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## The Dying Grain Which Bears Much Fruit: John 12:24, the Livia Cult, and Bethsaida

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH at Bethsaida on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee provides a new perspective for the context of the ministry of Jesus and for the development of the early church. In particular, findings from archaeology provide new eyes for understanding the saying of Jesus in John 12:24:

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

The context for this saying is not Bethsaida, but Jerusalem during the last week of Jesus' life; however, it is uttered when Philip and Andrew, two Bethsaida disciples, report that there are "Greeks" wishing to see Jesus. A saying about grain sown and bearing fruit is by no means unusual in the teaching—evidenced by the parables of the sower, the mustard seed, and the seed sown secretly. However, what is unique is the connection to the death and resurrection of Jesus. This can be understood against the background of the role of Livia, wife of Augustus, in the imperial cult and in particular its importance in the city of Bethsaida.

## AN EARLY SAYING OF JESUS

The grain saying of John 12:24 has many characteristics that point to its earliness in the sayings tradition. In fact, according to *The Five Gospels* (Funk et al. 1993, 441–42), which records the work of the Jesus Seminar, it is one of only four sayings in the Gospel of John that are considered possibly authentic.<sup>1</sup> This saying is printed in gray, which means that it reflects the ideas of Jesus although not his exact words. This is somewhat surprising because there is no synoptic or Thomas parallel; however, a parallel in 1 Corinthians 15:36–37 does demonstrate that the imagery “has deep roots in the Christian tradition” (Funk et al. 1993, 411). The Pauline parallel reads:

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

Since 1 Corinthians is usually dated to the early 50s CE, this would point to wide use of the saying in the first two decades after the death of Jesus on 7 April 30 CE.<sup>2</sup>

The dying grain is combined with two other short sayings of Jesus in John 12:24–26 which seemed to be linked already in a pre-Johannine source:

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

Rudolf Schnackenburg has identified these three sayings as “a unit, firmly rooted in tradition and catechesis of the primitive church.”<sup>3</sup> What stands out the most about these latter two sayings is that parallels occur in Mark 8:34–35, but in reverse order. These sayings occur in the context of the confession of Simon Peter which is linked geographically to the area of Caesarea-Philippi, just north of Bethsaida. That episode is preceded in Mark 8 by the second feeding miracle and the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (Brodie 1993, 48–66; Strickert 1998, 125–30). Even though it is a major revision from Mark, Luke 9 places the confession of Peter and the sayings about losing one’s life and being a servant directly after the Bethsaida feeding of the five thousand

episode. The tendency of form critics (Bultman 1931), of course, has been to completely separate the sayings of Jesus from their context in the Gospels and to discount this contextual data as devoid of interpretive information. John 12:20–23, however, seems to bring this principle into question. The fact that John 12:21 refers to Bethsaida disciples in introducing these three sayings should not go unnoticed.

Years ago, C. H. Dodd analyzed this short dying grain parable (John 12:24) and asked whether it also “should not be accepted as representing an element in the tradition as primitive and authentic as anything” contained in the synoptic Gospels (1963, 366–69). He noted that in form it is very similar to a number of synoptic parables (salt, kingdom divided, eye, lost sheep),<sup>4</sup> which he refers to as the form of an “observed invariable sequence” or “law of nature” that “if A occurs, then B occurs” (Dodd 1963, 366–69). Parables based on observation of agricultural practice are common to Jesus, especially seed parables—the parables of the sower, the mustard seed, the seed sown secretly. Even with individual words and phrases, there is a high degree of similarity: ὁ κόκκος τοῦ σίτου [a grain of wheat] is not unlike the κόκκος συνάπews [a grain of mustard seed] of the mustard seed parable (Mark 4:31), and πεσῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν [falling into the earth] is almost identical to ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν γῆν [it falls into the earth] of the parable of the sower (Mark 4:8). Only the introductory “very truly I say to you” and “it remains alone” (John 6:15) have a distinctively Johannine ring (Sanders 1968, 292; Brown 1966, 471). More important than individual expressions, however, is the similarity in motif with the mustard seed parable that the one becomes many (Funk et al. 1993, 441). According to Dodd, “It appears, therefore, that we have here a pericope which in form, in the character of its imagery, and in the whole manner in which it is presented...associates itself closely with the tradition of parabolic teaching as we know it from the Synoptics.”<sup>5</sup>

The final words in the John 12:24 text, καρπὸν φέρει [it bears fruit], are significant. The concept of bearing fruit is quite common in the New Testament. The actual epithet καρπόφορος [fruit bearing] occurs only a single time in Acts 14:17. This is a sermon by Paul in the town of Lystra in Asia Minor against the backdrop of a temple of Zeus in which Paul points to the one creator God worshipped in Judaism as καρπόφορος. Likewise in letters written in a Greco-Roman context (Rom. 7:4, 5; Col. 1:6, 10), the metaphor is used for Christian behavior, with the verbal form καρποφορέω.

The predominant expression used in the synoptic Gospels is καρπὸν ποιεῖν [to produce fruit], used a total of fourteen times in Q (Matt. 3:8 = Luke 3:8; Matt. 3:10 = Luke 3:9; Matt. 7:16–20 [five times] = Luke 6:43–44 [twice]), Matthew's unique material (Matt. 13:36, 21:43), and Luke's unique material (Luke 13:9). The Markan parable of the sower uses καρπὸν δουνᾶν [to give fruit] (Mark 4:7, 8). This is followed by Matthew 13:8 while Luke makes an alteration to καρπὸν ποιεῖν [to produce fruit] (Luke 8:8). Only in the final verse of the explanation to the parable of the sower do all three writers use καρποφορέω (Mark 4:20; Matt. 13:23; Luke 8:15). This same expression is repeated by Mark in the parable of the seed sown secretly (Mark 4:28). Thus out of twenty-two occurrences of the various forms of the expression "to produce fruit," the synoptic Gospels only have four from the καρπόφορος [fruit bearing] root.

In contrast, John uses exclusively καρπὸς φερεῖν [to bear fruit]. The first occasion is the Passover week dying grain saying (John 12:24). Three chapters later, also in the context of Passover week, Jesus gives the "I am the vine; you are the branches" discourse, which employs καρπὸς φερεῖν seven times (John 15:1–16). This is clearly a favorite Johannine expression. With John's often subtle sacramental theology, one can see a clear link between the two sayings, one focusing on the fruit of sown grain and the other on the fruit of the vine. The dying grain saying thus provides an introduction to the grain and vine motifs common to both Passover and Eucharist. The point is that through the single grain and the single vine comes much fruit.

Unlike the synoptic Gospels, there is no reference to a Thursday evening Passover meal nor to the Eucharistic words in John 12–15. Rather one is directed back to the previous Passover when Jesus stayed behind at Bethsaida (John 6), where the same disciples, Philip and Andrew, played leadership roles, and when Jesus fed the five thousand by taking the grain of the field and producing much fruit (Strickert 1998, 115–24).

