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J. Stevenson

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CHAPTER I

The City and Church of Caesarea

Strabo the geographer makes but a brief reference¹ to Strato's Tower. In his course southwards along the Syrian coast he merely mentions it, and the fact that there was a landing-place there. But even as Strabo wrote, or perhaps before he had written, a transformation was taking place, and the munificence of a king was changing this decaying² spot into a splendid city, and the only real port in Palestine.

Strato's Tower was not a place of great antiquity, as its neighbours to the north and south, Dora and Joppa, were. It is probable that the founder of the town was one of the two Stratos who were Kings of Sidon in the fourth century B.C. We do not know anything about its early history; in Josephus it first emerges in the story of the murder of Antigonus by his brother Aristobulus.³ It had been prophesied of Antigonus, as of Cambyses, Epaminondas, King Henry the Fourth of

¹ P. 758. On Strato's Tower and Caesarea see L. Haefeli, *Cäsarea am Meer* (Münster i. W. 1923).

² Jos. *B. J.* i. 21. 5 (408). Had Strato's Tower been destroyed in the earthquake of 31 B.C.?

³ After 104 B.C. and before 102-1 (fall of Cleopatra). Bevan, *House of Seleucus*, II. 256-7. Jos. *A. J.* XIII. 11. 12 (307 ff.).

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England and others, that he should die at a certain place, in his case Strato's Tower. But Antigonus was murdered in Jerusalem, and the prophet thought that he had lost his reputation, till it was discovered that the murder had been committed in a tower of the same name as the city on the coast. At this time one Zoilus was tyrant of Strato's Tower and of its neighbour Dora, but he was overcome by Ptolemy Lathyrus at the request of Alexander Jannaeus,¹ and his dominion passed to the Jews. One can infer that the inhabitants were compelled to adopt Jewish customs.²

With the coming of Pompey to Palestine in 63 B.C. the coast cities, Gaza, Joppa, Dora, and Strato's Tower, as well as various inland towns, were added³ to the province of Syria, and Strato's Tower must have been one of the places bequeathed by Antony to Cleopatra.⁴ At the final triumph of Augustus, Herod received various towns, including Strato's Tower, as an addition to his dominions, in recompense for his friendship, of which⁵ he took good care that Augustus should not be ignorant. Herod built himself a new capital, Sebaste, on the site of the ancient Samaria, but more than a new capital was needed: an ambitious

¹ *A. J.* XIII. 12. 4 (335).² *A. J.* XIII. 15. 4 (397).³ *A. J.* XIV. 4. 4 (76). *B. J.* I. 7. 7 (156).⁴ *A. J.* XV. 4. 1 (95).⁵ Cf. *A. J.* XV. 7. 3 (217).

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monarch required a port as well, and of the coast towns he chose Strato's Tower as a fit subject for his munificence. The coast¹ was harbourless; ships had to ride at anchor off the shore, as the prevalent south winds drove the waves against the rocks with such fury that the backward surge disturbed the sea for a considerable distance, or by rolling to the shore sand from the sea created sandbanks.² Nevertheless, Strato's Tower seems to have been a stopping-place much used on the voyage from Phoenicia to Egypt.³ Herod determined to build a port at this place. But he did not have it all his own way; in his building he had a formidable contest with the forces of nature: all the material had to be brought⁴ from elsewhere, and the struggle to combine beauty and utility was hard, but the king won, and the city of Caesarea was built, in construction a compliment to the tenacity of Herod, and in name a compliment to his imperial benefactor. Herod really had an eye on Rome when he built Caesarea. Josephus states that this city was an especial demonstration of the king's love of magnificence.⁵ It was also a strong

¹ Cf. *A. J.* xv. 9. 6 (333) with *B. J.* i. 21. 5 (409).

² I think that this is what Josephus means in *A. J.* *loc. cit.* There is a reference in the Talmud to the sand at Caesarea. Haefeli, *op. cit.* p. 12.

³ *A. J.* *loc. cit.*

⁴ *A. J.* xv. 9. 6 (332).

⁵ *B. J.* i. 2. 1 (410).

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fortress for his personal safety.¹ Well did Herod know the passionate, easily excited character of the Jews.²

The new city was on a plain by the sea shore,³ stifling in summer and warm in winter. Vespasian recognised it as a good place to winter in during the Jewish war.⁴ Later accounts agree that Caesarea was in a pleasant land; the Talmud calls the towns of Tyre and Caesarea 'the country of life',⁵ and the geographer Mukaddasi⁶ says, 'There is no city more beautiful nor any better filled with good things; plenty has its well spring here, and useful products are on every hand'.

Herod had a magnificent harbour built. So famous did this harbour become that the city was designated by it.⁷ Josephus says in one⁸ passage that it was as big as the Peiraeus, in another⁹ that it was bigger. The breakwater enclosing the harbour was made by dropping huge stones into the sea and was 200 feet broad. On it was a sea wall, lodgings for the sailors, and before these a

¹ *A. J.* xv. 8. 5 (293, 295).

