

Rhetoric of Spatiality – Making Correct Christians through Distancing Themselves from Jerusalem:

Examining the Rhetorical Strategies to Control the Place
in On Pascha by Melito of Sardis

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1. Introduction

This article explores the significance of space in shaping collective memory and identity, particularly in relation to Jerusalem's historical, theological, and religious status for Christians. By analyzing Melito of Sardis's *On Pascha*, a second-century homily, this study examines how he reinterprets the established values of sacred space to construct Christian identity.¹⁾

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1) Concerning the significance of the place as marking a collective memory, see Thompson M. Mayes, *Why Old Places Matter: How Historic Places Affect Our Identity and Well-Being* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 7-30; Christine Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 92-128; Robert McEachnie, *Chromatius of Aquileia and the Making of a Christian City* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 61-80; Carlos Machado, Rowan Munnelly, Rebecca Sweetman eds. *Lived Spaces in Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2024); Shira L. Lander, *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries in Late Roman North Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 74-118; Mark Humphries, *Cities and the Meanings of Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 16-30; Hye-jin Jeong, "The Beelzebul controversy of the Gospel of Mark as Counter-attack against the Jerusalem Temple (3:22-30)," *Canon&Culture* 14/2 (2020), 153-179.

As a bishop, Melito addresses his Sardian congregation, emphasizing Jesus' death and resurrection as the fulfillment of the Paschal lamb. His work highlights how the time and place of Christ's suffering call believers to a particular way of life. Notably, Church historian Eusebius identifies Melito as a "Quartodeciman," part of a group that observed Easter on the 14th of Nisan, following the Jewish calendar. Despite this temporal connection, Melito sought to distinguish Christian identity from Jewish traditions by redefining spatial concepts and attributing responsibility for Jesus' death to the Jews.²⁾

This study investigates the historical and theological rationale behind Melito's reinterpretation of Jerusalem in *On Pascha*. It situates his perspective within the broader context of first- and second-century Judea, as well as the religious, political, and social dynamics of second-century Sardis. Drawing on Roman historians, early Church Fathers, and archaeological evidence, the article explores how Melito redefines Jerusalem as a sacred space, shaping a Christian topography centered on Christ rather than Jewish traditions.

2. Jerusalem, after the Two Consecutive Jewish Revolts against Rome

Jerusalem held sacred significance for both Christians and Jews. For Jews, it symbolized the City of David—the historic capital of the Davidic kingdom promised for future restoration—while for Christians, it embodied salvation through Jesus, the

2) Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, trans. Alistair C. Stewart, 2nd ed. (New York: St Vladimir Seminary Press, 2017), 13-20: This article examines Melito's *On Pascha* as a literary source to uncover historical and religious perceptions of Jews. Accordingly, I will conduct a literary analysis while contextualizing Melito within his historical background.

Messiah who once walked its streets. By the second century C.E., however, Jerusalem had lost these associations. The aftermath of the First Jewish Revolt (66–73 C.E.) and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 C.E.) triggered profound political, religious, and cultural transformations in both Jerusalem and the broader Judean region.³⁾

The failure of the First Jewish Revolt led to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE by the Roman general (and later emperor) Titus. This was a tragic blow to Jewish autonomy and religious life. Josephus, the Jewish historian as a firsthand witness vividly described the siege of Jerusalem and its results:

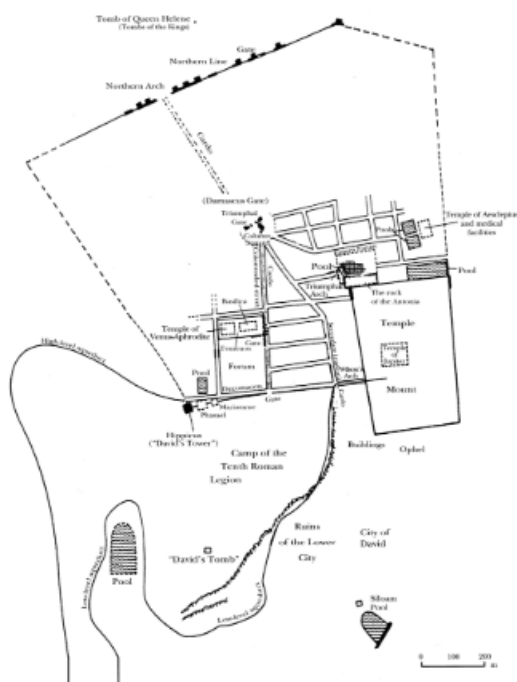
While the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those who were caught were slain ... The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those who were slain; and because this hill was high, and the works at the temple were very large, one would have thought the whole city had been on fire. Nor can one imagine anything either greater or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of the Roman legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamour of the seditious, who were now surrounded with fire and sword. (Jewish War, 6.271–6.273)⁴⁾