### THE DEMETER MYTH

While, in many respects, the saying of John 12:24 is very similar to other sayings of Jesus, there is one critical difference. The grain does not represent the word or the kingdom as in the synoptic parables. Rather it represents a person whose death is inevitable and necessary.

The parable not only speaks of the seed "falling into the earth," but twice it is also mentioned that the seed "dies."<sup>6</sup> The use of the article ὁ κόκκος του σίτου [the grain of wheat] makes it clear that the parable is not about seeds in general, but about one particular seed,<sup>7</sup> whose death will lead to bearing much fruit.

There is no question that the closest parallels for this symbolism are found in a Hellenistic religious background and especially mystery religions where the annual cycle of death and rebirth was dramatized with an ear of grain (Holtzmann 1908; Brown 1966, 472; Barrett 1960, 352; Sanders 1968, 293). Most popular were the mysteries of Eleusis where Demeter (also known as Brimo, Ceres [Roman], Deo, and Doso, and sometimes identified with her daughter, Kore, Kore Persephone, and Isis [Egypt]) traveled to the underworld to bring back her daughter Kore (Persephone, Persephassa, Proserpina [Roman], also known as Brimo, Core, Despoina [Arcadian]) so that the earth could bring forth corn. In time, hopes of individual immortality were thus linked to this agricultural festival (Rose 1970, 324).

The grain myth goes all the way back to the eighth or seventh century BCE Homeric *Hymn of Demeter*, which details the abduction of Demeter's daughter Kore to the underworld, her rescue, and finally the explanation of the life cycle of grains with the four-month period in which the fields are barren corresponding to the return of Kore to the underworld each year. The planting thus is understood as a mystery in which the seed is sown apparently to death below the surface of the ground, yet sprouts new life and an abundant crop for another year (Rice and Stambaugh 1979, 171–83; Meyer 1987, 20–30).

With the Demeter myth as the heart of the Eleusinian mysteries, the sanctuary soon became prominent in the religious life of Athens. A late fifth-century BCE document describes how the Athenians made regular grain payments to support the sanctuary:

Resolved by the council and the people..., on the proposal of the drafting committee: that the Athenians give first-fruits of the grain to the Two Goddesses according to the ancestral custom and the oracle of Delphi.

After explaining the details of this transaction, the document concludes: "May there be many good things and an abundance of grain of good quality to those who do this...."<sup>8</sup>

At about the same time, Herodotus documents the festive nature of the annual processions from Athens to Eleusis (*Hist.* 8.65). This same procession is alluded to a generation later (405 BCE) by the playwright Aristophanes in *The Frogs*. Here Dionysius, on a journey to the underworld, encounters initiates into the Eleusinian mysteries who celebrate in death as they did in life. The chorus sings a processional hymn to Proserpina:

March, chanting loud your lays,  
Your hearts and voices raising,  
The Saviour goddess praising  
Who vows she'll still  
Our city save to endless days,  
Whate'er Thorycion's will. (lines 378–83)

The leader then responds to introduce another hymn, this time to Demeter:

Break off the measure, and change the time, and now with  
chanting and hymns adorn  
Demeter, goddess mighty and high, the harvest-queen, the  
giver of corn. (lines 384–85)

Here in the final line, the epithet καρπόφορος is used of Demeter. She is “the harvest queen, the giver of corn” [τὴν καρποφόρον βασίλειαν].

The same basic expression had been used of Demeter by Herodotus in describing fertile Mesopotamia which abundantly brings forth the grain of Demeter (Δήμητρος καρπὸν ἐκφέρειν), an expression repeated verbatim several lines later (*Hist.* 1. 193). From inscriptions from Pessinus (*CIG* 4082) and Paros (*IG* 12 (5).226), it would appear that the epithet Καρπόφορος was in fact well known for Demeter. Although he is later (second century CE), Pausanias mentions in Tegea a temple (presumably built in earlier times) of Demeter and Kore which was called Καρπόφορος (*Descr.* 8.53.7).

A similar situation occurs in Rome with Demeter's equivalent Ceres—literary references point to the spread of this cult in Rome by at least the fifth century BCE (Spaeth 1996, 1). In fact, it was understood that the name Ceres itself derived (with the similarity of “c” and “g” sounds) from the idea of bearing fruit. The Augustan scholar Varro quotes the earlier poet Ennius as saying “She, because she bears fruits, (is called) Ceres” [*Quae Quod gerit fruges, Ceres*].<sup>9</sup> It is not surprising then

used as an epithet of Ceres.<sup>10</sup> As Barbetta Stanley Spaeth notes, “The Greeks gave Demeter the epithet *Karpophoros* (Bearer of Fruit), while the Romans called Ceres *Frugifera* (Bearer of Fruit)” (1996, 130). The impact of the dying grain myth is widespread.

There are two major problems with the Demeter cult as background for the particular grain saying in John 12:24. First, its Hellenistic character does not seem to fit the other evidence of an early, possibly authentic saying of Jesus. Second, the emphasis in John is on an action that really risks losing one's life and requires a death that is real. As Raymond Brown has pointed out, this is weakened by “the automatic and immutable character of this cycle” (1966, 472). It does seem far-fetched to make a connection between this saying of Jesus and Hellenistic mystery religions.

### THE GREEK CONNECTION

An adequate explanation for the connection between the grain imagery of one becoming many and death becoming life has long eluded scholars. John offers a clue by setting this saying in the context of the Jerusalem Passover when Greeks<sup>11</sup> wish to see Jesus. The mention of Greeks is highly significant. On the one hand, it is totally unexpected from a historical perspective because Greeks would not be permitted to eat the Passover meal (Exod. 12:48; Josephus *J.W.* 6.422–27; Schackenburg 1980, 381), and it is unusual from a literary perspective because the Greeks are not mentioned again after this introduction. Their place in the episode is more symbolic than historical. The author seems to be giving the reader a clue perhaps to the upcoming gentile mission, but perhaps also to the significance of this saying. This is underscored further by including as intermediaries Philip and Andrew, the only disciples with truly Greek names. Likewise the author reminds the reader that these disciples are from Bethsaida—a piece of information that had already been mentioned once in John 1:44—an area noted for its “mixed population” (Josephus *J.W.* 3.58). In order to understand the saying of Jesus in John 12:24, the reader should look to the Greek cultural and religious setting of Bethsaida.<sup>12</sup>

### LIVIA CULT

The mention of Bethsaida in John 12 is significant because it was a center for the imperial cult and especially the cult honoring Livia.

who was known also as Julia. Livia, the second wife of Augustus and the mother of Tiberius, was perhaps the most popular woman of the Roman Empire and played an important role in the imperial cult. Upon the death of Augustus in 14 CE, while she was denied deification, she was adopted into the Julian clan, receiving the name Julia Augusta [Ιουλία Σεβαστη] (Tacitus *Ann.* 1.8.14; Dio *Hist.* 56.32.1, 56.46.1, 57.12.2; Suetonius *Aug.* 101.2; Giacosa 1983, 22–24). While this made the succession of Tiberius possible, it also elevated Livia's role as Empress Mother and increased her popularity in the provinces.

