurium and sought asylum from Queen Cartismandua. The Queen took him in and gave him a room in her castle. In the middle of the night, armed men entered his room, bound him and turned him over to the Romans. It turns out that the Romans had bribed Cartismandua with a large loan of money and a treaty agreeing not to take over her territory if she would help capture Caractacus.

Caractacus was taken to Rome in chains and his leaderless army dispersed into the mountains of Wales and Scotland. Within several months, Caractacus was brought before Emperor Claudius in Rome. Roman historians report that much of the royalty of Rome was watching as Claudius asked if Caractacus had anything to say before he was sentenced. Here was their account of the reply: *"Your imperial majesty, I stand before you today as your enemy of ten years. Had I yielded sooner, my misfortune would have been less notorious and your conquest much less renowned. And now, Caesar, if you spare my life, I shall be an eternal monument to your clemency. My fame is clear, but on my fate your glory or shame await."*¹⁰

What a brilliant argument to a Caesar of the Roman Empire! Apparently Claudius also thought so and ordered Caractacus to be under house arrest in Rome for 7 years and then released if he swore to go back to Britain and make no more war on and, also, be vassal to Rome. Claudius also ordered Caractacus' father, King Vran (or Bran) and his children to be under house arrest in Rome at the same time. The children were Gladys, renamed Claudia, and Linus.

The Pauline Connection

Here is where the story gets really interesting. When the extended family arrives in Rome and presents themselves to Claudius, he is so impressed with the daughter of Caractacus that he adopts her and renames her Claudia Britannica. (He already had a son whom he had named Britannicus in honor of his triumph over Britain.) This Claudia soon marries a young senator from Tarsus named Rufus Pudens Pudentinus. The young couple was given a home near the palace and the Romans called it the Palatium Britannicum. Living with them were Claudia's brother, Linus, the old British king Bran and Caractacus. The biblical mention of them begins in Romans 16:13. Paul is finalizing his letter to the Romans by greeting all the brothers and sisters of the church in Rome. He says, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord,

and his mother and mine.” Perchance, Paul’s own mother was living there too. Add to this greeting the greeting of Paul as he is finishing his second letter to Timothy in 2nd Timothy, 4:21: *“Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and the brothers.”*

The third suggestion that we would make concerning this subject is a quote from Clemens Romanus, who is also mentioned by St. Paul in his epistles, who states in his writings (the genuineness of which has not been questioned by any church scholar) that Linus, the first Bishop of Rome, was the brother of Claudia Britannica, *“Sanctissimus Linus, frater Claudiae.”* Clemens was the bishop of the Christians in Rome after Cletus, who was the preceding Bishop for 12 years after Linus was martyred. That’s right. The first Christian Bishop of Rome was a Brit from Wales and was probably brought to Christ by Paul during his house arrest A.D. 58-60. Even the great church historian Irenaeus, in c. 180 A.D. writes, *“The Apostles, having founded and built up the Church at Rome, committed the ministry of its supervision to Linus. This is the Linus mentioned by Paul in his Epistle to Timothy.”*¹¹

Other biblical evidence shows that Paul, in his Philippians salutation to the church says, *“All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.”* (Phil. 4:22) And another time, he says, *“Greet (in Rome) Herodian, my relative.”* (Romans, 16:11)

So, to make a long story somewhat shorter, the Emperor Claudius, proud conqueror of Britain and adopter of British royalty, was poisoned the next year in October of 54 A.D. and his nephew Nero, a 17 year old narcissist was installed on the throne. For the first seven years of his reign, Nero was tutored and bridled, so to speak, by Seneca and other Roman elders. He was bent upon restoring the grandeur of Augustus’ day. He was so intent on building monuments and leading a life of lechery that he ignored the Apostle Paul, Rufus, Claudia, Bran and Caractacus, who were Christians living right under his nose. (Claudius’ son Britannicus was not so lucky. He was a threat to Nero. Nero’s mother, Agrippina, had him poisoned.) During this time, it is suspected that Paul was the one who converted to Christianity Caractacus, Claudia, Rufus and Linus. Even old Bran was eventually converted because thereafter he was called Bran, the Blessed for the rest of his life.