In his work, Josephus highlights the horrific suffering of the Jewish people, the mass slaughter, famine, and the destruction of Jerusalem's sacred and cultural center. Josephus regarded

3) Concerning the comprehensive researches of the circumstances of Jerusalem after the first two centuries, see Chang Seon An et al., "The Arts of Controlling the Landscape: The Return from Aelia Capitolina, the Secular City, Back to Jerusalem, the Holy City-Exploring the Rituals as Restructuring and Reimagining the Place in the Catechetical Lectures of Cyril of Jerusalem," *The Journal of Classical Studies* 68 (2023), 209–242.

4) Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Volume III: Books 5–7, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL 210 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928).

the destruction as both a historical tragedy and a divine punishment for the internal strife and rebellion of the Jewish people (Jewish War, 5.19-20; 5.256-257). When describing the burning of the Temple, Josephus explicitly interprets the event as a sign of divine abandonment. He asserts that God had turned away from the people because of their impiety (6.110-113, “God has condemned the whole nation and turned away from his sanctuary, for he no longer showed regard for the holy place”). But the second Jewish revolts made Jews that there were much worse results they had to encounter.



<the city plan of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina by Hadrian>⁵⁾

5) Jodi Magness, *Jerusalem Through the Ages: From Its Beginnings to the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2024), 313.

Following the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–136 CE) a large-scale uprising by the Jews against the Roman Empire, led by Simon Bar Kokhba, Emperor Hadrian sought to erase Jewish identity in the region. In addition to the mass slaughter of Jews and the immense destruction in Judea, the emperor ordered to rename the Judean region as Syria Palaestina to sever the region's Jewish connection. Jewish religious practices like circumcision and Jewish sacrifice were heavily restricted or prohibited. Jerusalem also was renamed Aelia Capitolina, after Hadrian's family name and Jupiter Capitolinus, and was rebuilt as a Roman city.⁶⁾

Hadrian rebuilt the city following the standard Roman city plan after erasing the Jewish roads. The site of Jerusalem temple was abandoned and remained as it was ruined for serving the public display of the results against the Roman empire. While fortifying the city and consolidating it as the Roman colony, the Roman authority made Roman legions stationed permanently in the region to suppress any further uprisings. Later ancient writers like Dio Cassius, the Pilgrim of Bordeaux, Cyril of Jerusalem later depicted Jerusalem as Romanized and pagan city;

At Jerusalem he [Hadrian] founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there. (Dio Cassius, Roman History 69. 14).⁷⁾

6) G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem: The Topography, Economics and History from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 270–271.

7) Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, Volume VIII: Books 61–70, trans. E. Cary, H. B. Foster. LCL 176. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 447.

And in the sanctuary itself, where the Temple stood which Solomon built, there is marble in from of the altar which has on it the blood of Zacharias – you would think it had only been shed today. All around you can see the marks of the hobnails of the soldiers who killed him, as plainly as if they had been pressed into wax. Two statues of Hadrian stand there... (The Pilgrim of Bordeaux, 591)

For just as the sacrifices on pagan altars are, in themselves, indifferent matter and yet have become defiled by reason of the invocation made over them to the idols ... (Cyril of Jerusalem, The Catechetical Lectures 3. 3)

And Jews did not only have to suffer the loss of the second Temple in Jerusalem, but also face Aelia Capitolina adorned with Roman temples, including one dedicated to Jupiter on the Temple Mount, desecrating the site sacred to Jews. Pagan religious practices were encouraged to reinforce Roman cultural supremacy. In his work *Onomasticon*, Eusebius, the Church historian in the early 4th century C. E. identifies the city as “Aelia” and describes its Roman features, noting that it was no longer recognized as the holy city of the Jews (6.8-16).⁸⁾

Jerusalem was no longer a holy city where God’s presence dwelled or a festival gathering place for Jews. It became a judged city, as Jesus prophesied (Mark 13:2, Matt 24:16), and a space of despair awaiting another sacred site. Thus, shifting the Church’s focus away from Jerusalem to other places seemed natural. And the two Jewish revolts created a period of deep cultural trauma for the Jewish people while laying the groundwork for new religious and cultural shifts reshaping Temple-centered and religious life into a way of Jewish life concretely decentralized from the land of Judea and Jerusalem Temple.