In Palestine, two cities were thus renamed Julias in her honor: Betharamptha in Perea<sup>13</sup> and Bethsaida (Josephus *J.W.* 2.168; *Ant.* 18.28; Strickert 1995b, 40–51) on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. Herod the Great, under the patronage of Augustus, of course, had already established the imperial cult in the region by building temples to Augustus at Caesarea Maritima, Sebaste, and Paneas (which was later renamed Caesarea Philippi by Herod's son Philip). It is not surprising, then, that Herod's two sons Antipas and Philip, who had been raised in Rome, chose to continue this patronage by honoring Livia with the dedication of cities in their tetrarchies.<sup>14</sup> There is no question concerning the importance of Livia in the imperial cult and there is no question of her significance in Palestine. How then is she related to this saying of Jesus about dying grain coming to life?

The link between Jesus' saying about the dying grain and the Demeter myth is in the person of Livia, and the key to understanding this linkage is a coin minted by Herod Philip in 30 CE (Strickert 2002b; Meshorer 2001, plate 51, no. 107) at the rededication and renaming of Bethsaida to the city of Julias. This particular coin (fig. 1) bears the image of Livia on the obverse surrounded by the inscription ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΗ [Julia Sebaste] and on the reverse the depiction of an outstretched hand holding three ears of grain with the inscription ΚΑΡΠΟΦΟΡΟΣ [Karpophoros/fruit bearing] and the date ΛΔ.

The date ΛΔ points to the thirty-fourth year of the rule of Philip corresponding to the year 30/31 CE—a year in which Philip minted at least two other coins (Kindler 1999, 245–49). Philip portrayed his own image on another rare, smaller coin minted that same year (fig. 2) (Meshorer 1982, plate 8, no. 12). As in previous mints, his primary coin was one depicting the emperor (Tiberius)<sup>15</sup> on the obverse and the temple of Augustus at Caesarea Philippi on the reverse (fig. 3). The



Fig. 1. "Julia Sebaste," Coin of Herod Philip. Caesarea Philippi, 30 CE. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Fig. 2. "Philip," Coin of Herod Philip. Caesarea Philippi, 30 CE. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

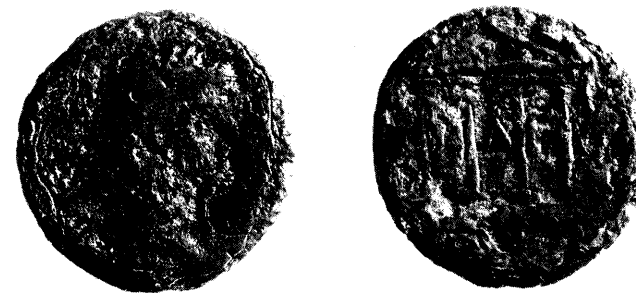


Fig. 3. "Tiberius," Coin of Herod Philip. Caesarea Philippi, 30 CE. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Fig. 4. "Augustus and Livia," Coin of Herod Philip. Caesarea Philippi, undated. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

8, no. 10a) is the inclusion at the end of the typical inscription ΕΠΙ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ ΤΕΤΡΑΡΧΟΥ [in the tetrarchy of Philip] of the abbreviation ΚΤΙΣ referring to Philip's role as a founder [κτίστης] of cities.<sup>16</sup> In particular this points to the founding of the city of Julias where Philip had made improvements and added population to the fishing village Bethsaida (Josephus *Ant.* 18.28; *J.W.* 2.168). It has been argued elsewhere (Strickert 1995a, 179) that the undated coin depicting the double image of Augustus and Livia under the legend ΣΕΒΑΣΤΩΝ (fig. 4) makes up the fourth coin in this commemorative mint (Meshorer 1982, plate 7, no. 6; Maltiel-Gerstenfeld 1982, 148–49).

The ΚΑΡΠΟΦΟΡΟΣ legend and the grain symbolism on the ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΗ coin point to her role as a Demeter/Ceres figure. As Gertrude Grether has noted:

The tendency of the art of the period seems to have been to stress her office as priestess of Augustus and her association with the deities of plenty and fertility. The general idea expressed is that, since Augustus is no longer on earth but has taken his place among the divinities, his blessings must come to the Roman people through the mediation of his priestess, Julia Augusta. (1946, 245)

The extent of the assimilation of Livia with the goddess Demeter/Ceres is confirmed by inscriptions from throughout the empire:

- From the island Gaulos near Malta:  
*CERERI IULIAE AUGUSTAE DIVI AUGUSTI MATRI TI CAESARIS AUGUSTI*

Translation: [dedicated to] Ceres Julia Augusta, wife of the deified Augustus, mother of Tiberius Caesar Augustus (Spaeth 1996, cat. 1.1; Bartman 1999, epig. cat. 50)

- From Lampsacus:  
Ἰουλίαν Σεβαστὴν Ἑστίαν νέαν Δήμητρα  
Translation: [dedicated to] Julia Augusta Hestia, the new Demeter (Spaeth 1996, cat.1.2; Bartman 1999, epig. cat. 55)
- From Amphrodisias:  
Θεᾶς Ἰουλίας νέας Δήμητρος  
Translation: [dedicated by the priests] of the goddess, Julia, the new Demeter (Spaeth 1996, cat. 1.3)
- From Nepet:  
*Cereri August*  
*Matri Agr*  
Translation: [offerings dedicated] to Ceres Augusta, mother of the fields (Spaeth 1996, cat. 1.6; Bartman 1999, epig. cat. 63)
- From Cyzicus:  
Ἄυτοκράτορα Καίσαρα θεόν θεοῦ υἱόν  
Σεβαστὸν καὶ Λιουίαν θεὰν Δήμητηρά...  
Translation: The god Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of a god, and the goddess Livia, Demeter... (Bartman 1999, epig. cat. 7)

The impression is quite clear that the fruits of Demeter/Ceres are now bestowed through the benefactress Livia/Julia.

The cult of Ceres had arrived in Rome as early as the fifth century BCE and was worshipped at the Aventine where Temples of Ceres, Liber, and Libera paralleled the Eleusinian triad. The prominence of Ceres is also documented by the fact that nine different coin types of Ceres were used already for the years 48 through 42 BCE (Spaeth 1996, 98); however, it was Augustus himself who appears to have initiated the link between Livia and Demeter/Ceres (Grether 1946, 226). The influence for this may have been derived from the fact that Octavian himself had been initiated into the Eleusian mysteries in 31 BCE just after the battle of Actium (*Dio Hist.* 54.7). On that occasion, the people of Eleusis erected statues to both Octavian and Livia. An

Ὁ δ [ἡμ] ος  
 Λιβίαν Δρουσίλλαν  
 [Αὐ]τοκράτορος Καίσαρος  
 γυναῖκα

Translation: The people [dedicated the] statue of Livia  
 Drusilla, wife of Imperator Caesar  
 (Bartman 1999, epig. cat. 1)

Her statue, however, does not survive. Susan Wood argues that Livia herself may have been initiated into the Eleusinian rituals when she accompanied Augustus on a second trip to Eleusis in 19 CE (2000, 92–93; Dio *Hist.* 54.9.10).

