

The Robe Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Marcellus is the only son of Cornelius Gallio and her husband, a senator, and brother of Lucia. Lucia recounts the fact that her father spoke harshly against a local official, Gaius. Immediately after, Marcellus laughs openly at a long-winded ode to Gaius. Though Gaius is himself sleeping through the praise, Marcellus tells his sister that he's certain someone will inform him of Marcellus' action. That appears to be the case because Marcellus is soon sent to Minoa to command there. The region is far from Roman civilization and is known as the place for those who are exiled for one reason or another.

Marcellus goes with a contingent of his soldiers to Jerusalem for the annual Passover feast where their duties are primarily to be a military presence. However, Marcellus is then assigned the task of overseeing the crucifixion of Jesus. Marcellus is drunk at the insistence of his friend and fellow soldier, Paulus, who has seen crucifixions before. Despite this, Marcellus knows that Jesus is innocent of all crimes and Jesus' actions impress that on Marcellus. At the base of the cross, the soldiers - all very drunk - roll dice for Jesus' robe and Marcellus wins. At a dinner that night, he's goaded into putting it on and is immediately ill, unable to walk normally and plagued with depression and bouts of forgetfulness. His faithful servant Demetrius witnesses the entire episode, having already seen Jesus and become interested in His life. Demetrius returns home with Marcellus but the family agrees that he can't remain in Rome where his malady will be discussed. The two travel to Athens where Marcellus decides to take his life. Searching for his dagger, he finds the robe and is immediately calmed and healed.

Over the coming months, Demetrius and Marcellus study the scrolls of an old Jew who is a weaver and who presents them with prophecies that seem to have come true with the life and death of Jesus. Demetrius is forced to flee for his life and returns to Jerusalem. Marcellus is assigned to go there to find information about Jesus for the Roman emperor. Marcellus and Demetrius soon reconnect and Demetrius proclaims his conversion to Christianity. Marcellus soon follows suit, learning from those who walked with Jesus and knew him best.

When Marcellus returns to Rome, his conversion is not accepted by either his family, his government or his intended wife, Diana. Forced to choose, Marcellus chooses Jesus and disappears for some period of time. Diana escapes an unwanted suitor - the emperor - and finds Marcellus. Marcellus is soon arrested for his proclamation of his Christianity and refuses to publicly recant Jesus, which earns him a death sentence. Diana, seeing the calm certainty of her husband, chooses to stand by his side and the two are led away to be executed.



Chapters I through IV

Chapters I through IV Summary

Marcellus is the only son of Cornelius Gallio and her husband, a senator, and brother of Lucia. Lucia recounts the fact that her father spoke harshly against a local official, Gaius. Immediately after, Marcellus laughs openly at a long-winded ode to Gaius. Though Gaius is himself sleeping through the praise, Marcellus tells his sister that he's certain someone will inform him of Marcellus's action. Lucia confides in Marcellus that she was the subject of Gaius' unwanted attention and rebuffed him. Lucia is certain the events will incite Gaius to anger, and Lucia convinces Marcellus that he must apologize immediately. Marcellus is on his way to do so when he encounters his father, who immediately knows something is wrong. Marcellus eventually recounts the story and his father instructs him not to apologize. Soon after, Marcellus receives instructions to report for military duty and discovers he's being sent to Minoa, a forsaken outpost fraught with danger in the form of Bedouin tribes and boredom that results in fights among the men. The post is just outside Palestine.

Marcellus is to leave that same night and asks his faithful slave, Demetrius, whether he wants to go along. Demetrius was angry when he was captured and purchased by Marcellus's father, but was treated well, trusted, and was soon devoted to Demetrius. He now says he will go along, though Marcellus tells him that they are being sent to this post to die. Demetrius takes time to run one errand as he's preparing for the two of them to leave - he goes to Diana, a friend of Lucia, who is enamored of Marcellus, telling her of their departure. Diana hurries to bid Marcellus good-bye and Marcellus notes that he wants to say more than he does, but knows he can't expect any promises from her.

As Marcellus is saying good-bye to Diana, Demetrius goes to Lucia. He gives her a ring that he says is the only personal thing from his family he saved when he was captured as a slave. He asks her to keep it for him, slides it on her finger and kisses her hand. Lucia thinks little of it, though Demetrius is flushed and smiling when he returns to Marcellus and Diana says that it seems improper.