8) Benjamin Isaac, *Empire and Ideology in the Graeco-Roman World: Selected Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 342.

From Christian perspectives on the religiously central location, the ruins of Jerusalem become a site that legitimates the identity, displays the meaning of past events, and memory of the Christian groups observing it. Now, each local Christian group and their leaders worked to shape new perceptions of the Jerusalem Temple and the memories surrounding it in ways that legitimized their own claims.⁹⁾

2. Sardis, the City of Melito the Bishop in the Second Century C. E.

The city of Sardis under the Roman empire was home to a large Jewish community, a fact that likely contributed to Melito's endorsement of the idea that Christ followers should celebrate Easter according to Jewish time.¹⁰⁾ Interactions between and intermingling among Christ following Sardinian Jews and non-Christ following Jews, as well as Christ followers with other cultural affiliations, should be assumed.¹¹⁾ Josephus recounts the arrival of Jews in the city and states (Antiquities, 12-148-153), that the Seleucid king, Antiochus III, forced 2,000 Jewish people to move into major cities of Lydia and Phrygia in 205 B.C.E.; Josephus assumes that the Jews living there in his own day were connected to this first settlement.¹²⁾ According

9) Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 15-16.

10) Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 26; Pieter W. van der Horst, *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 143-160.

11) Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 461.

12) Given that Obadiah 20 states that "the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad" (Aramaic for Sardis), it is probable that there was a Jewish settlement in the city earlier than the Seleucid dynasty. Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, 461.

to Josephus, Jews in Sardis were allowed to “assemble together, according to their ancient legal custom” and to make “their prayers and sacrifices to God.” Some Jews with Roman citizenship even enjoyed an exemption from obligatory military service on account of their religious practice (Antiquities 14. 236-237 and 259-260). The Jewish community was well established when the “good news about Christ” reached Sardis.

Josephus also states that Sardian Jews were able to meet in a designated location called “a place,” not a synagogue (Antiquities, 14. 260-261, “[...] they [Jews] may assemble together, according to their ancient legal custom [...] a place may be given to them where they may have their congregations”), but later evidence suggests that a synagogue was eventually built. This structure, however, was constructed long after Melito’s homily, and thus it is highly probable that the first and second century Jews gathered together in a private building (or buildings) shared by the community, perhaps only at certain times. If so, these gathering were likely similar to those of the early Jesus believers’, which were also hosted in private dwellings.¹³⁾ Sardis was therefore a culturally diverse city with a strong Jewish presence and, later, emerging groups of Christ followers who may (or may not) have met separately for religious observance. Envisioning this scenario, Tessa Rajak argues that “the Sardinian Jew” likely held “a powerful attraction for the Christian of his day, causing considerable anxiety to the local leaders of the church at the time of Melito.”¹⁴⁾

13) Lynn H. Cohick, “Melito’s Peri Pascha: Its Relationship to Judaism and Sardis in Recent Scholarly Discussion,” *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress*, eds. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 123-140; Ophir Munz-Manor, “Narrating Salvation: Verbal Sacrifices in Late Antiquity Liturgical Poetry,” *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire*, ed. Natalie B. Dohrmann, Annette Yoshiko Reed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 167-181.