Bran is said to have been released to go back to Britain early in 57 A.D. and the story goes that he took with him one Aristobolous who was one of Christ’s seventy sent out to evangelize by Jesus and who Paul also sent out. The record shows that three years later, in 60 A.D., Caractacus was released also to return to Britain and help quell the Boadicean War there against Rome. (Queen Boadicea was royal cousin to Claudia Britannica, but that is another story.) Just one year later, the year 61, Paul is released from house arrest in Rome and travels to Spain. Some also think that he eventually went to Britain, which was only about a three week boat trip from Spain, in order to visit Aristobolous there and see the Christian work among the brethren. After all, Paul is next seen three years later in Greece, where he is captured and sent back to Rome under arrest. That is plenty of time to have gone to England and stayed for a year or more. We do have a letter written by church historian Theodoret in 435 A.D. which states, *“Paul, liberated from his first captivity at Rome, preached the Gospel to the Britons and others in the West. Our fishermen and publicans not only persuaded the Romans and their tributaries to acknowledge the Crucified and His laws, but the Britons also and the Cymri.”*¹²

Rome in Decline

During this time, Nero had so squandered the Roman coffers that he had no money. He fought expensive battles on several fronts of the empire. At the same time, he desperately wanted to build a new palace complex near the city center. However, the old Roman Senatorial quarters were there. Historians agree that in July of 64 A.D. Nero hired arsonists to put a torch to this area and burn three of the seven boroughs of Rome to the ground, killing 30,000 and destroying precious history in order to rebuild it as his new palace, sprung from the ashes.

When the rumors began to fly and fingers began to point, Nero (who had played his guitar, not his fiddle, when the city was burning) needed a scapegoat. He thought, "Why not the odious, atheistic sect that most Roman citizens disliked anyway? That's it. The Christians did it!" Nero rounded them up and prosecuted them vigorously. Many died. However, many became the diaspora to Europe and the original home of the free and the brave, Britain.

During that same persecution, it is recorded that in 66 A.D. the Apostle Paul was brought out of the Mammertine dungeon and murdered a mile or so down the Appian Way by the sword of the executioner. Rome was cursed from that day forward not to ever be the place of progression for the Kingdom of God. His plan continued in the far north of the empire. Meanwhile, back in Britain, King Caractacus of the Silurian Celts in Wales and Northern England, was solidifying the Kingdom and building more Christian church communities than had ever been known in any country. By the time he died in 80 A.D., Britain was known as the first Christian nation on earth, Nero was dead, Jerusalem was destroyed by Emperor Titus, and Linus was the head of a growing church in Rome.

Only God could bring together a story like that!

The Fruit of the Gospel in Early Britain

We have already made a good case for the acceptance of the Gospel based on the pattern of Druidic teachings, which God had set-up for quick Gospel acceptance when the first disciples settled on the island. Once the Gospel of Jesus Christ reached their ears, peasant and king alike were smitten by the glorious truth of the advent of God on earth and His saving grace. Christian churches sprung up all over Britain during the last half of the first century. This growth presented its own issues of discipleship and Christian King Lucius of the Britains needed to act. He sent dispatches to Rome and Bishop Eleutherius dispatched the missionaries, Phagan and Deruvian, to the island of Britain to preach the Gospel. Historian William of Malmesbury puts the time somewhere past the **middle of the second century AD**. Coming from the continent, these missionaries would probably have landed somewhere in Kent, and must have worked their way toward the west and north, preaching as they went. On their journey, historian Malmesbury tells us that, "*they came to Glastonbury, where they re-constructed a church.*"¹³ Logic would dictate that a church must have already been there for many years, else they would not have needed to re-construct it.