As he sails for Minoa, Marcellus asks the ship's captain, Manius, about Minoa. Manius says the area has been repeatedly invaded, that a few from each invading army remain to carry on the feud, and that Gaza is not the place any sane person would choose to live. He says the fort of Minoa is outside Gaza and does nothing to keep order. Talking later with Demetrius who says the only way for Marcellus to command is to take over instantly on his arrival, Marcellus realizes this is probably correct. The fort is slovenly and the soldiers more so. Marcellus finds that the commander is away and demands the second-in-command, Sextus, as well as temporary quarters. When the commander, Paulus, arrives, he's rude and Marcellus meets that with a challenge to fight. Marcellus easily wins but doesn't take the life of Paulus. Over the coming days, the men obey orders but it seems Marcellus is nothing more than a task maker to be obeyed. Then Sextus breaks his leg. Marcellus demands that he be moved to a better room for his



recovery, that a special bed be made to offer better support and personally creates broth for the man. It's this act that puts him firmly in command of the fort, complete with the dedication of his men.

Paulus informs Marcellus that a company of Romans will soon need to travel to Jerusalem to help keep order for the Passover celebration. Paulus recounts stories of the Messiah, the history behind the Passover as the escape from Egypt, and that only the poor really resent the Roman presence in the region while the rich are happy for the security. Paulus says that the poor among the Jews sometimes talk of revolt, but that the rich won't allow it to happen. According to Paulus, the Romans are used to do the "dirty work" of disposing of anyone who talks of the "lost kingdom."

The day the Romans reach the outskirts of Jerusalem, Demetrius is left behind while Marcellus and a few others enter the city. The next day, Demetrius travels into the city with the remainder of the slaves and soldiers. As he walks, he notes a massive press toward something and learns from another slave that there are cries of "king" and "messiah." Demetrius can't explain what pushes him to go with the surging crowd, but he does so. He gets his first glimpse of Jesus, noting that Jesus seems unaware of the press of people. Their eyes meet for a moment and Demetrius is awed. When another slave asks if the man is a king, Demetrius says he is not, but that he is something "more important than a king."

Chapters I through IV Analysis

The attitude among the Romans, including Lucia's family, is that slaves are not quite human. There is a new addition to the family's slaves just before Marcellus leaves home. A pair of young girls, twins, who are obviously frightened. Lucia treats them kindly but firmly, telling them that they've nothing to fear but reminding them to behave as instructed by the slaves overseeing them. She then tells Marcellus not to be harsh with them and tells him that she can't help wondering how she would feel in their position. It seems her concern over what Gaius might do to her family has made her consider such a possibility.

The family's attitudes about God and even the Roman gods is that there is no reason to believe in either, in any form. Marcellus's father says that gods are nothing more than a way for the poor people to be distracted from their pain and everyday sufferings. When Marcellus is called to the military, his father says that he wishes he believed in gods so he could call on them to curse Gaius. Marcellus later asks Demetrius for his thoughts on religion. Demetrius says that he called on the gods on the day his father was taken away in chains, and that the lack of response is proof they don't exist. He says that it's not even worth his time to curse the gods. Marcellus says that it would be comforting to have a god of some sort to call on in times of trouble. Marcellus says that he believes the stars, rivers, and mountains follow an orderly course, and that if there is a god in charge of that, the god is orderly and good. He says that if there are gods on Olympus overseeing the humans, those gods are vicious and stupid. Demetrius calls a halt to the



conversation when Marcellus asks if the Roman Empire is insane, saying that he believes whatever Marcellus believes.

As they travel toward Jerusalem, Demetrius finds himself talking with a slave named Melas who tells of the ornery attitude of donkeys and that he knows of a slave who ran away to Syria while the soldiers were in Jerusalem. Demetrius worries that Melas has some motive in mind and vows to separate himself from the other slave as much as possible. Demetrius then thinks back to a discussion between Marcellus and Paulus in which Paulus explains about Jehovah - that he created his people in a garden and then punished them for their curiosity in eating the forbidden fruit. Marcellus points out that curiosity is a good thing and that it seems the people would be rewarded for it. Paulus goes on to explain that Jehovah has a special interest in the Jews and cares nothing for any other people. Marcellus and Paulus discuss the god they would create and this god's abilities, including - according to Marcellus - that a man's life would end with a eulogy recounting his glorious life before the man simply vanished. Marcellus says this would be preferable to the fact of a man's undignified end. Demetrius considers what he might have added to this deity created by Paulus and Marcellus and comes to the conclusion that it would have been something significant - that on the day his father was chained and carried to his death, this deity would arrive and put a stop to it. It's interesting that it seems these men are all searching for something, but can't put a name to what that something is. It is Demetrius who is touched first by the presence of Jesus, though they are all about to be drawn into the last days of Jesus' life.