Jews who did not believe in Jesus's Messianic status and Jesus believers, however, remained interconnected and differences between the two groups were obscure both to non-believers and to members. For the Romans in particular, it was hard to distinguish Jews who did not believe in Jesus from Christ followers based on what each claimed to believe and practice.¹⁵⁾ Some Christ followers, however, did seek to create rhetorical if not actual differences between themselves and "the Jews" by marking themselves off from others and claiming a superior cultural status. The distance that these writers sought to create between themselves and those who did not believe in Jesus often involved the claim that Jesus followers, not "the Jews" per se, were the true heirs of Israel's heritage.¹⁶⁾ Given the diversity of ritual practices in Sardis during the first and second centuries C.E., however, this argument must be interpreted as more rhetorical than actual.¹⁷⁾ In this respect, Reidar Aasgaard points out that Melito's *On Pascha* "is not a case of 'either/or' but of 'both/and'" and, moreover, that "Melito is, more or less directly, concerned with marking boundaries in relation to various groups at the same time."¹⁸⁾ As such, Melito invited non-believers and those who (from his perspective) misunderstood Jesus's passion

14) Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue*, 449; Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast*, 9.

15) Galen the Roman and Greek physician, for instance, saw Jews and Christ believers as a single group, which he called the "school of Moses and Christ" (*Depulsum differentiis* 3.3). See, Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 142.

16) The book of Revelation already displays the conflicts between Christians and Jews even though it happened in the church at Philadelphia: "I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying- [...]" (Rev. 3:9). A. Choi, "Boundary Crossing in Christian Baptism" in *Early Christian Ritual Life*, ed. R. E. DeMaris and S. C. Muir (Routledge, 2017), 81.

17) Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 221.

18) Aasgaard, "Among Gentiles, Jews, and Christians Formation," 172.

to celebrate Easter according to his unique temporal frame, which differentiated Christ-affiliated and Jewish Pascha celebrations and yet structured the former according to the latter.

Sardis was not only a space where believers in Jesus and Gentiles coexisted, but also a place of cultural competition of Jesus believers with Jews who called upon the name of the God of Israel and awaited the Messiah. As a Christian leader, Melito needed to differentiate Christians from Jews by ensuring that Christians no longer regarded Jerusalem as the sole space for worship. Through reshaping the common physical place and conceptualizing the sacred location universally applicable to all Christians, Melito sought to demonstrate to the Christians of Sardis that worshiping in Sardis, rather than in Jerusalem, was sufficient and thus attempted to devalue the significance of Jerusalem and provide a spatial dimension that the believers in Christ could afford.

3. Melito's Strategies to Devalue Jerusalem, the Sacred City

In the 2nd century, Sardis was a nexus of religious and cultural interaction, where Christianity, Judaism, and local cults coexisted and competed. Leaders often promoted their own spaces as superior while disparaging others. In this context, Melito of Sardis, in *On Pascha*, reinterprets Jerusalem's spatial and ritual significance, shifting emphasis from the physical city to a more symbolic and theological understanding of the sacred.

3.1. Melito's Perception of Jerusalem as a Site Abhorred and Abandoned.

Ancient leaders, recognizing the political and multilayered significance of local spaces, attempted to label specific spaces as places of either positive or negative value to establish their religious or political claims.¹⁹⁾

In his treatise, *On Pascha*, Melito expounds on how commemorating the Pascha links the suffering and death of Jesus with the Paschal lamb of the book of Exodus by temporally linking the Pascha with the passion of Jesus and making it present for contemporary believers.²⁰⁾ He argues that the Pascha is a bridge that evokes God's past salvific works projecting Jesus as the key participant in those earlier events. Melito's homily was initially presented within the complex cultural, religious, and social milieu of Roman Sardis, where Jews, Christ believers, Sardinians and others mixed.²¹⁾

Based on the Gospel of John, Melito essentially argued that Christ and his ministry had superseded all Jewish practices once observed by both Christians and Jews. According to Melito, Christians were the true Israel because they believed in Jesus who fulfilled all prophecies in the Old Testament, whereas the Jews neither believed in nor listened to Christ, and therefore, they were no longer God's people, that is, Israel.

You [Jews] were not Israel.
You did not see God.

19) Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places*, 92.

20) R. A. Norris, *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 9-10; S. G. Hall, "Melito in the Light of the Passover Haggadah," *JTS* 22 (1971), 29; L. Cohick, "Melito of Sardis's "PERI PASCHA" and Its "Israel,"" *HTR* 91 (1998), 351-372.