Shortly thereafter, the link between Livia and Demeter/Ceres began to appear in Rome. Following the return of Augustus from campaigns in Spain and Gaul, the Senate decreed in 13 BCE the erection of the Ara Pacis Augustae to celebrate the return of peace—the *Pax Romana*. This is the first time that identifiable mortal men and women were to appear on an official state relief in Rome. No less than ninety figures make up a stately procession on the north and south friezes with Augustus and Livia being dominant, projecting the image of a ruling couple with shared powers—they alone wear both veil and laurel wreath—and emphasizing the relation between lasting peace and the continuation of this dynasty (Bartman 1999, 86–93).

The larger than human status of Livia is emphasized by the similarities in her depiction with a mother figure on the eastern panel often named Italia<sup>17</sup> who, crowned with a wreath of wheat and poppies, holds two children in her lap. Flanked by nymphs, with a grazing sheep and a reclining lamb at her feet, and surrounded by various plants and fruits such as pomegranates, grapes, and nuts, the Italia figure clearly portrays the ideal nurturing figure which Spaeth identifies as the goddess Ceres (1994, 65–100). The Augustan visual message is one that is paralleled in writing by Ovid:

Peace nourishes Ceres  
 and Ceres is the nursling of peace.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise Horace, writing in 13 BCE, the year of Augustus' campaigns in Spain and Gaul, declares:

The fatherland yearns for Caesar. (For when he is here),  
 the cow in safety roams through the fields. Ceres and

nourishing Prosperity nurture the fields, the ships fly  
 over the pacified sea. (*Saec.* 4.5.16–19)

Upon Augustus' return, Horace declares the promise fulfilled: "Your era, Caesar, has brought back abundant fruits to the fields" (*Saec.* 4.15.4–5).

One might wonder how effective was such a subtle connection between the figure of Livia and Italia and the symbolism of Ceres on the Ara Pacis Augustae; however, Augustus seems to have assisted that merging of figures in his choice for the dedication of the altar—on 30 January, the birthday of Livia, in the year 9 BCE. It seems to be no accident that in 7 CE, following the adoption of Tiberius by Augustus, the emperor dedicated two other altars in Rome, the Arae Cereris Matris and Opis Augustae, serving to link Livia and the goddess Ceres (Grether 1946, 226). Likewise Augustus restored the ancient Temples of Ceres, Liber, and Libera which were then rededicated by Tiberius in 17 CE (Tacitus *Ann.* 2.49).

The identification of Livia with Ceres was very useful in that the goddess seemed to represent a variety of symbols. Not only was the connection with fertility [καρπόφορος], peace, and prosperity, but the ancient myth of Ceres and Proserpina (Demeter and Kore) represented the virtues of chastity and motherhood. Ceres was the ideal symbol for the Augustan program and Livia as the grand mother played the role perfectly (Spaeth 1996, 113). With the death of Drusus, the heir apparent, on a military campaign in 9 BCE, Livia along with her son had moved into the spotlight.

Beginning in 2 BCE and continuing to his death in 14 CE, coins of Augustus depicted on the reverse a seated female who holds a scepter in her right hand and wheat stalks in the left (Spaeth 1996, fig. 40; *RIC* 1:56.219; *BMCRE*, Augustus 544). This same imagery was adopted on official state coins of Tiberius (see fig. 5)—the tribute coin (*BMCRE* 1, 124–27, nos. 30–60, plates 22.20–23.9; *RIC* 1:95.25–29)—and of Claudius in 42 CE after the deification of Livia (*BMCRE* 1, 195, no. 224, plate 37.7). Only in the case of the latter does the inscription make clear that the figure on the coin is Livia: *Diva Augusta* (see fig. 6). However, it has been commonly held by scholars that this was the intent also of Augustus and Tiberius and the portrait features of the seated figure, although less than distinct, are similar to the depiction of Livia on statues.<sup>19</sup> Just as important as the intent of the minter, however,



Fig. 5. "Tribute Penny," Denarius of Tiberius. Lyons. © Copyright The British Museum



Fig. 6. "Diva Augusta," Dupondius of Claudius. Rome, 42 CE. © Copyright The British Museum

may be the understanding of those who held these coins. In the provinces during the rule of Tiberius, a number of imitations of this figure do include the name Livia in the inscription (*RPC* 341–Caesaraugusta, 711–Hippo Regius, 3919–Cyprus; Bartman 1999, 118 n. 25). There are numerous examples of other Livia coins from the provinces with a variety of other images as well. For example, a coin from Alexandria in 10/11 CE depicts Livia on the obverse with Euthenia/Abundantia on the reverse (*RPC* 5053).

Wood notes that "during the period of her widowhood, Livia first began to be explicitly identified as 'Ceres Augusta'" (2000, 112). According to Elizabeth Bartman, "Ceres was Livia's most politically innocuous (and consequently, most widespread) divine evocation" (1999, 93). In addition to coin images, Bartman has catalogued a large corpus of sculpted portraits of Livia that includes a significant



Fig. 7. "Livia on sardonyx." Museo Archeologico, Florence

representation of Ceres/Demeter figures. Perhaps the most common mark of identification of Ceres in art is the *corona spica*—a crown of wheat. Here Ovid's rendition of the myth of Ceres and Proserpina seems to have been influential. He describes the daughter's return as affecting the land:

Only then did Ceres recover her expression and her spirit and she put the wheat sheaf garland on her hair; and a great harvest was produced in the fallow fields and the threshing floor scarcely received the heaped up wealth. (*Fast.* 4.615–18)

This is depicted well by a sardonyx cameo from the Tiberian era which presents Livia facing left, veiled, and wearing a very distinct floral wreath (fig. 7).<sup>20</sup> This is common in numerous statues as well.



In Tibullus, where *Pax* is given the attributes of Ceres, the stalk of wheat is held forth in the hand—as in the case of the seated women on the imperial coins mentioned above. Tibullus describes the role of *Pax* including a descriptive reference to the wheat imagery:

Meanwhile let Peace tend our fields. Bright Peace first led under the curved yoke the cows about to plow the fields; Peace nourished the vine plants and stores the grape juice so that pure wine might flow for the son from the father's jar. In peace shine the hoe and plowshare, but decay masters the sad arms of the harsh soldier in the darkness. . . . Then come to us, nourishing Peace, and hold the wheat stalk in your hand, and let fruits pour out of your shining breast (*Corp. Tib.* bk. 2:1.10.45–50, 67–68).

