

To Caesar Tiberius Emperor of Rome.

Noble Sovereign, Regards.

The events of the last few days in my province have been of such character that I want to give you the full details of what has happened. And it wouldn't surprise me if these things, over time, change the destiny of our nation; for it seems that lately all the gods have ceased to be merciful. I am almost inclined to say: Cursed the day I succeeded Valerius Flaceus in the government, for since that time my life has been a continuity of discomfort and misery. On my arrival in Jerusalem I took up residence in the Praetorium and ordered that everything be ready for a splendid feast, and to which I invited the Tetrarch of Gallilee, along with the high priest and his staff. No guests showed up at the appointed hour. I considered this an insult to my dignity and that of the entire government I represented.

A few days later the high priest condescended to visit me. His attitude was haughty and deceitful. He pretended that his religion forbade him and his followers to sit at the tables of the Romans and eat and socialize with them. But this was but a hypocritical display, his face betraying hypocrisy. Nevertheless, I thought it fit for me to accept his apology. From that moment I was convinced that the vanquished consider themselves the enemies of the victors, and I wanted to warn the Romans to beware of the high priests of this land. They even wanted to betray their own mother if they could thereby obtain a position with the associated luxurious life.

It seems to me that of the conquered cities, Jerusalem is the most difficult to rule. The people are turbulent, that I live in fear of an uprising. I don't have enough soldiers to suppress it. I had only one centurion and a hundred men under my command. I requested reinforcements from the prefect of Syria, who informed me that he himself hardly has enough troops to defend his own province. The insatiable thirst to expand the empire, without the means, makes me fear that this will lead to the overthrow of our entire government. I myself lived in isolation from the crowd, because I did not know what power these priests have over the mob to take action. Nevertheless, I endeavored, as far as I can, to determine the thoughts and attitudes of the people.

Among the various rumors that came to my attention, there was one that caught my special attention. A young man, it was said, had appeared in Galilee, and preached with noble anointing a new law in the name of God who had sent him. At first I was afraid that his purpose was to turn the people against the Romans, but that fear was soon allayed. Yeshua of Nazareth spoke more as a friend of the Romans than of Jews.

One day, when I passed by the place of Siloam, there was a great crowd of people. In the middle of the crowd I saw a young man who, leaning against a tree, spoke calmly to the crowd. I was told this was Yeshua. I could have easily checked this myself, so great was the contrast between him and those who listened to him. His golden hair and beard gave his appearance a heavenly impression. He seemed about thirty years old to me. Never have I seen a more beautiful or peaceful appearance. What a contrast between him and his audience with their black beards and tawny appearance.

Not wanting to disturb him by my presence, I continued my walk, but my secretary joined the crowd to listen. My secretary's name is Manlius. The grandson of the superior of the conspirators who, waiting for Cataline, stayed in Eturia. Manlius is a long-time resident of Judea and familiar with the Hebrew language. He is devoted to me and I trust him. When I came back into the Praetorium I was already back, and he told me the words Yeshua had spoken at Siloam. Never have I read in the works of philosophers anything that can be compared to the teachings of Yeshua. One of those rebellious Jews, who is so rich in Jerusalem, asked Yeshua if it was lawful to pay tribute to the Emperor. His answer was, "Give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, and to God the things of God."

It was for this wisdom of speaking that I allowed the Nazarene so much freedom, for it was in my power to arrest him and banish him to Pontus. That would have contrasted, however, with the character that the right of the Roman government has always had in its dealings with people. This man was not seditious, or rebellious. I stretched out my protection over him, perhaps without his knowledge. He had the freedom to perform, speak, gather audience, address the people, and select disciples, without restriction by any official mandate. Should it ever happen (may the gods avert the sign!), should it ever happen, I say, that the religion of our forefathers should be supplanted by the religion of Yeshua, Rome would owe her untimely death to this noble tolerance, while I, unfortunate bum, will have been the instrument of what the Jews call "Providence" and we "fate".

This unlimited freedom, granted to Yeshua, excites the Jews—not the poor, but the rich and powerful. It is true, Yeshua was stern against the latter, for political reasons and in my opinion a proper reason not to restrict the freedom of the Nazarene. Scribes and Pharisees, he said, "You are a brood of vipers; you are like whitewashed tombs. You show yourself well to men, but you have the dead inside you." Another time he mocked the alms of the rich and the proud, saying that the penny of the poor was far more precious in the sight of God. Complaints came every day in Praetorium about Yeshua's impudence.