21) I agree with Knust's point that Christian writers' opponents identification with "pagan," "the nations," and "Jews" are "potent rhetorical moves" and that their documents are not necessarily to be read as attacking any "real" enemies but rather as attempting to ensure that "others" are condemned as "bad Christians" and non-Christians. Jennifer W. Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 140. The point is therefore not to acquit Melito of anti-Judaism so much as to situate him as a Christ believer who sought to claim the mantle of Jewish heritage while at the same time distancing himself from Jews and those who did not agree that Jesus was the crucified and resurrected Messiah

You did not perceive the Lord, Israel,
You did not recognize the first-born of God begotten before
the morning star (On Pascha 83)

Therefore, Israel,
you did not shudder at the presence of the Lord;
so you have trembled, embattled by foes.
You did not fear the Lord, ...
When the Lord was hung up you did not rend your clothing,
so you tore them over the fallen. ...
You smashed the Lord to the ground,
you were razed to the ground. (On Pascha 99)

The Jews are guilty of smashing, hanging, and killing the Lord. Just as the Jews no longer hold the status and qualification of being Israel, and thus their sacrificial space, Jerusalem, also no longer holds significance for Christian worship. Melito's displeasure at the status of Jerusalem pervades his homily. In his work, Melito made it clear that it was the Jews, not Pilate, who killed Jesus, and that Jesus was put to death in the space of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is no longer the place of worship for ancient Israel or a space to encounter God. Melito strengthens his efforts to redefine Jerusalem by portraying the city as an execution ground, orchestrated by the Jews with the cooperation of their leaders.

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the
Jews persecuted him. (John 5:16)

This is the one who has been murdered
And where murdered?
In the middle of Jerusalem
By whom? By Isarel (On Pascha 72)

You brought forth a flogging for his body,
and thorn for his head;
and you bound his goodly hands, which formed you from
the earth. ...
And you kill your Lord at the great feast (On Pascha 79)

Therefore the feast of unleavened bread is bitter for you:
as it is written, "You shall eat unleavened bread with
bitterness."

The nails you sharpened are bitter for you, ...
the Judas you hired is bitter for you,
the Herod you followed is bitter for you,
the Caiaphas you believed is bitter for you, ...
the thorns which you gathered are bitter for you,
the hands which you made bloody are bitter for you.
You killed the Lord in the middle of Jerusalem (On Pascha
93, 96)

Melito mentions only the Jews, such as Judas, Herod, and Caiaphas, as those involved in Jesus' death. Above all, the ones who led Jesus' arrest, suffering, and crucifixion were the Jews. When Melito refers to Jerusalem not as a place of worship but as the site of Jesus' execution, he rhetorically degraded the city's reputation and distanced it from the status of a sacred place that believers in Jesus should honor. His purpose in depicting Jerusalem negatively is to encourage his audience, or those he considers Christians, to stop participating in the rituals and practices of a profane place that could undermine the basis of their faith.²²⁾ It is because Jerusalem is "the city of the law, the city of the Hebrews" but not the place for the Christians, new Israel (On Pascha 94). Through re-evaluating Jerusalem in negative terms, Melito tried to discourage his audience to threaten their belief by engaging the Jewish place associated with their rituals and superseded by Christian worship places.

Melito employs typology, a method of biblical interpretation where events in the Old Testament are seen as prefigurations of events in the New Testament. Melito's anti-Judaism is deeply rooted in the Johannine tradition.²³⁾ Jews in the Gospel of John

22) Laurence Broadhurst, "Melito of Sardis, the Second Sophistic and 'Israel'," in *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities*, ed. Willi Braun (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2005), 65-66.

He presents the Paschal sacrifice not merely as a historical event tied to Jerusalem but as a prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice. This interpretation moves the emphasis from the geographical location of Jerusalem to the universal significance of Christ's passion, applicable to all Christians regardless of their location.

Humanity was doled out by death
for (On Pascha 56)

He (Christ) is the one led like a lamb
and slaughtered like a sheep;
he ransomed us from the worship of the world
as from the land of Egypt,
and he set us free from the slavery of the devil
as from the hand of Pharaoh ... (On Pascha 67)

This is the Pascha of our salvation:
this is the one who in many people endured many things
(On Pascha 69)

“It is I,” says the Christ. ...
... For I am your freedom.
I am the Passover of salvation.
I am the lamb slaughtered for you,
I am your ransom” (On Pascha 102-103)

23) Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, trans A. C. Stewart, 2nd ed. (New York: St Vladimir Seminary Press, 2017), 37-38. It seems that Melito echoes the theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews by asserting that the sacred space revered by the Jews has been replaced through Jesus Christ. While Hebrews presents the sacrificial system in the context of the “first tent” (Heb 9:2), Melito identifies the Jerusalem temple as the symbol of the first covenant and argues that it, not the tabernacle, has been superseded. Moreover, as the high priest in Hebrews oversees sacrifices for the people's sins, Jesus, by offering himself once, atones for humanity's transgressions (Heb 9:26).