² Haefeli, *op. cit.* p. 111.

³ *B. J.* iii. 9. 1 (413).

⁴ *B. J.* iv. 2. 1 (87).

⁵ A. Neubauer, *Géographie du Talmud*, p. 13.

⁶ Transl. in *Palestine under the Moslems* by G. le Strange, p. 474.

⁷ *Καισάρεια ἡ πρὸς Σεβαστῶν λιμῆνι*. Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-encyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, art. 'Caesarea', col. 1292.

⁸ *A. J.* xv. 9. 6 (332).

⁹ *B. J.* i. 21. 5 (410). Both the statements of Josephus are exaggerations. Haefeli, *op. cit.* p. 14.

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‘most pleasant’¹ walk round the whole length of the structure. At intervals towers were set, and of these Josephus singles out the tower of Drusus for special² mention. The entrance to the harbour, with a great monument on either side, faced the north,³ the most sheltered direction. Opposite to this entrance, on rising ground, was the temple of Caesar and Rome wherein, in imitation of the statue of Zeus at Olympia, and that of Hera at Argos, the two divinities had their abode.

The other public buildings, amphitheatre, theatre and agora, were on an equally lavish scale, all the city being built⁴ of white stone. In the 192nd Olympiad (12–8 B.C.), in the twenty-eighth year of Herod’s reign (10–9 B.C.), the first celebration of Games, named like the city from Caesar, took place, this festival marking the completion of the new city,⁵ after ten or twelve years’ building. But the old name of the city was not entirely forgotten, and in Ptolemy,⁶ in the Clementine

¹ *A. J.* xv. 9. 6 (337).

² *A. J.* *loc. cit.* (336), *πάνν καλόν τι χρῆμα*.

³ Accurately speaking, the harbour mouth faced north-west. Haefeli, *op. cit.* p. 14.

⁴ *A. J.* xvi. 5. 1 (136). *B. J.* i. 21. 8 (415). Cf. *A. J.* xv. 9. 6 (339), *Καισάρεια...καλλίστης καὶ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῆς κατασκευῆς τετυχηκῖα*.

⁵ Cf. *A. J.* xvi. 5. 1 (136) with xv. 9. 6 (341).

⁶ Schürer, *History of Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ*, Eng. transl. div. II, vol. I, p. 85. This name appears in the Armenian translation of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius also,

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Homilies and *Recognitions*, and in Epiphanius, we find a combination of the two, Caesarea of Strato.

The previous lack of a port on the coast of Palestine, the residence of the Roman governor in the city after the deposition of Archelaus, Herod's successor, and the establishing of a Roman garrison maintained the importance of Caesarea in the future.

From A.D. 41 to 44 the city was under the rule of Herod Agrippa I, who was a benefactor of the Jews. On the occasion of a great festival at Caesarea, in his pride he did not rebuke the flattery of the people, who hailed him as a god, and he was straightway punished by the sudden attack of a fell disease. There are two accounts of his death; one in Josephus,¹ and one in the Acts of the Apostles;² both bear witness to the sudden intervention of Heaven, and a unification of the two was attempted by some Christian, who turned an owl³ into an angel, who appeared as the minister of Heaven's vengeance on the proud ruler. The people of Caesarea vilified the memory of Herod⁴ Agrippa, whom they really hated for his Judaising

Schoene, *Eusebii Chronicorum libri duo*, vol. II, p. 152; and it is found in an inscription of the time of Marcus Aurelius at Aphrodisias in Caria and (in Latin) on a military diploma of Vespasian (Haefeli, *op. cit.* p. 26).

¹ *A. J.* XIX. 8. 2 (343 ff.).

² Acts xii. 20 ff.

³ Eus. *H.E.* II. 10.

⁴ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. III, p. 488, art. 'Caesarea'.

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tendencies, and their behaviour was so bad¹ as to provoke the resentment of the Emperor himself. The city was always Gentile rather than Jewish.² That it was never meant to be a Jewish city is shown by the prominence given by its founder to such Gentile buildings as the amphitheatre and the temple of Caesar and Rome. Josephus³ calls it 'Caesarea, the biggest city of Judaea, inhabited by Greeks for the most part'. This Gentile preponderance was, no doubt, accentuated by the massacre of the Caesarean Jews—20,000 of them, if we may believe Josephus—at the outbreak of the Jewish war, and by the plantation of a colony there by Vespasian, after the war was over.⁴

But previous to the Jewish war the Jews were a formidable minority⁵ and the struggle between them and the Gentiles became serious in the reign of Nero, when Felix was governor. The cause lay in the fact that each side denied *ἰσοπολίτεια* to the other: 'for the Jews', says Josephus,⁶ 'thought to take the first place because the founder of Caesarea,

¹ *A. J.* xix. 9. 2 (361 ff.).