Chapters V through VII

Chapters V through VII Summary

Marcellus learns some about the Jewish people who inhabit Palestine, including that the name of their governing body is the Sanhedrin. As Marcellus joins the other officers, spending the majority of his day in the baths, gambling and drinking, Demetrius wanders the city and thinks. The man who seems reluctant to heed the demands of the people that he be king continues to haunt Demetrius' thoughts. He considers that the Jews want freedom, but questions their reasons. He is told to be careful of a spice dealer who would "rob his own grandmother." Demetrius says that if the Jewish people lived under a new government, that man's grandmother would be no safer from his tendency to rob people. Demetrius comes to the conclusion that it's not the government that is a problem, but the people themselves.

The following morning, Demetrius finds the man he'd been with on the day Jesus came through and saw Demetrius. That man, Zenos, relates the rituals associated with the temple - that people bought an animal for sacrifice for an exorbitant price and were often cheated. If a person brought his own animal as a sacrifice, the priests would find some blemish, trade him for a more worthy animal with the person paying the difference and the priests selling the blemished animal to some other. Demetrius hears all this and is appalled that it occurs inside the beautiful temple. Then Zenos says that Jesus upset the tables of the money changers in the temple and sent them running, prompting his arrest. Zenos' master, Popygos, explains the people's cry for the blood of Jesus and they wrangle as those in authority tried to put the decisions off on someone else. Demetrius learns that Jesus is on trial and hurries to find Marcellus.

Demetrius watches the last few minutes of the trial. Pilate questions Jesus and listens to the roar of the crowd, finally calling for a basin of water and literally "washing his hands" of the situation. He grants the desire of the crowd - for Jesus' death. Marcellus heads up the contingent of Roman soldiers who leads Jesus through the throng. The slave of another Roman soldier, Melas, tells Demetrius that Jesus is to be crucified. Melas tells Demetrius that it's a horrible way to die, and Demetrius returns to Marcellus' quarters. He realizes that Marcellus might want a drink and resolutely walks toward the hill where Jesus is to be crucified.

Marcellus himself recalls the events as they occurred leading up to the death of Jesus. Paulus arrives early in the morning to tell Marcellus about Jesus, the events at the temple, and the jockeying for power to judge Jesus. As Marcellus finishes telling his story, Marcellus is commanded by Pilate to appear at the trial. Paulus says that Pilate does not confer honor on the soldiers of Minoa, and that the only reason to have called them is to demand that they do something unsavory - and that it's to be crucifixion. Paulus drinks a huge cup of wine and encourages Marcellus to do the same, saying that the crucifixion is a horrible death and that it's not a task for a sober man.



Demetrius later takes a drink of water to the hill where Jesus is being crucified and witnesses the darkness that encompasses the land at the time of his death. He also notes that Marcellus is barely sober enough to function and that he is among those gambling, literally at the base of the cross where Jesus hangs. As the gambling breaks up, Jesus' robe is thrown in as the prize for the highest roll of the dice and Marcellus wins. He sends the robe with Demetrius who returns to their quarters. That night, the soldiers gather for a feast and it's noted that the soldiers of Minoa are given a bit of leeway in consideration for their day's work. At one point, Marcellus points out that Jesus was guilty of nothing. When Paulus, who is very drunk, calls for Marcellus to don the robe, Marcellus does so. He is immediately taken with a strange weakness that plagues him well after he removes the robe.

When Marcellus calls for the robe, Demetrius hesitates, saying that he doesn't want the robe - and thereby Jesus - to be ridiculed in the way he senses is to come. When he doesn't immediately obey, Marcellus slaps him. Demetrius notes that it's the only time Marcellus or any member of the family, has done so. When Malas says that he's about to leave as planned, for the road to Damascus and freedom, Demetrius - with Marcellus' slap still fresh on his mind - agrees to go.

Meanwhile, Marcellus receives word that he's to return to Rome by order of the emperor. Demetrius packs Marcellus' belongings for the journey and his own for his escape. When Demetrius and Malas meet at the gate, Malas confides that he'd seen Marcellus as he was leaving by way of the courtyard and that he seemed rattled. In fact, Marcellus is barely able to walk and is scarcely functioning as he prepares to leave for Rome.