The representation of the Paschal lamb with Jesus' body assists the construction and establishment of spatial redefinition. Melito argued that Jerusalem, once the spatial center of ancient worship, lost its significance due to the death of Jesus the one who fulfils "the Passover of salvation" (On Pascha 103). Instead, the place where individual Christians now worship and help them to see God of Israel have become the Passover lamb (On Pascha 82, "You were not Israel [because] you did not see God").²⁴⁾ In his homily, Melito identifies Christ as the true Passover lamb, whose sacrifice transcends the need for the ritual practices traditionally associated with Jerusalem. By portraying Christ's death and resurrection as the fulfillment of the Passover, Melito shifts the focus from the Jewish Passover celebration centered in Jerusalem to the Christian commemoration of Christ's sacrifice, which can be observed anywhere. Passover is no longer a day to worship Jesus the lamb of the Old Testament but has been replaced as a day to worship the Lamb who was slain on the cross.

3.2. New Israel and the Temporality of the Passover Confirming Christian Spatiality

Melito sets it in critical contrast to the Church as the holy place of Christian gathering. Melito universalizes the locally confined space of Jerusalem, supplementing the significance of place by assigning new meaning to the Jewish Passover. By interpreting the Exodus and the Passover in the context of Christ's passion, Melito universalizes the narrative of salvation and adopts it to the Christian identity as a new and true Israel replacing the old and false Israel the Jews. The physical journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, which culminates in Jerusalem, becomes a

24) Based on the Greek text, the conjunction 'because' is added.

spiritual journey from sin to salvation, applicable to all humanity. This shift undermines the centrality of Jerusalem as the focal point of salvation history. Along with this topographical reconfiguration, Melito emphasizes the importance of proper rituals for being correct Christians, distinguishing them from those of the Jews. In his writings, he asserts that the Pascha of the Old Testament lost its role due to the continuous sins of Israel and articulates that its meaning was fulfilled through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Paschal lamb (On Pascha 56, “... the paschal mystery completed in the body of the Lord”). Just as the Gospel of John portrays Jesus’ death occurring on the day before Passover, Melito argues that the celebration of the resurrection should begin with the renewed Passover inaugurated by Jesus.

Thus the mystery of the Lord
 prefigured from of old through the vision of a type,
 is today fulfilled and has found faith,
 even though people think it something new.
 For the mystery of the Lord is both new and old;
 old with respect to the law
 but new with respect to grace.
 But if you scrutinize the type through its outcome you will
 discern him (On Pascha, 58)

Thus, those who inherited the Gospel displayed their loyalty to these works in part by developing their own temporal frames, in this case by a calendar of feasts related to narrative temporalities of both texts.²⁵⁾ Based on the salvific work of Jesus, Paschal lamb as a new site, Melito imaginatively constructed the identity of Israel as those who conceive of the divine will and remain unadulterated by sin by inviting Jesus followers to join

25) Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 40-56.

the temporality of the Pascha that he linked with the suffering of Jesus (On Pascha 103, “So come all families of people, adulterated with sin, and receive forgiveness of sins”). In the construction of time that commemorates the continuation of God’s salvific intervention from the Exodus to the death and resurrection of Jesus, Israel’s special status as the chosen people is described as extending to “all families of people,” who are able to see God after they transgress God’s commandments. Israel’s (the Jews’) repentance and participation in Christ’s invitation is not annulled (On Pascha 103, “come ... and receive forgiveness of sins”). Melito also borrowed the biblical idea of Israel from Exodus to typologically apply the Israelite past of affliction and deliverance from Egypt to humankind’s present corruption and the misery and salvation through the same Paschal lamb.