William also writes, in his voluminous work *The Antiquity of the Church*, this narrative:

"After the glory of the Lord's resurrection, the triumph of His ascension and the mission of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, who filled the disciples' hearts which still trembled with dread of temporal punishment, and gave them the knowledge of all languages,

*all who believed were together, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, as Luke the Evangelist narrates; and the word of God was sown abroad and the number of them that believed increased daily, and they all had one heart and one soul. Kindled therefore with the torch of envy, the priests of the Jews together with the Pharisees and scribes stirred up persecution against the Church, killing Stephen the first martyr and driving far away almost all the rest. So while the storm of persecution raged, the believers were dispersed and went forth into divers kingdoms of the earth, which the Lord assigned to them, offering the word of salvation to the Gentiles. Now St Philip, as Freulfus declares in the fourth chapter of his second book, came to the country of the Franks, (France) and by his gracious preaching turned many to the faith and baptized them. Then desiring that the word of Christ should be yet further spread abroad, he chose twelve of his disciples and sent them to Britain to proclaim the word of life and preach the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and on each of them he devoutly laid his right hand; and over them **he appointed, it is said, his dearest friend, Joseph of Arimathaea who had buried the Lord.** They arrived in Britain in the sixty-third year from the Incarnation of the Lord, and preached the faith of Christ with all confidence. The king gave them an island on the borders of his country, surrounded by woods, thickets and marshes, called Ynis Witrin.”¹⁴*

We put the pieces of the puzzle together, thus. During the beginning of the 12th century, William, the British historian, spends some months at the Monastery of Malmesbury, which was built years after Glastonbury, which in turn was built years after Avalon (Iona). There he is afforded access to the library containing ancient documents of the church. He tells us in his history of the church that these documents recorded:

37 A.D. – 465 A.D., “Kirk” (“Church”) Bishops of Mediterranean/ Gauliean/Roman Lineage, beginning with Simon Zealotes and Joseph of Arimathaea. (Greek= kuriakon [adj.] ‘Kirk’ ‘Kuriakon-doma’ Gr. = ‘The Lord’s House’, Scholars wonder how a Greek neuter noun became a Germanic feminine.)

It is recorded that, later, the 1st Abbot/Bishop of the English line was at Glastonbury in 465 A.D.

Then, the 10th Abbot, Maidulph in 675 A.D., was the abbey’s Saxon re-builder.

After that, nine more Abbots of Malmesbury Abbey were named until 940 A.D. when the recorded lineage stopped because the next several Abbots were still remembered by monks up until William’s day of 1128 A.D.

Not only William of Malmesbury, but other eminent historians have weighed in on the beginnings of the church in England.

ÿ “The church of Avalon in Britain, no other hands than those of the Disciples of the Lord themselves built.” (Publius Discipulus)

ÿ “The mother church of the British Isles is the Church in Insula Avallonia, called by the Saxons Glaston.” (Usher)

ÿ “If credit be given to ancient authors, this church of Glastonbury is the senior church of the world.” (Fuller)

ÿ “It is certain that Britain received the faith in the first age from the first sowers of the Word. Of all the churches whose origin I have investigated in Britain, the church of Glastonbury is the most ancient.” (Sir Henry Spelman, underline mine.)

So, with the early, first century church accepted by the “rustic people” of the British Isle, including southern Scotland, let’s back up and see how the church was accepted and by whom. Of course there were thousands of believers in Christ, but most remain nameless. Rather, we have the names of the

kings and queens, who, if they were following Jesus and his teachings, we are pretty sure that most of the populace were proselytes also. So, the Kingdom is established in Britain during the first century. But we can't forget about Rome and her never-ending need for tin, gold and copper from the mines on the western coast of the island, a land area later called Wales.

In the meantime, Rome...



Titus Flavius Vespasianus

Vespasian Titus Flavius Caesar Vespasianus Augustus; 17 – 79 A.D. became Roman Emperor from A.D. 69 to A.D. 79. Vespasian was most reputed as a military commander; he led the Roman invasion of Southern Britain in 43 A.D. and travelled back and forth to the island several times. Later, he subjugated Judaea during the Jewish Rebellion of 66. Matter of fact, Vespasian was called back to Rome because of the illness of the Emperor and crowned Caesar within a year. He had left a contingent of Roman soldiers in Britain in order to make sure that the mines were still operating for sending precious ore to Rome.