I have been informed of an accident that would have happened to him and that would not be the first time Jerusalem has stoned someone who calls themselves a prophet. An appeal would be made to the Emperor. In any case, my actions had been approved by the Senate and I was promised reinforcements as soon as the war with the Parthians was over. We ourselves are too weak to suppress an insurrection, so I decided on a measure that could promote peace in the city without subjecting the Praetorium to humiliation.

I wrote to Yeshua and requested him to come to the Praetorium for an interview. He came. You know that in my veins flows a mixture of Spanish and Roman blood, without fear or easily moved. When the Nazarene came in, I walked in the gallery, and my feet seemed as if they were tied to the pavement with an iron hand, and I trembled over all my limbs like a guilty man, but the Nazarene was calm and innocence itself. When he came close to me, he stopped, and by a sign it seemed as if he said to me, "I am here," though he said not a word. For a while I regarded with wonder and awe this extraordinary man, a type unknown to many painters who had given form and model to many gods and heroes. There was nothing in him that bore the character of defense, and yet I felt a great dread and shudder to approach him.

"Yeshua," I finally said to him -and my tongue stammered- "Yeshua of Nazareth, for the past three years I have given you great freedom of speech, which I do not regret. Your words are those of a sage. I do not know whether you have read Socrates or Plato, but this I know, that there is a majestic simplicity in your lecture which exalts you far above these philosophers. The Emperor has been informed of this and I, as his humble representative in this country, am glad having given you this liberty which you are worthy of. But I do not want to hide from you that your way of speaking strong and bitter enemies have arisen against you. That will come as no surprise. Socrates had his enemies and he too felt himself a victim of their hatred. But yours are doubly angry with you for your teachings, so strict in content, and with me, for the liberty which I allowed you. They even accuse me of colluding with you indirectly, with the target the Hebrews of their to rob the little power that Rome has left them. My request, I do not say my command, is that in the future you will be more careful and moderate and pay more attention to them, lest you hurt the pride of your enemies, and they set the stupid people against you, and compel me to use the instrument of the law.

The Nazarene answered me calmly, "Prince of this earth, your words bear no witness to true wisdom. Tell the mountain stream to stand in the midst of the gorge; and it will uproot the trees in the valley. The mountain stream will answer you that it will obey the natural laws of the Creator. God only knows where the waters of the mountain stream flow. Verily I say unto you, Before the rose of Sharon blooms, the blood of the righteous shall be shed."

Your blood will not be shed, I said with deep emotion: "You are more precious in my judgment because of your wisdom, than all those restless and proud Pharisees who abuse the freedom granted to them by the Romans. They conspire against Caesar and turn his benevolence into fear, giving the illiterate the impression that Caesar is a tyrant who wants to destroy theirs. Brutal wretch! They are unaware that the wolf of the Tiber sometimes dresses with the skin of a sheep for his evil purposes I will protect you from them My official residence shall be an asylum, inviolable day and night.

Yeshua carelessly shook his head and said with a serious but divine smile, "When that day comes, there will be no hiding places for the son of man, not on earth, or under the earth. The hiding place of the righteous is there," pointing to heaven. "That which is written in the books of the prophets must be fulfilled."

Young man I answered mildly, "You compel me to turn my request into an order, The security of the province entrusted to me requires it. You must exercise more moderation in your speech. Do not transgress my order; you now know the consequences. My congratulations are with you. Farewell!"

Prince of this earth, Yeshua answered, "I come not to bring war into the world but peace and love and joy. I was born on the day Emperor Augustus gave peace to the Roman world. Persecutions do not come from me. I expect that of others and will meet them in obedience to the will of my Father who has shown me the way. Therefore restrain your earthly policy. It is not in your power to arrest the victim at the foot of the tabernacle of atonement ". Saying this he disappeared like a bright shadow behind the curtains of the gallery, much to my relief, for I felt a heavy burden from which I could not free myself in his presence.</>

Then Yeshua's enemies turn to Herod, who reigned over Galilee, to take revenge on the Nazarene. Had Herod acted as he saw fit, he would have ordered Yeshua to be put to death immediately; but, however proud of his royal dignity, he hesitated to do anything that would diminish his influence in the Senate, or he, like me, was afraid of Yeshua. Provided that a Roman officer would never be deterred by a Jew. That is why Herod had come to me in the Praetorium. When, after some trivial conversation, he rose to leave, he asked my opinion of the Nazarene. I replied that Yeshua appeared to me as one of the great philosophers who produced great nations, that his teachings were in no way sacrilegious, and that the intentions of Rome were to allow him freedom of speech which is justified by his actions. Herod smiled maliciously and greeting me with ironic respect, he departed.