According to Melito’s argument, Israel of the Old Testament rejected God’s will and failed to see Him, while the new Israel are those who see God through Jesus, as stated in the Gospel of John (John 14:9, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”). In resonating the Johannine notion on those who see God, Melito portrays Jesus as the revelator of the God of Israel and further argues that no one may come to understand God and become a member of true Israel without recognizing and without commemorating Jesus as the Paschal lamb. The name “Israel” is used to revise definitions of identity by distinguishing those who correctly understand the meaning of the Paschal lamb from those who do not (On Pascha 82, “you did not perceive the Lord”). Melito makes critical contrasts of Jesus believers who see God with Jews as referring to ‘you’ who do not.

Just as the “the Passover of the Lord” is “a commemoration of Israel forever” commanded by God (On Pascha 13), Melito argues that the fulfilled Passover of Christ the Lord must be commemorated by those who are free (On Pascha 103, “... I am your freedom”). This temporal expansion to the Exodus

period broadens the family tree beyond historical Israel and alludes to a more archaic and universal time as a “common shared heritage,” which includes the newly defined Israel.²⁶⁾ Melito marks Israel’s identity by moving back through time to the salvation of Israel in the book of Exodus, which he then thematically links forward in time with the death of Jesus as the Paschal lamb. Having identified Jesus as the murdered lamb (“to murder,” φονεύω), Melito further defines Jesus as the just One, using language from Psalm 25:12 and Isa 3:10. His allusions to the book of Exodus show his understanding of Jesus’s death as the death of a sacrificial lamb and confirm that the saving efficacy of Jesus’s death reaches beyond the past of Israel through Jesus’s connection with the Law and Prophets. Melito’s argument extends to all humankind by appealing to all who must seek the Lord’s forgiveness.

Melito’s extension of “Israel” to anyone that “see[s] God” broadens the scope of “a new priesthood” beyond any particular group of people.²⁷⁾ Melito’s fluid sense of temporal differentiation between Jesus believers and “Israel” suggested that, within the Jesus movement, there were rhetorical codes for rejecting and marginalizing different groups that were drawn from Jewish traditions themselves. Melito’s employing “Israel” displays his attempt to produce the self-expression of his group of Jesus followers which legitimates and strengthens a sense of belonging to create a fictitious family. By inventing the self-identity of Jesus believers as “a new priesthood,” he reveals the nuanced boundary between this group and those who did not believe in Jesus. And Melito re-classifies the name “Israel” as his in-group while at same time denouncing anyone (Jews and

26) Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 76-77.

27) “... [he] made us a new priesthood and a people everlasting for himself” (On Pascha 66), cf. “... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9).

non-Jews alike) who do not perceive Jesus as the Paschal lamb and therefore fail to see God. His construction of temporality to reveal the true meaning of the Pascha serves as a rhetorical strategy to distinguish those who see God from those who do not, while urging his audience to commemorate the passion of Jesus according to his constructed temporal frames.

4. Conclusion

The destruction of the Jerusalem temple following the Jewish revolts catalyzed the evolution of Christianity from a Jewish sect into a distinct religious tradition. Although early Christians continued to venerate sites associated with Jesus—albeit informally under Roman rule—the absence of the Temple fostered theological reinterpretations in which Jesus emerged as the “new temple” and believers as the “new Israel.” Melito of Sardis employs a rhetorical strategy that not only devalues the physical sanctity of Jerusalem but also recasts it as a symbolic locus within the divine plan. By decentering Jerusalem, Melito redefines Christian spatiality, shifting the emphasis from its historical and geographical origins to a universal, spiritual dimension. In doing so, he contributes to the ideological divide between Jews and Christians, urging his audience to perceive the sacred not in a confined locale, but as an expansive, transformative reality embodied in Christ.

<주제어>

멜리토, 사데, 예루살렘, 장소, 유월절

<Keywords>

Melito, Sardis, Jerusalem, Place, Pascha

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<Abstract>

Rhetoric of Spatiality – Making Correct Christians through Distancing Themselves from Jerusalem:

Examining the Rhetorical Strategies to Control the Place
in On Pascha by Melito of Sardis