The *corona spicea*, handheld wheat stalks, cornucopia, and other floral arrangements thus, when employed in sculptural representations of Livia, serve to identify her with Ceres/ Demeter.

The Ceres Borghese (fig. 8) with a likely provenance of the vicinity of Rome brings together several of these characteristic symbols.<sup>21</sup> Wearing the floral wreath, Livia stands erect while clutching a cornucopia of fruit to her left side and extending her right hand with stalks of wheat. Bartman suggests that this “reflects an important portrait of Livia” in Rome since a similar figure has been discovered near Spanish Corduba (1999, 106).

In contrast to the highly decorated Ceres Borghese, the Velletri statue (fig. 9) is highlighted alone by the stalks of wheat held erect in the left hand.<sup>22</sup> The figure of Livia herself is dominant, dressed in chiton and himation, veiled, and with waves of hair framing her face. Yet there is no question. It is Livia in the guise of Ceres.

Perhaps the closest parallel to the depiction on the Philip coin commemorating the city of Bethsaida/Julias is a cameo figure from Vienna (fig. 10).<sup>23</sup> The figure of Livia, enthroned and diademed, faces to the left gazing at a bust of Augustus that she holds in her right hand—thus providing a dating for this piece shortly after Augustus' death in 14 CE. It is the depiction of the stalks of grain, however, that is important here. Unlike other parallels where the ears of grain are bunched together, here the artist has depicted three distinct ears. Like the depiction on the coin of Philip, they are held in the left hand—in this case oversized perhaps for emphasis. One should also not overlook



Fig. 8. Ceres Borghese, “Portrait de l’Impératrice Livie figurée en Cérés, épouse d’Octave-Auguste en 38 av. JC.” Paris, Musée du Louvre



Fig. 9. "Velletri Livia." Wells (Norfolk), Holkham Hall



Fig. 10. "Cameo of Livia." Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum

following the death of Augustus, so also the coin of Philip, dated to the year 30 CE, is clearly a response to Livia's death.

The Ceres/Demeter imagery serves to convey ideas of fertility, prosperity, and peace as well as virtues of motherhood and chastity—all of which were important in the Augustan program. At the same time, one should not overlook the role of the Ceres/Demeter myth focusing on life and rebirth. So while the gem depicts Augustus in his deified state, that message of continuity of life is affirmed in the symbol of the wheat stalks. There is mourning, yet there is also a message of hope. The program of Augustus will be continued in the role of Livia as benefactress. According to the will of Augustus, Livia had been adopted into the Julian gens and granted the title *Sebaste* ensuring the succession of Tiberius, yet in fact setting up a co-regency where she ruled alongside as empress mother.

Καρπόφορος ΕΡΙΤΗΤ

As seen above, *Καρπόφορος* [fruit bearing] was the dominant slogan associated with the goddess Demeter. The coin of Philip dedicated to Julia/Livia is apparently the only known example of *Καρπόφορος* on a coin. It is important to note that the epithet does not merely call attention to the goddess Demeter, but it explicitly describes Livia herself as *Καρπόφορος* identifying the imperial mother with the goddess.

A parallel for this comes from an inscription on a large stele from Ephesus dating from 19 to 23 CE. While dedicated to Livia, the decree describes the special favors granted to the *Demetriastai* [priests of Demeter] among whom several are named including

ἱερεῖς ... τῆς Σεβαστῆς Δήμητρος Καρποφόρου  
[Priests...of Augusta Demeter Karpophoros]  
(SEG 4.515; Bartman 1999, epig. cat. 45; Spaeth 1996, cat. 1.4)

This is the beginning of a trend in which the epithet *Καρπόφορος* is appropriated by women of the imperial family so that later inscriptions will designate in a similar way the following imperial women.

- Agrippina the Elder, wife of Germanicus and mother of Caligula:  
Αἰολίς Καρποφόρος (from Mytilene on Lesbos)
- Agrippina the Younger, sister of Caligula, daughter of Agrippina the elder, wife of Claudius, mother of Nero:

Αιολίς Καρποφόρος (from Thermae)  
Αιολίς Καρποφόρος (from Mytilene)

- Sabina, wife of Hadrian:  
Δημητῆρ Καρπόφορος (from Tchelidjik)  
Καρπόφορος (from Athens)  
(Spaeth 1996, cat. 4.1, 6.1, 6.2, 12.3, 12.4)

While the use of such later examples must be treated carefully, it would seem to indicate that the use of the epithet for Livia herself may have been more extensive than the evidence of two examples might attest. Since the coins of Philip were intended only for circulation within his meager territory northeast of the Sea of Galilee, one would expect this to be the case for Philip's subjects to understand the inscription.

#### LIVIA COINS IN A JEWISH PROVENANCE

In a well-known episode, Jesus, confronted by Jerusalem authorities concerning taxes, calls for a coin and says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17). The saying revolves around the image of Caesar Tiberius depicted on the coin. A lesser-known detail is that the reverse depicts an image of Livia, seated and in the guise of *Pax* (fig. 5) (*BMCRE*, no. 35). For over thirty years, this particular coin type had circulated throughout the Roman Empire—minted regularly at the official Roman mint at Lugdunum by Augustus beginning in 2 BCE, continued by Tiberius, and then copied frequently in the provinces including the "tribute penny" presented to Jesus in Jerusalem. The significance of this is quite clear—Livia was a well-recognized figure even among those living far on the eastern edges of the Roman Empire on Palestinian soil. As benefactress also for the Jewish people, her role would be familiar.

The Roman procurators of Judaea residing in Caesarea Maritima also issued their own coins, among which were a number dedicated to Livia. In deference to Jewish custom, no images of Livia were depicted (Meshorer 1982, 42). Yet during the years 15 through 26 CE, Valerius Gratus issued no less than six different coins with a ΙΟΥΛΙΑ [Julia] inscription (fig. 11).<sup>24</sup> The symbols employed were inoffensive cornucopia, amphorae, vine leaves, and olive leaf wreathes. Still, those symbols did point to the concept of fertility and abundance associated with



Fig. 11. "Julia," Coin of Procurator Gratus, 17 CE. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Fig. 12. "Julia Kaisaros," Coin of Procurator Pontius Pilate, 29 CE. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

In the year 29 CE, and again in 30 CE, following Livia's death, the new procurator Pontius Pilate continued the practice of issuing Livia coins now with a ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ [Julia of Caesar] inscription (fig. 12).<sup>25</sup> Only Pilate, known for his willingness to test the boundaries of Jewish law (Josephus *Ant.* 18.55–62; *J.W.* 2.167–77; Philo, *Embassy* 38.299–305), did not refrain from images that were associated with the imperial cult such as the *simpulum* and the *lituus*. In addition, imagery of three ears of grain, which are significant for Livia, appear on Pilate's coins. The frequency of these Livia coins in modern coin markets attests to their wide circulation. The holders of such coins were surely aware of the importance of this individual named Julia.