While the Romans were in Britain, they kept the mines running and made treaties with the local kings. 'Bran, the Blessed' was King of Britain when Vespasian landed with two cohorts of special troops. (This was before the war with Caractacus.) They fortified the borders of Wales and made peace with the ruling class because they needed local labor to run the mining operations.

The Succession of Celtic British Christian Leaders

Remember that in 40 A.D. King Bran, The Blessed was King of the Britons. But he was captive in Rome, a royal convert to Christianity then, as we have discussed, was released to return to his homeland. In 57 A.D., his son King Caractacus, was converted under the Apostle Paul in Rome. He became King upon his father's death in 60 A.D. Caractacus, restored to power, consolidated the kingdom and fought the Picts (painted people who were non-Celtic in origin) in the extreme northeast of the island. These skirmishes were the first on record as being fought by the Christian Celts with Roman aid. Matter of fact, legend has it that the two armies became allies for many years because of common interests against vicious tribes in the East of Britain and Scotland. King Caractacus and his son Cyllinus fought side by side.

It is surmised that Caractacus, and his children, brought several copies of the Gospels from Rome and copies of some of Paul's doctrinal writings. One of the more prominent British brothers in Christ was one, Beatus, so named because of his steady following of the Beatitudes. He resided in the church at Underseven, England and his tomb, inscribed in the year 96 A.D., can still be seen there. After forty years

as King of Britain, Caractacus died and his son, Cyllinus, continued the Christian Kingdom of Britons for an additional thirty or so years.

In 120 A.D. Cyllinus passed the kingdom to his son, Coill who continued the Christian faith in the royal household and throughout Britain. We will see later that King Coill (or Coel) will be revealed as the Great, Great Grandfather of Constantine the Great, who will be so important to Christianity during the 4th century.

By this time Christianity had been firmly planted in Britain for almost 100 years. There was no person on the western and central area of the Isle who could remember not living in a Christian nation. The churches were even sending missionaries to the continent. In 170 A.D. it was recorded that, "A missionary of the British Church, St. Cadval, founded the Church of Tarentum in France and went from there to Switzerland and Germany."¹⁵

As early as 192 A.D., Tertullian, theologian of the Church, wrote, "The extremities of Spain, the various parts of Gaul, the regions of Britain, which have never been penetrated by the Roman arms, have received the religion of Christ."¹⁶

And in 230 A.D., historian Origen wrote, "The divine goodness of our Lord and Saviour is equally diffused among the Britons, the Africans, and other nations of the world."¹⁷

For the next 100 years, Britain continued to have a vibrant Christian Church. Coill's son Lucius was born next in line. If you remember, he is the king who sent back to Rome for missionaries. He and Queen Gladys were blessed with Baby Princess Strada who eventually married King Coel of Glouchester. Their (Strada and Coel's) daughter grew up to be Princess Helena who was given in marriage to Constantius, the Roman general and co-emperor in charge of Gaul and Britain during that time. He was also next in line to become the Emperor of the Roman Empire. Their son would grow up to be the Christian Emperor Constantine, the Great. We will hear more about him in the next chapter.

British historian John Morris in *The Age of Arthur* wrote:

"The early tradition is that Coel ruled the whole of the north, south of the [Hadrian's] Wall, the territory that the Notitia assigned to the dux [Roman military leader]; but that in later generations it split into a number of independent kingdoms. It suggests that ... he was the last Roman commander, who turned his command into a kingdom." He is credited with founding a number of kingly lines in the North and was regarded as an ancestor figure, suggesting that the territory he controlled must have been substantial."¹⁸

*"Duke Coel of Colchester, say the old chronicles, by an insurrection became king. The Senate, rejoiced at the overthrow of an enemy, sent Constantius to Britain. Coel, fearing, sent ambassadors to meet him and shortly died. Constantius was crowned, married Helena, daughter of Coel, the most beautiful, cultivated, and educated woman of her time. By her he had a son, Constantine, afterwards called the Great."*¹⁹

Later writers such as Henry of Huntington and Geoffery of Monmouth associate Coel with Colchester and make him the father of Saint Helena of Constantinople, the mother of Constantine the Great. Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae* expands on the legend of Coel, including material about his rule as king of the Britons and his dealings with the Romans.²⁰

Today, we have a song about him, which is sung by children.