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In *On Pascha*, written around the 2nd century A.D., Melito, as a bishop of Sardis, explains to his Sardian congregant the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. The work emphasizes what Christ fulfills through his sacrifice as Paschal lamb and how the time and place of His suffering and death call audience to lead a particular kind of life. Notably, according to Church historian Eusebius, Melito of Sardis was one of the so-called "Quartodecimans." The term "Quartodeciman" refers to a group that commemorated Easter on the 14th day of Nisan, the start of Passover according to the Jewish calendar. The name originates from the Latin word "*quartodecim*," meaning "fourteen." Thus, for Melito, the timing of Easter, which differed from the practice of commemorating it on Sunday as was common in the Western Church, held significant meaning. Despite observing Easter based on the Jewish calendar which fulfilled by Christ's death and resurrection, however, he did not aim to align the associated space with Jewish locations. Instead, he sought to clearly distinguish Christians from Jews through universalizing the spatiality. In this respect, this study examines the reasoning behind the unique topography Melito supported

and demonstrates how, in *On Pascha*, he challenges the positive values associated with Jerusalem, thereby attempting a geographical redefinition and reevaluation.

To achieve this, I analyze the historical context of Judea during the first and second centuries C.E. to understand Jerusalem as it appears in the background of Melito's perception of Jerusalem in *On Pascha*. Additionally, it examines historical, political, and religious circumstances of the second-century Sardis and its Christian community through the writings of Roman historians, early Church Fathers, and archaeological evidence. Based on this analysis, the study explores how Melito reevaluates the status of Jerusalem in *On Pascha* and how he develops a new topographical perception of the sacred place as a site making correct Christians to worship Christ through focusing on his interpretation of Passover.

<초록>

공간의 수사학- 바른 그리스도인이 되기 위하여 예루살렘에서 멀어지기:

사테 주교 멜리토의 (Melito of Sardis)의 「유월절에 관하여」
(On Pascha)에 나타난 공간을 재구성하는 방식에 관한 연구

안창선

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본 연구는 2세기 사테의 주교였던 멜리토(Melito of Sardis)의 공간을 이해하는 방식, 특히 그리스도인들에게 역사적, 신학적 그리고 종교적 중요성을 지나는 공간 예루살렘의 의미를 재정의, 재구성 그리고 재해석하는 방식에 관한 연구이다. 특히 본 연구는 국내에서 거의 연구된 바 없는 C.E. 2세기 멜리토의 저서 「유월절에 관하여」 (On Pascha)를 중심으로 그가 그리스도인의 정체성을 드러내기 위해 특정한 공간에 관한 기존의 가치를 어떠한 방식으로 다시 규정하는지 살펴본다.

위해 본 연구는 멜리토의 저서 「유월절에 관하여」 (On Pascha)의 배경으로 등장하는 예루살렘에 대해 이해하기 위하여, 1-2세기 C.E. 의 유대의 상황을 분석한다. 그리고 고대 역사가들과 초대 교회교부들의 문헌 자료의 검토를 통해서 멜리토가 활동하던 2세기 사테와 당시 그리스도인들의 역사적, 정치적, 그리고 종교적 상황을 살펴본다. 이를 바탕으로 멜리토의 저서 「유월절에 관하여」 (On Pascha)에서 어떤 방식으로 예루살렘이라는 공간을 재해석하고 그 근거는 무엇이며, 그리고 자신의 논지를 주장하기 위해 새롭게 발전되는 내용은 무엇인지 유월절에 대한 그의 해석을 중심으로 살펴본다.

이를 위해 「유월절에 관하여」의 분석을 통해서 멜리토는 올바른 그리스도인이 되기 위해서는 자신들의 정체성이 분명하게 드러나는 공간 즉 가야할 곳과 가지말아야 할 곳을 구분했음을 소개한다. 그리고 2세기 예루살렘과 사데의 정치, 종교적 상황을 살펴보면서 기존의 변성한 유대 공동체의 존재가 초대 교회 성장에 가장 큰 도전 가운데 하나였음을 소개하고 멜리토는 유대인들과 그리스도인들이 섞이지 않고 분명히 구분되기를 원했음을 강조한다. 이와 더불어 본 연구자는 멜리토는 공동체의 하나됨과 정체성을 분명히 확립하기 위해 특정한 종교적 지형을 정하고 그 곳에서 나오는 믿음을 공유하는 사람들로 그리고 복잡한 사회속에서도 일관되고 교회의 정통일 수 있는 그리스도인으로 연합할 것을 강조했음을 주장한다.