When one considers the high distribution of the tribute coins of Tiberius, the Julia coins of Procurators Gratus and Pilate, and the Julia Sebaste coins of Herod Philip, it is clear that the impact of this powerful woman was understood throughout first-century Palestine.

#### THE DEATH OF LIVIA

The Demeter myth of the dying grain was spread throughout the Roman Empire through its appropriation by Livia the wife of Augustus; and the impact of Livia on Palestinian soil was communicated through the naming of cities and the minting of coins. It is, however, at the point of her death in 29 CE that the connection of Livia and the dying grain myth is made explicit. The evidence for this is the use of grain imagery on Livia coins both by Pilate and by Philip in 29 and 30 CE.

It is well known that Livia sought apotheosis for herself, as had been the case with Julius Caesar and her husband Augustus. In the eastern provinces, she was already treated as a goddess while living. Yet in Rome, these attributes of Ceres and other goddesses were still seen as more symbolic. Perhaps it was the degree to which such honors were bestowed upon her, especially in the provinces; perhaps it was her growing popularity and power in Rome itself. However, there was a definite falling out between Tiberius and Livia during her latter years, so that he exiled himself in 26 CE to Capreae, from which he ruled. Even news of her death was not enough to bring him back to Rome. Fear that her followers might stage a grandiose funeral and pressure for her apotheosis, he stayed away, only sending orders that her funeral be kept simple and he asked the Senate to declare a year of mourning (Dio *Hist.* 58.2; Suetonius *Tib.* 51; Tacitus *Ann.* 5.1–2)—a significant move in contrast to the declaration forbidding mourning following Augustus' death since he was to be seen as a god (Dio *Hist.* 56.41). It was the continued popularity of Livia and a grassroots movement that led to her deification by Claudius in 41 CE (Dio *Hist.* 60; Suetonius *Claud.* 11).

The Pontius Pilate coin of 29 CE is clearly influenced by Tiberius' instructions for a year of mourning to commemorate Livia's death. Thus the inscription ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ [Julia of Caesar] gives honor to her special role as wife of Augustus and mother of the emperor and the *simpulum* on the obverse points to her role as priestess in the imperial cult. Yet it is the use of grain imagery on the reverse that calls attention to Livia as the new Demeter.



Fig. 13. "Livia with Augustus and the bust of a young man on a sardonyx." St. Petersburg, Hermitage

The motif of drooping ears of grain on this particular coin resembles the Vienna gem where Livia, holding the bust of Augustus, was clearly in mourning. In contrast, Ceres Borghese (fig. 8) and Vellettri (fig. 9) statues portrayed Livia with erect stalks of wheat. What is especially interesting about the Pilate coin is that three distinct ears of grain are depicted rather than the common, less-distinct bunches of ears found on many statues.

A gem from St. Petersburg (fig. 13) may perhaps offer insight into interpretation since it also portrays a trinity of figures.<sup>26</sup> The positioning of Livia and Augustus—this time an actual figure rather than

a bust—closely parallels the Vienna gem. Here Livia, bedecked with the Ceres *corona spicea*, is portrayed as priestess with the veil and her uplifted right hand. New to this depiction is the central character of a young boy. His identity, while debated for years, must remain uncertain. The obvious connection with Tiberius cannot be proven because of lack of facial resemblance and the incongruity of age (Bartman 1999, 103). Nevertheless, the youthful figure surely represents the future and the promise of the Augustan dynasty. With both Augustus and Livia depicted with divine attributes, the empire's future would be in the hands of youthful mortals—including Tiberius. The coin of Pilate would seem to follow this idea. The single erect ear of grain in the center would likely represent the living Emperor Tiberius while the two drooping ears would represent the now fallen Augustus and Livia. Such a depiction is not unlike the Vienna gem where, in Livia's handheld bundle, the lower ear of grain seems to recede giving way to two stronger, healthier looking stalks. Here this lower receding stalk would represent the deceased, though deified Augustus. The Pilate coin has taken that one step further in response to the death of Livia in 29 CE and the Roman Senate's declaration of a year of mourning. The representation of the drooping ears of grain on the coin of Pilate was thus consistent with that decree. With Augustus and Livia now dead, Pilate's future was clearly dependent upon his favor with Tiberius.

Like the Pilate coin, Agrippa 1 also employed the imagery of three grain stalks in a coin minted in 42 CE (fig. 14). Only this time all the stalks of grain are presented as erect (Meshorer 1982, plate 10, no. 11). There is no connotation of mourning. The timing of this coin is significant. In 41 CE, Livia finally achieved her goal of apotheosis when her grandson Claudius became emperor and declared her deification. On that occasion, Claudius reissued the common Tiberian and Augustus state coin which depicted the seated Livia in the guise of Ceres holding an ear of grain (fig. 6) (*BMCRE* 1975, 224). The inscription *DIVA AUGUSTA* [goddess Augusta] makes the explicit connection with her role as the new Demeter and her deification. It was thus fitting that Agrippa 1—as the grandson of Livia's dear friend Salome who had been educated in Rome alongside Claudius, as well as Caligula and Drusus, son of Tiberius—would commemorate Livia's deification far away on Palestinian soil.



Fig. 14. Coin of Agrippa 1, 42 CE. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

On the other hand, it is somewhat surprising that Philip was to employ the symbolism of three erect ears of grain on his Julia Sebaste coin of 30 CE (fig. 1)—eleven years prior to Livia's apotheosis. In fact, that same year Pilate was to reissue the Julia coin with the drooping ears of grain. It would appear that Philip was part of a grassroots movement in support of Livia's deification—a movement at odds with the official position of the emperor and the Roman Senate. Yet there is no ambiguity concerning the coin of Philip. The ears of grain are presented more in the traditional pose of Ceres/Demeter, erect and held in an outstretched hand—a sign of vitality and health. The two legends *Ἰουλίᾳ Σεβαστῆ* [Julia Sebaste] and *ΚΑΡΠΙΟΦΟΡΟΣ* [fruit bearing] underscore the continued benevolence of the Livia figure.

It would seem that this might be a risky move for Philip since it went against the position of Tiberius; however, Philip continued to mint an image of Tiberius on his larger denomination in 30 CE while the Julia Sebaste coin was smaller. At the same time, one must note that the Tiberius coin in that particular year included a significant variation, the mention in the inscription of Philip's role as founder of cities [ΚΤΙΣ].<sup>27</sup> This information, combined with the notations in Josephus (*Ant.* 18.28; *J.W.* 2.168), provides the convincing evidence that this especially large mint in the year 30 CE was part of a greater program in which Philip honored Livia with the foundation of a city—the village Bethsaida, now expanded and rededicated as Julias (Strickert 1995b, 40, 51).