A great feast of the Jews was imminent and also the preparation for a kind of popular festival preceding the solemnity of an Easter feast. The city was overcrowded with riotous people clamoring for the death of the Nazarene. My envoy informed me that the temple treasury was used to bribe people. A Roman centurion was offended. I wrote to the Prefect of Syria to send a hundred foot soldiers and as many cavalry. He declined this. I saw myself alone with a handful of veterans in the middle of a rebellious city, too weak to suppress an insurrection and no choice but to tolerate it. They had seized Yeshua, and the rioters—because they had nothing to fear from the Praetorium, believing that I would condone the riot, as their leaders had told them—continued screaming, "Crucify him! Crucify him !"

Three powerful factions had united against Yeshua: First, the Herodians and the Sadducees, their sedition seemed to stem from dual motives. They hated the Nazarene and the Roman yoke. They never forgave me for entering the holy city with the banners bearing the image of the Roman Emperor; and though I had admitted the fatal error in this matter, the sacrilege was no less heinous in their eyes. Another grievance gnawed within them. I had proposed to use part of the treasury in the temple to erect a building for public use, but my proposal was despised. The Pharisees were Yeshua's best known enemies. They were not bothered by the government. They bore with bitterness the stern rebukes which the Nazarene had given them for three years, everywhere he went.

Shy and too weak to act on their own, they had taken advantage of the quarrel between the Herodians and the Sadducees. In addition to these three factions, I also had to contend with a savage and licentious mob, always ready to support an uprising and take advantage of the disorder and strife that would ensue.

Yeshua was dragged before the high priest and sentenced to death. It was then that the high priest Caiaphas humbled himself before me. He sent his prisoner to me to confirm his conviction and ensure execution. I answered him that if Yeshua was a Galilean, the matter was under Herod's jurisdiction and ordered him to be sent there. The cunning tetrarch showed humility, gave his respect to the emperor's lieutenant, and placed the man's fate in my hands. Soon my palace looked like a besieged fortress. Every moment their discontent grew. Jerusalem was flooded with crowds from the mountains of Nazareth. All Judea had poured into the city. I had chosen a woman from the Celts. She claimed to be able to see into the future. Weeping and throwing herself at my feet she said to me: "Beware! Beware! Do not touch this man, for he is holy. Last night I saw him in a vision. He walked on the water; he flew up wings of the wind. He spoke to the storm and to the fish of the lake, all obeyed him. Behold, the brook that flows from Mount Kedron is covered with blood. The steps at the emperor's busts are covered with vegetation. The pillars of the courtyard give way, and the sun is covered with mourning like a vestal virgin in the tomb. Ah Pilate, evil awaits thee, if thou wilt not hearken to thy wife's speeches. Fear the curse of the Roman Senate; fear the disapproval of the emperor". At this time the marble staircase groaned under the weight of the crowd. The Nazarene had been returned to me. I made my way to the courtroom, followed by my guard, and sternly asked the people what they wanted.

"The death of the Nazarene," was their reply. "For what crime?" He has blasphemed, he prophesied the destruction of the temple; he calls himself the Son of God, the Messiah, the king of the Jews." Roman law I said, does not punish such cases with death. "Crucify him! Crucify him!" cried the ruthless horde. The frenzy of a maddened mob shook the foundations of the palace.

There was only one who remained calm in the midst of the colossal crowd. That was the Nazarene. After many fruitless attempts to protect him from the furious and ruthless persecutors, I tried what seemed to me at the time the only means that could save his life. I suggested-because it was their custom to release a prisoner at this feast-to release Yeshua-that he might be the scapegoat, as they called it. But they said, "Yeshua must be crucified." I then spoke to them of the illogicality of their conduct, which was not in accordance with their law, showing them that no judge should pronounce sentence on a criminal unless he had fasted a whole day; and that the verdict must have the approval of the Sanhedrin and the agreement of the president of the court. That no criminal could be executed on the same day that the sentence was pronounced, and that the next day, the day of the execution, the Sanhedrin would be asked to reconsider the entire trial.