Old King Cole was a merry old soul

And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl
And he called for his fiddlers three.
Every fiddler he had a fiddle,
And a very fine fiddle had he; Oh there's none so rare, as can compare
With King Cole and his fiddlers three.

Old English Version

Good King Coel,
And he call'd for his Bowle,
And he call'd for Fiddler's three;
And there was Fiddle, Fiddle,
And twice Fiddle, Fiddle, For 'twas my Lady's Birth-day,
Therefore we keep Holy-day And come to be merry.

This song was sung in praise of the Christian King Coel. Legend has it that, on festive occasions, the King would celebrate with three fiddlers playing songs. The three players represented God in his three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit; all playing the same tune. (Being of the same essence.)

The great early British historian, Bede, wrote about these activities during his time, only 275 years later. If this seems like a long time, remember that America's English beginning, which we know so well, was about 250 years ago. Here is Bede's mention of that time in Britain's history.

"There was on the east side of the city, (Canterbury) a church dedicated to the honour of St. Martin, built whilst the Romans were still in the island, wherein the queen, who, as has been said before, was a Christian, used to pray." ²¹

Geoffrey of Monmouth expanded the story of Constantine in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, an account of the Kings of Britain from their Trojan origins. According to Geoffrey,

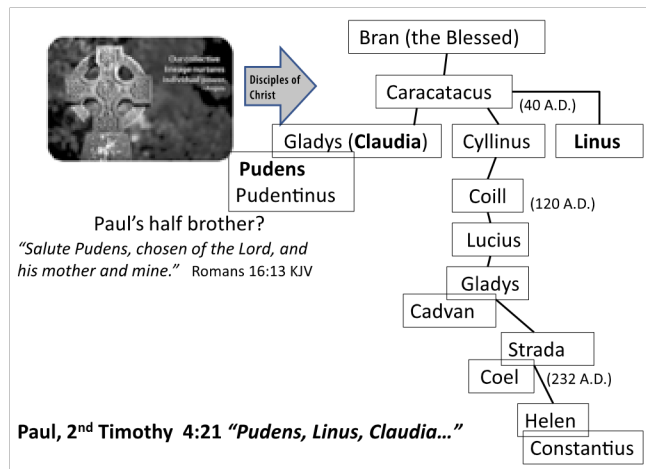
"Coel was King of the Britons when Constantius, here a senator, came to Britain. Afraid of the Romans, Coel submitted to Roman law so long as he retained his kingship. However, he died only a month later, and Constantius took the throne himself, marrying Cole's daughter Helena. They had their son Constantine, who succeeded his father as King of Britain before becoming Roman Emperor." ²²

It is interesting that this legendary father of Helena is supposed to be the same as "Old King Cole, the merry old soul," making Constantine thus the grandson of a King of Britain and a Mother Goose hero. ²³

Similarly, we have a mention by Christian Historian and Theologian, Eusebius. Eusebius was the Christian Bishop most favored by Constantine the Great and had unfettered access to the King and his court.

"Helena Flavia Augusta, the heire and onely daughter of Coelus, sometime the most excellent king of Britaine, by reason of her singular beautie, faith, religion, goodnesse, and godly Maiestie was famous in all the world."—Eusebius

Following is a chart of the family tree of Christian British royalty during the first through the third century and the connection with Paul, the Apostle.



Summary

Some will say that we have painted a rosy picture of heaven on earth within Britain. We readily agree that no family and no nation is free of challenges. Neither were the Isles of Ancient Bretagne (Britain) so endowed. However, our point is that there was a Christian heritage in Britain from the first century A.D. onward. And these ancient people produced one of the few truly Christian, world emperors that would aid the Christian cause. Was he perfect? Is anyone? But we think that you will be pleased and surprised by what you learn in the next chapter about Constantine the Great from the "rustic isle."

God's plan has never been foiled by the evil one and his devotees whether in Rome, the Middle East or from the Norse Kingdoms, whose emperors, generals and pirates spent great sums of money and human capital to derail the advance of His kingdom. Let's reveal God's champion of the 4th Century in the next chapter.