While the minting of a coin may be a decision that can be made in short order, the founding of a city requires years of planning and preparation, especially when improvements and expansion are included. In the case of the city of Bethsaida/Julias, it is likely that construction began as early as 25 CE with his original target date for dedication as 30 January 33 CE—Livia's ninetieth birthday. The decision was perhaps a response to Livia's recovery from serious illness in 22 CE<sup>28</sup> and an act of appreciation for a lifetime of beneficiary service. After all, Philip had been educated in Rome along with other potential client rulers under the watchful eye of Livia, and his appointment as tetrarch of the Golan in 4 BCE and retention in office after the deposing of Archelaus in 6 CE were likely due in part to her influence (Strickert 1998, 79, 94–95). At the same time, there may also have been political factors since Agrippa 1, a member of a younger generation of Roman-trained client rulers, had returned to Palestine in 23 CE at about the age of thirty-three. The brothers Antipas in Galilee and Philip in the Golan having provided long and successful rule since 4 BCE, Agrippa 1 found himself as a trained client king without a kingdom.

What better way to demonstrate stability and prosperity—and to ensure Philip's continuation as ruler—than to found a city and to dedicate it to the empress mother. By incorporating the motifs of Ceres/Demeter on the Julia Sebaste coin, Philip was also recalling the great virtues of the Augustan program—the recognition of motherhood, peace, and prosperity; the natural progression of the life cycle. In short, Ceres/Demeter was a natural image for a political figure seeking a continuation of the status quo. There was also a natural connection with the establishment of a new city. Before grain was discovered, people wandered without boundaries. The settled farming society was thus the beginning of law, the beginning of civilization. Thus in commenting on Vergil's *Aeneid* 4.58, Servius writes:

Ceres...is in charge of the founding of cities,  
as Calvus teaches: "She taught the sacred laws."  
(Spaeth 1996, 98)

Thus is found the well-known custom of encircling the boundaries of a city with the furrow of a plow. The Ceres/Demeter motif on the Julia Sebaste coin would have served Philip well.

Yet one must also be careful not to overestimate the propaganda value of such a coin since the coins of Philip were circulated

only within his own Golan region—especially for such a small denomination. For Philip himself, having been educated in Rome during that period when Augustus began utilizing the Ceres motif and quite possibly present at the dedication of the Ara Pacis Augustae where the connection with Livia began, the symbolism would have been meaningful. So also it is to some degree with the other Herodians, Agrippa and Antipas, as well as with Pilate and other Roman officials. Yet what about the local populace? Even with the proliferation of Livia/Demeter statues and coins throughout the eastern Mediterranean and with an appreciation of some degree of cosmopolitanism in the Palestinian setting, would the impact of these coins be lost on Philip's subjects?

Perhaps the answer to this comes from the recent archaeological excavations at Bethsaida/Julias under the direction of Rami Arav. Among the ruins, Arav has identified a Roman-style temple from the early first century—identification has been established on the basis of floor plan and architectural remains, as well as the discovery of a Roman incense shovel (Arav 1999, 18–24, 34–44)—which he suggests was dedicated to Livia and employed in the imperial cult, quite possibly at the time of the city dedication. Rather significant is the discovery of numerous fragments of clay figurines found in the vicinity of the temple—presumably for residents to purchase and take home. In one case, the fragment displays the folds of a draped cloth worn over the chiton. In another, a partial tiara is covered by a veil denoting possibly a priestess figure (Arav 1999, 22, 32, figs. 16, 21). Yet, for most of these, a more precise identification is impossible.

One figurine (fig. 15), however, does lend itself to identification since the upper portion of the woman's body is preserved (Arav 1995, 21, fig. 13). This four-centimeter-tall clay fragment (with tints of red remaining) shows a veiled female with a hairstyle typical for Livia during this period. Perhaps the closest parallel is found in the two-meter-tall white marble Velletri sculpture (fig. 9) where the distinct waves of hair frame the face.<sup>29</sup> Beginning with Tiberius' *Salus* coin (fig. 16) minted in 22 CE, there was a clear development in Livia's hairstyle which has been characterized by Bartman as the tendency "to exaggerate those waves into melonlike segments that cover the head uniformly with distinguishing between side waves and crown."<sup>30</sup> Although facial features in this miniature clay figurine are clearly generic, it seems only logical to identify the figurine as Livia.





Fig. 15. "Livia," clay figurine. Israel Antiquities Authority



Fig. 16. "Livia as *Salus*," Dupondius of Tiberius. Rome, 22 CE. © Copyright The British Museum

There are no similarities between the figurine fragment itself and the Julia Sebaste coin of Philip. A connection can only be made indirectly in that the Velletri parallel does depict Livia holding ears of grain in her left hand. However, the depiction on Philip's coin is most unusual, with the disembodied arm reaching out with the grain. While the depiction of ears of grain on coins is quite common, as is the identification of the respected Livia, no parallel for the handheld

grain has been found earlier than the Philip coin.<sup>31</sup> Several years ago at a conference in Germany, Robert Wenning suggested that such a representation must be dependent upon a well-known statue. One possibility, of course, is that the artist employed by Philip at his mint was aware of such Livia statues from travels throughout the empire. No less improbable is the conjecture that the coin imagery was based on such a statue that stood prominently in Bethsaida/Julias—Philip, after all, was not hesitant to employ human images on his coins. The handheld grain imagery on the Julia Sebaste coin would thus serve as a constant reminder of the significance of the Livia cult in Bethsaida/Julias in the same way that the tetrastyle temple on his Augustus and Tiberius coins called to mind the temple of Augustus at Caesarea Philippi. The coin epigraph ΚΑΡΠΟΦΟΡΟΣ likewise must be understood in this context—familiar to all of Philip's subjects because of the Livia cult and perhaps even utilized, as at Ephesus, as a dedicatory inscription.

#### LIVIA AND THE DYING GRAIN SAYING OF JOHN

There is no question that the role of Livia as priestess in the imperial cult helped to spread the Demeter myth throughout the empire, including first-century Palestine. There is now strong evidence that the depiction of stalks of grain on sculptures and on coins and the common epithet ΚΑΡΠΟΦΟΡΟΣ were commonplace. Because of the coincidence of the respected Livia's death in 29 CE less than a year before the death of Jesus of Nazareth (April 7, 30 CE), one must take seriously this phenomenon as background for the dying grain saying in John 12:24. The mention of "Greeks" wishing to see Jesus and the intermediary role of two Bethsaida disciples seem to be clues that should not be discounted too quickly.