Also according to their law, a man with a flag should be placed at the door of the courtroom, and a little further on a horse, to proclaim the name of the criminal, and his crime, and also the names of the criminals. testify to know if anyone could testify in his favor. And the prisoner, on his way to the execution, had the right to return thrice and bring forward for new points that could be of advantage. I used all these pleas in hopes of awe and submission, but they kept shouting. "Crucify him! Crucify him"!

Thereupon I ordered the scourging of Yeshua, hoping that this would assuage their anger, but that only increased their rage. Then I asked for a bowl of water and washed my hands in front of the roaring crowd, testifying that in my judgment Yeshua of Nazareth had done nothing to deserve death. But in vain. It was his life that these wretches were thirsty for.

Many times in our civil riots I have witnessed an angry mob, but nothing could compare to what I have seen in this event. It may rightly be said that all the demons of hell had gathered in Jerusalem. Instead of walking, the masses seemed to be carried by a whirling gulf stream, rolling on like living waves, from the gates of the Praetorium to Mount Zion, as they howled, howled, and howled, as had never been heard in the revolts of Pannonia or in a tumult at the forum in Rome.

Gradually it began to get dark, like a winter twilight. Just like the death of the great Julius Caesar. It was like the 15th day of March. I, as the procurator of a rebellious province, leaned against a column of my gallery, contemplating in the gloomy darkness how the evil spirits of Tartarus had dragged the innocent Nazarene to execution. Everyone around me had disappeared. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had left the city through the funeral gate (now Herod's Gate) and had gone to Gemonica. An air of desolation and sadness surrounded me. My guard had joined the cavalry, and the chieftain, with a display of force, tried to maintain order. I was left alone; and my heart broke, which showed me that; what passed at that time belonged to the history of the gods rather than that of the people. A loud cry was heard, carried by the wind, coming from the direction of Calvary. A cry of terror, such as has never been heard by any mortal before. Dark clouds fell over the top of the temple and covered the city as if with a veil. The signs which were seen, both in the heavens and also on the earth, were so terrible, and it is said that Dionysius the Areopagite then exclaimed: "Either the Creator of nature suffers, or the universe falls apart."

About the first hour of the night I put on a cloak and went into the city to the gates of Calvary. The offering was completed. The crowd went home, still excited, but sad, silent, and desperate. What she had witnessed had struck her with fear and remorse. I also saw my little Roman division go by mournfully, the standard-bearer had wound his eagle in token of sorrow; and by chance I heard some Jewish soldiers muttering strange words which I did not understand. Others related of the miracles so much like those which the Romans had so often struck by the will of the gods. Sometimes groups of men and women halted and, after looking backwards at the hill of Calvary, stood motionless, waiting to witness new wonders.

During these terrifying events in nature, there was a terrible earthquake in lower Egypt that filled everyone with fear and filled the superstitious Jews with deadly terror. It is said that Balthasar, an old and wise Jew from Antioch, was found dead after these events. It is not known whether he died of shock or grief. He was a close friend of the Nazarene.

As the first hour of the night approached, I put on my cloak and went toward the city, to the gate at Calvary. The sacrifice had been made. The crowd returned home, still excited, it is true, but gloomy, silent and despairing. What they had seen had caught them in terror and remorse. I saw my small group of Romans pass by in mourning, their standard-bearer had wrapped the eagle in a cloth as if in mourning, and the Jewish soldiers muttered strange words that I did not understand. Others told of the miracles that had happened to the Romans by the will of the gods. Sometimes groups of women and men stood still and looked back to the hill of Calvary, motionless waiting to witness new wonders.

I returned to the Praetorium, sad and pensive. As I ascended the stairs, the steps of which were still stained with the blood of the Nazarene, I noticed an old man in a pleading pose, and behind him several Romans in tears. He threw himself at my feet and wept bitterly. It is painful to see an old man cry, and my heart, already filled with sorrow, could not take it anymore, so that we, though strangers, wept together. And it seemed that many of the people I saw in the large crowd also had tears in their eyes. I had never witnessed such an extreme reversal of feelings before. Those who had betrayed and sold him, who had testified against him and cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him, we want his blood," all of them crept away like cowards and brushed their teeth with vinegar.