In Rome, Diana had been called to the home of her grandfather, the emperor, who loved her youth and vitality. As spring became warmer, Diana spent time with her grandfather and reveals that she has come to care for Marcellus who was sent away by the emperor's stepson, Gaius. The emperor immediately sends for Marcellus, prompting his return.

Lucia is the first to see Demetrius, who explains that Marcellus is not well. He says that Marcellus will be talking, suddenly fall into a trancelike state, then ask the person he is talking to, "Were you there?" Demetrius says he'll explain "there" later, but urges Lucia that she and her family must simply respond that they weren't there. It is as Demetrius says, and when Marcellus goes to his room to rest, Marcellus' father calls for Demetrius. He questions the slave who tells of the events surrounding the crucifixion and says that he believes Marcellus must get away from Rome for awhile. Demetrius says Marcellus worries that his condition will bring shame on the family and Marcellus' father agrees, saying that Marcellus and Demetrius must immediately travel to Athens, a destination suggested by Demetrius.



Chapters V through VII Analysis

As Demetrius considers the man called "king," he says that this man could be made ruler of the region on this very day, and that those who helped him to power would expect favor, and that the new reign would be equally as corrupt as any other. Demetrius seems to fully understand that there has to be a change in people and that a different ruler won't change how people are.

It's interesting that Paulus tells Marcellus about Jesus and the events leading to his trial, finishing by saying that he wants nothing to do with carrying out the sentence the people are demanding - crucifixion. He says that it's a horrible way to die, but also says that there's something about Jesus that makes him wish he were not to be involved.

Demetrius' dedication to Marcellus is seen in the fact that he returns to Marcellus after having been slapped and having the road to freedom open in front of him. That dedication is further exemplified when Demetrius refuses the offer of his freedom. When Marcellus' father agrees that the two must travel to Athens, he says that it would never be fair to entrust the life of his son solely to a slave. He writes out a statement granting Demetrius his freedom but Demetrius declines it. He's told it is available to him, whenever he wants it. As he considers what to say regarding the offer, it passes through his mind that this would make him free to express himself to Lucia. This is the second hint of his feelings for her, the first having been his giving her the ring.

An important point of this conversation is that Demetrius tells Marcellus' father that he's not superstitious but that he believes there was some power in that robe. Demetrius says that he doesn't believe it to have anything to do with the robe alone, but to do with the wearer. He further goes into this when he talks to another slave in the house, a man named Marcipor. Marcipor, hearing Demetrius' story, tries on the robe. Demetrius says he doesn't believe this man, Jesus, would mind Marcipor having the robe. Upon trying on the robe, Marcipor agrees with Demetrius, that there is something powerful attached to that robe. Demetrius himself says that he believes it could hold the key to Marcellus' recovery, though he doesn't know how or when to use it.



Chapters VIII through X

Chapters VIII through X Summary

Marcellus and Demetrius travel together to Athens. On the way, Demetrius attempts to draw Marcellus into conversation. At one point Demetrius mentions the views of Lucretius on god. As Demetrius tells it, Lucretius says that the human belief that gods care about people is "the source of nothing but unhappiness." Marcellus says that the biggest problem facing Lucretius was that he had too much time to think and eventually drove himself crazy. Marcellus then says that he is doing the same.

Upon their arrival at the House of Eupolis, Marcellus is told that slaves do not share their master's quarters, but Marcellus insists and the host - a man named Dion - gives in. His wife Phoebe and widowed sister Ino help welcome Marcellus. Both Ino and then Dion's daughter, Theodosia, speak to Demetrius. Theodosia stammers when she is told, saying something about it being "too bad" that slavery exists. Phoebe says that if Demetrius tries to take advantage of Theodosia, she is to "snub him," though Theodosia says that it seems he already has been.

Over the next few days, Marcellus keeps to himself, refusing to visit any of the nearby galleries or to initiate any conversation with their hosts. On the eighth day, Demetrius begins a fumbling attempt at creating a bust from clay and Marcellus moves in to the studio to help, eventually working on his own. It doesn't last long and Demetrius, fearful that Marcellus will continue in this vein, decides it's time for serious action. He takes the robe to Marcellus who grows immediately angry and threatens to sell Demetrius at the marketplace. Demetrius leaves the room. Though he is upset, he says there is a sense of calm because he is holding the robe. When he goes out for a walk, giving Marcellus time to cool off, Demetrius encounters Theodosia who asks if they've done something to anger Marcellus. Demetrius says what's wrong with Marcellus is "a long story," and worries about Theodosia's reputation if she's seen carrying on a conversation with him. They agree to meet a short distance away in a cloister. There they pretend to be lovers seeking a few minutes alone and Demetrius, his arms convincingly around Theodosia, tells the story. When he finishes she says she better understands Marcellus' state of mind and quizzes Demetrius on his thoughts on the subject.