SourceS

1. Gerrard, 2000, Penhallurick, 1986, pp. 86-91
 2. Shepherd 1980, 219; The Institute of Metals 1991, 14; Tylecote 1964, p. 26
 3. O'Brien 1996; Timberlake 1990b; Timberlake 2003b
 4. McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*, p. 213*
- *Nicephorus (Patriarch) of Constantinople wrote: "Simon born in Cana of Galilee who was surnamed Zelotes, having received the Holy Ghost from above, traveled through Egypt and Africa, then Mauretania and Libya, preaching the Gospel. And the same doctrine he taught to the Occidental Sea and the Isles called Britanniae." Nicephorus tables of universal history (*Chronographikon Syntomon*), were in great favor with the Byzantines, and were also circulated outside the Empire in the Latin, and also in Slavonic translation. The Chronography offered a universal Christian history from the time of Adam and Eve to his own time in 800 A.D.)
5. Qualben, Lars P., *A History of the Christian Church*, p 48, Eusebius, 3rd Century, "Simon in N. Africa")
 6. Hearnese Antiquities of Glastonbury, Leland *ibid*, RW Morgan
 7. Qualben, Lars P., *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 48, Eusebius, 3rd Century, "Simon in N. Africa"
 8. William of Malmesbury, (c. 1128 A.D.)
 9. Tertullian *Apol. xxxvii.*, *adv. Jud. 7*: "The haunts of the Britons inaccessible to the Romans subjugated to Christ." About A.D. 150 the Church of Edessa counted the king among its members (see F. C. Burkitt, *Early Christianity outside the Roman Empire*, p. 11, Cambridge, 1899)
 10. Tacitus, *The Annals of Tacitus*, Book 12, vs 37
 11. Illtigiis, *Apostolici Patres*, lib. Vi, c. 47, circa 150 A.D., "Concerning those bishops who have been ordained in our lifetimes, we make known to you that they are these; of Antioch, Eudoius (Eubulus) of the church of Rome, Linus, the son of Claudia, (and) Clemens the second." underline mine.)
 12. Theodoret, *De Civ. Graec. Off.*, lib. Xi (Niceph., lib. li, c. 40
 13. William of Malmesbury, (c. 1128 A.D.) an historian regarded highly by modern scholars, was a guest of the Glastonbury Abbey for a period of time during the second decade of the twelfth century. He called this structure "the oldest Church in England," and, henceforth, it was known simply as the Old Church, serving as a symbol for the ancientness of Glastonbury's Christianity. "*De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae*" (*Enquiry into the Antiquity of the Church of Glastonbury*)
 14. Hearnese Antiquities of Glastonbury, Leland *ibid*, RW Morgan
 15. MS Vellum of the Church of Tarentum, *Catalog of the Saints in the Vatican*, 1641 A.D.
 16. Tertullian, *Def. Fidei*, p. 179
 17. Origen, In Psalm CXLIX
 18. Morris, John, *The Age of Arthur*, p. 54
 19. This is in substance the account of Geoffrey of Monmouth (5.6) and Pierre de Langloft (1, p. 66-7). The story is mentioned by Henry of Huntington (Bk. I. 37), who perhaps wrote before Geoffrey (in 1137 [?]), and Richard of Cirencester (2. 1. 33). Waurin (Vol. I. Bk. 2. 43) makes "Choel" Count of Leicester, but in general the mention is identical with Geoffrey. The famous Brut of Layamon (ed. Madden, 2 [1847] p. 35) is translated with amplifications from Wace's Brut, and this in turn from Geoffrey. This writing makes Coel Earl of Gloucester.
 20. Henry of Huntingdon (c.1129), *Historia Anglorum* Book I, ch. 37,
Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Book 5, ch. 6
 21. Bede, *H E i 26*
 22. The Eulogium Hist. calls Helena (1. 337) daughter of a British king. It is also mentioned by many others; e.g. Voragine's, *Golden Legend*.
 23. Hayden, *Index to Eulogium*, p. 45, and Giles, note on Geoffrey, p. 162

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