As I was told, Yeshua taught a resurrection and separation after death. If that were a fact, I'm sure it started to permeate this huge crowd. "Father," I said to him, after I regained control of my feelings, "who are you and what is your request?" He answered, I am Joseph of Arimathea and have come on my knees to beg you for permission that I may bury the body of Yeshua of Nazareth." "Your prayer has been answered," I replied, and at the same time ordered Manlius to supervise the funeral with some soldiers, so that no desecration would take place.

A few days later the tomb was empty. His disciples proclaimed throughout the land that Yeshua had risen from the dead, as he had foretold. This caused even greater excitement than the crucifixion. To what extent this is true I cannot say for sure, but I have already made inquiries, so that you may find out for yourself and judge whether I have been wrong, as Herod suggests. Joseph buried Yeshua in his own tomb. Whether he had his resurrection in mind, or whether he planned to cut another for himself, I cannot say. The day after his funeral, a priest came to the Praetorium and said that they were afraid that his disciples planned to steal Yeshua's body, hide it, in order to prevent him from rising from the dead, as he had foretold, and of which they were perfectly convinced. I sent him to the captain of the royal guard (Malchus) to tell him to take Jewish soldiers and as many as was necessary to place the tomb; so that if anything happened, they would blame themselves and not the Romans.

When there was great excitement over the tomb being found empty, I felt a deeper concern than ever. I called for Malchus, who told me that he had placed his Lieutenant Ben Isham around the grave with a hundred soldiers. He told me that Isham and the soldiers were very shocked at what had happened that morning. I sent for this Isham, who, as far as I can remember, revealed to me the following circumstances: He said that at the beginning of the fourth watch, they saw a soft and beautiful light over the tomb, He thought at first that the women had come were to embalm the body of Yeshua, as was their custom, but he could not see how they had passed the guard.

As those thoughts passed through his mind, the whole place lit up, and there seemed to be a crowd of the dead in their shrouds. All seemed to be cheering and in ecstasy, while all around and above was the most beautiful music he had ever heard; and the whole air seemed to be filled with voices praising God. At this time, the earth seemed to sway and swam, so much so that it made him sick and unable to stand on his feet. He said that because the earth swam beneath him, his feelings failed him, so that he did not know what was happening. I asked him what condition he was in when he came to himself. He said he was lying on the ground with his face to the earth. I asked him if he could have been mistaken just the light. Wasn't that daylight in the east? He said he had thought this too at first, but a stone's throw away it was still very dark and he remembered that it was still too early for the day. I asked him if his dizziness might not have been caused by the sudden awakening and rapid standing, as it sometimes may be. He said no and indicated that he hadn't slept all night, because sleeping during the military service would carry the death penalty. He did say that he let some soldiers sleep for a while. Some were asleep at that time. I asked him how long the scene had lasted. He said he didn't know but thought about an hour. He said it faded at the light of day. I asked him if he had gone to the tomb when he had come to himself. He answered no, because he had been afraid, and said that with the changing of the guard, they had all gone to their quarters. I asked him if he had been questioned by the priests. He said this happened. They wanted him to say it was an earthquake and they were asleep. In addition, they had given him money to say that the disciples had come and stolen Yeshua. But he had seen no disciples; he didn't know the body was gone until he was told. I asked him what his personal view was of the priests with whom he had spoken. He said some of them thought Yeshua was not a man; that he was not a human being; that he was not the son of Mary, nor the same one who was said to be born of the virgin in Bethlehem. That the same person had been on earth before with Abraham and Lot, and at many other times and places.

It seems to me that, if the Jewish theory is true, these conclusions are correct, because they are in accordance with this man's life, as is known and testified by friend and foe alike. For the elements were no longer in his hands as clay in a potter's hand. He could turn water into wine; turning death into life, disease into health. He could calm the sea, calm the storms, call a fish with a silver piece in its mouth.

Now I say, if he could do all these things that he did and many more, as all the Jews testify - and by doing these things enmity arose (he was not charged with any criminal offences, or transgression of the law, neither of any wrong doing in a person) and these facts are known by thousands, both from enemies and from friends—I will almost say, like Manlius at the cross: "Truly this was the son of God."

Noble Sovereign, so far as I can judge the matter, this largely corresponds to the facts as I can ascertain them, and I have made every effort to make as complete a statement as possible, so that you may judge my conduct in its entirety, especially as I hear that Antipas has said many harsh things about me in this case.

With the promise of allegiance and good wishes to my noble Sovereign, I am, your most obedient servant.

Pontius Pilate