² Cf. the Letter of Apollonius of Tyana to the Chie Councillors of Caesarea, in which he commends the ἡθη Ἑλληνικά of the city. Given in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, vol. II, p. 416 (Loeb Library).

³ *B. J.* III. 9. 1 (409).

⁴ Pliny, *N.H.* v. 13. 69.

⁵ The Jews do not appear to have lived in any particular quarter of the city; cf. *B. J.* II. 13. 7 (266).

⁶ *A. J.* xx. 8. 7 (173 ff.).

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Herod their king, was a Jew by race, but the Syrians, while agreeing about Herod, said that Caesarea was formerly called Strato's Tower and that at that time they had not a single Jewish inhabitant'. Timely chastisement of the leaders on both sides by the rulers quelled the trouble for a moment, but it began again, the Jews relying on their wealth, the Syrians on the fact that most of the garrison were natives of Caesarea and Sebaste. The custom prevalent in the first century of allowing troops to take root in a place had already become a cause of danger in Caesarea in the reign of Claudius; after the death of Herod Agrippa at Caesarea the gross behaviour of the soldiers had caused Claudius¹ to express the intention of sending them to Pontus; but they begged themselves off, and were, says Josephus, the beginning of the greatest misfortunes to the Jews. Vespasian removed them at last.

Riots took place, and Felix, the governor, called out the troops, who seem to have concentrated their energies on the Jews, and when Felix was succeeded by Festus, these sent to Rome to complain about the acts of Felix,² who extricated himself through the influence of Pallas. Moreover Nero, acting on the advice of Beryllus,³ his secretary for Greek correspondence, who had been bribed

¹ *A. J.* xix. 9. 2 (365).

² *A. J.* xx. 8. 9 (182-4).

³ ? Beryllus or Burrhus; cf. Schürer, *op. cit.* div. I, vol. II, p. 184 note, with P.W. s.v. 'Beryllus'.

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by two of the leading Gentiles of Caesarea, decided the question at issue in favour of the Syrians and matters in Caesarea went from bad to worse. A Gentile insult to a synagogue¹ produced another riot, and the Jews retired from the city. Florus, who was now governor, was quite unsympathetic to the appeals of the Jews, his sole objects being, according to the Jewish historian, to get money out of them, and to cover his own crimes by goading them to revolt. He compelled the Jews to return to Caesarea, and there they were massacred,² on the same day as the massacre of the Romans at Jerusalem. This synchronism need not be pressed; one cannot be sure if the one massacre was not in some measure a reprisal for the other. Anyhow, Caesarea was denuded of its Jewish population, as Florus took prisoner those who escaped the sword, and sent them to the dockyards for compulsory labour.

The war had begun. A Jewish offensive directed against Caesarea, amongst other places, was unsuccessful at this point,³ and during the war Caesarea played an important part as a Roman base. Vespasian⁴ landed there after the capture of Jotopata, and the historian Josephus, as the defeated enemy commander, experienced the vocal resentment of the inhabitants. Vespasian wintered

¹ *B. J.* II. 14. 5 (289 ff.).² *B. J.* II. 18. 1 (457 ff.).³ *B. J.* II. 18. 1 (459).⁴ *B. J.* III. 9. 1 (409 ff.).

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two legions there, but forbore to inflict a third upon the city. After the news of the accession of Vitellius to the imperial power it was at Caesarea that the dissatisfaction of the troops of Vespasian with the new sovereign seems to have come to a head,¹ and here it was that the rule of the Empire was first thrust by the Eastern army on its commander. After the fall of Jerusalem Titus celebrated the birthday of his brother at Caesarea with games in which a great multitude of captives were slain.

The plantation of a colony by Vespasian would make up the loss of population occasioned by the war and later in its history the city received another honour from the Emperor of the time, Alexander Severus, who added the title 'Metropolis'.² A bare notice in the *Chronicle* of Eusebius states that Nicopolis and Caesarea were destroyed by an earthquake about A.D. 130.³

We know little of the history of the city in the second and third centuries. It must have continued a busy place: we hear of purple-dyeing⁴ there, and that the land abounded in wine, oil and corn. And the Jews had returned; one reason for this was probably the fact that Jerusalem was forbidden

¹ *B. J.* iv. 10. 4 (601 ff.).

² Schürer, *op. cit.* div. II, vol. I, p. 84.

³ Schoene, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 166. *Ann. Abr.* 2145. J. Karst, *Die Chronik aus dem Armenischen übersetzt* (p. 220), gives 2144.

⁴ Müller, *Geog. Gr. Minor.* vol. II, p. 513 (c. 29), quoted by Schürer, *op. cit.* div. II, vol. I, p. 42.