With the death of Livia, a new dimension was added to the dying grain myth. No longer was rebirth considered automatic and immutable. The seed of grain had fallen into the earth and died. Just as the followers of Jesus looked in hope for his resurrection, so the adherents of the cult of Livia looked forward to her deification—a process that was not complete until the rule of Claudius in 41 CE. Although she had frequently been identified with Ceres while alive, Livia's death by no means led to an automatic rebirth. Yet it was a grassroots movement in the provinces that led to her exaltation. Her

## CHAPTER NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. All biblical citations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

1. Only John 4:44 received a pink or "probably" designation, while John 12:25 and 13:20 are both colored gray, which means that the ideas are close to those of Jesus.
2. Hans Conzlemann (1975, 281) notes that the analogy of human life and the cycle of nature is common in the ancient world, yet what is new in the Christian saying is the necessity of death as a condition of life.
3. Schnackenburg 1980, 384. See also Brown 1966, 471, 473–74; Haenchen 1984, 97; Barrett 1960, 353; Dodd 1963, 368. Like John 12:24, verse 25 is also printed in gray in *The Five Gospels* (Funk et al. 1993).
4. Matt. 5:13; Mark 3:24; Matt. 6:22–23; Matt. 18:12–13. See also Schnackenburg 1980, 383.
5. Dodd 1963, 369. Similar opinions are expressed in Brown 1966, 471–73; Schnackenburg 1980, 383.
6. Raymond Brown (1966, 472) states, "the peculiar feature of this parable is the insistence that only through death is the fruit borne."
7. Cf. Brown (1966, 467) who refers to "a parabolic use of the article" as in Luke 8:5, 11. See also Barrett 1960, 352.
8. *IG I.76.1–46*. Translation in Rice and Stambaugh 1979, 185–87.
9. Varro *Ling.* 5.64. See also Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.26.67, 3.30.52, 24.62.
10. Seneca, *Phoen.* 219; Claudianus, *Rapt. Pros.* 2. 138; Germanicus, *Arat* 38; similarly Ovid (*Metam.* 5.490) makes use of the epithet *frugum genetrix*.
11. The term here is "Ἕλληνες" which refers to Gentiles, not "Ἑλληνίσται" which would refer to Greek-speaking Jews. John does not use ἔθνος to refer to the Gentiles, but to the Jewish people. Ernst Haenchen suggests that John 12:20 refers to the "Greek world in general, and thus also the pagan world" (1984, 96). See also Brown 1966, 466; Schnackenburg 1980, 381; Barrett 1960, 351; Sanders 1968, 290; Hoskyns 1947, 423.
12. The reference to Bethsaida of Galilee perhaps focuses on "Galilee of the Gentiles" as a territory of mixed culture and should be contrasted with Jerusalem rather than making a distinction between Galilee and Golan (Strickert 1998, 21). See also Brown 1966, 466; Barrett 1960, 351.
13. This city was first renamed as "Livia" and then changed to "Julia." Josephus *J.W.* 2.168.
14. Salome also bequeathed territories on the southern coast to Julia. Josephus *J.W.* 2.167.
15. Kindler 1971, 162–63. Coins with Augustus' image were minted in 1, 8, and 12 CE and with Tiberius' image in 15, 26, 29, 30, and 33 CE.
16. Ya'akov Meshorer originally interpreted this as a reference to the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of Caesarea Philippi (1982, 42, 49). Citing my earlier study (Strickert 1995a), he has changed his view to see this as a ref-
17. Both figures are veiled and crowned in a similar fashion. Bonnano 1976, 28.
18. *Pax Cererem nutrit, Pacis alumna Ceres*. Ovid *Fast.* I.704.
19. *BMCRE* 1:91; Spaeth 1996, 171; Bartman 1999, 103; Wood 2000, 88–89; Grether 1946, 227. For a contrary view, see Pollini 1990, 334–57, esp. 350.
20. Bartman 1999, 190, fig. 185=Spaeth 1996, fig. 10—from Museo Archeologico 14549, Florence. Height 4.5 cm.
21. Bartman 1999, 45, fig. 45, cat. 3—Musée du Louvre (Paris) Ma 1242. Height 2.53 meters, probably from near Rome.
22. Bartman 1999, 152, fig. 132, cat. 15—Wells (Norfolk), Holkham Hall. From the Villa Ginnetti in Velletri, white marble, height 2.08 meters.
23. Bartman 1999, 104, fig. 79, cat. 110—Sardonyx from Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum IX A 95. Height 10 cm.
24. Meshorer 1982, 173; Gratus coin for year 17 CE, Meshorer 1982, plate 31, no. 16.
25. Meshorer 1982, 180, 283; Pilate coin of 29 CE, Meshorer 1982, plate 31, no. 21.
26. Bartman 1999, 105, fig. 81, cat. 105—sardonyx gem, St. Petersburg, Hermitage Z 149. Diameter 8.3 cm.
27. For analysis of epigraphs, see Strickert 1995a, 182.
28. Tacitus *Ann.* 3.68. Upon Livia's recovery, Tiberius responded in 22 CE. by issuing a series of coins in her honor including the *Salus dupondius* which expressed appreciation at Livia's health as well as the well-being of the entire empire. *BMCRE* 1.131, nos. 81–84; Giacosa 1983.
29. Other parallels noted by Bartman include the St. Petersburg gem illustrated above, Bartman 1999, fig. 81, cat. 105; the Paestum Livia with veil and wavy hair, figs. 88–89, cat. 24; the Velleia Livia, figs. 96–97, cat. 33; the Lusitanian Aeminius Livia, fig. 150, cat. 44; and the Grumentum Livia, fig. 136, cat. 21.
30. Bartman 1999, 117. Brigitte Freyer-Schauenberg describes this development as the "Kiel type" (1982, 209–24). See also Wood 2000, 118; Strickert 2002b.
31. Arie Kindler (1999, 246–47) notes two parallels, one minted by Agrippa for his wife Kypros (Meshorer 1982, 250) and another minted by Agrippa 2 (Meshorer 1982, 246), which are likely dependent on the Philip coin.



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## *Ereimos*: Was Bethsaida a “Lonely Place” in the First Century CE?

### BETHSAIDA AND “THE LONELY PLACE”

**B**ETHSAIDA (LITERALLY, THE HOUSE OF THE FISHERMAN) was an important location on the Sea of Galilee mentioned by name in the Apocrypha, the writings of Josephus, Greco-Roman and rabbinic literature, and the New Testament. Its importance in early Christianity is amplified by the fact that, according to the Gospel of Luke, the only major miracle mentioned in all four Gospel accounts, the so-called “feeding of the multitudes” (at or near the site of Bethsaida), occurred. The exact location where the miracle occurred is known simply in Greek as *ereimos* and is generally translated as “solitary,” “desolate,” “deserted,” “desert,” “lonely place,” or “wilderness.”

Some have speculated that the location of the *ereimos* was completely distinct from Bethsaida and located the site on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee in what is today called Tabgha.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee is anything but a desert or wilderness and so the question of where to locate both the feeding and “lonely place” remains. In the only account that gives a clear link to a named location, the Gospel of Luke, places the feeding in a “lonely place” near Bethsaida (Luke 9:10–17). For the Gospel of John, the miracle of the feeding occurs on the eastern side of the Sea, while the Gospel of Matthew simply places it near the Sea of Galilee on a hill. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that perhaps the “lonely