While Demetrius is away, Marcellus decides to end his life. He knows that his daggers are in Demetrius' possession though the slave told Marcellus they were lost or stolen. When Marcellus goes to retrieve them, he finds the robe on top of the bag and knows he must touch it in order to retrieve his daggers. When he does so, he finds the same peace Demetrius describes and the desire to kill himself passes away. When Demetrius returns, Marcellus suggests that they find a weaver who can repair the robe.

They find a Jewish weaver named Benjamin. He's very old and first refuses to repair the robe, then realizes it's Jewish, likely from the area of Galilee, and asks Marcellus how long he's been in the city. By his answers, the old man learns that Marcellus was in



Jerusalem during Passover week, says he'll repair the robe the following day and invites Marcellus to return then to pick up the robe and to share Benjamin's hospitality.

The following day, Marcellus seems to be busy on his own with the clay and Demetrius asks permission to go for a walk. Again, he meets Theodosia who convinces him to sit and talk with her. Demetrius fears she will have put his earlier comments about Marcellus down to a worrier, but finds that she fully believes him about both the condition and recovery of his master. After they part, Demetrius takes a walk in the market but is bored. He eventually buys some figs and goes to visit Benjamin. Benjamin says that he's early but Demetrius says he's only come to visit, not to pick up the robe. Benjamin suggests a trade - that Demetrius answer some of his questions and that he will then answer those posed by Demetrius. To Benjamin's questions, Demetrius offers details and impressions of Jesus and the crucifixion which Benjamin then correlates with scripture from an ancient scroll in his possession. Demetrius says that Benjamin's questions have answered his own, but protests that Jesus - unlike the Messiah predicted by Benjamin's scrolls - was unwilling to be called "king" and insisted that his kingdom was not on earth. Benjamin offers to allow Demetrius to study the scrolls.

Later, Marcellus goes to Benjamin's shop to retrieve the robe. They talk about slavery and the prophecies of his scrolls, then Marcellus asks for the robe. The talk then turns to the owner of the robe and Marcellus confirms that his name was Jesus. Benjamin asks some additional questions, prompting Marcellus to say that Jesus was absolutely dead when he was removed from the cross. Benjamin says there have been rumors that the drunken soldiers left and that Jesus was revived by his countrymen. Marcellus says the soldiers were drinking but that they pierced his heart before leaving him, so know that he was dead. Benjamin then asks if Marcellus knows what happened on the days following the crucifixion and Marcellus says he left for Rome the following day.

As Marcellus' family debates what they'll tell Diana who is soon to return home from the emperor's home, a royal messenger arrives with word that Marcellus is to accept an appointment with the emperor's guards. Gallio travels to the emperor to explain that Marcellus is away. The emperor is first angry and scornful that Marcellus couldn't adequately handle the duties of a crucifixion without breaking down and then says that it doesn't matter because he'll simply assign Marcellus a place as palace philosopher because all philosophers are weak in the head.

The following morning, Gallio goes for a walk and encounters Diana who tells him that she knows of Marcellus' malady from the chamberlain who overheard Gallio talking to the emperor. Diana urges Gallio to keep Marcellus in Athens, saying that she fears her own current predicament. The emperor is building a house for her near his own palace, and Gaius is pressing for her as his wife. Diana doesn't yet explain what she's facing, but says that it would be best if Marcellus did not return to the emperor's service.



Chapters VIII through X Analysis

Demetrius tries to tell Theodosia what he feels when he holds the robe. He says that as a child, he would run to his mother when he'd fallen and hurt himself, and that she would hold him until he could face the pain. He says the robe gives him the same feeling. When Demetrius and Marcellus talk about their feelings related to the robe, Demetrius says it's as if the energy from Jesus - the man they saw die without a fight, though he was innocent. Demetrius believes Jesus is dignified, strong, good, and brave. As Demetrius voices these thoughts, Marcellus seems ready to agree. Then he says that there's more to it and insists that Demetrius knows that to be true. The following day, when Marcellus has considered and dismissed several theories, it's Demetrius who suggests that they may not be required to understand the robe or its power at all.

Marcellus and Benjamin argue amiably about slavery, though it is evident Benjamin feels strongly about the issue. Benjamin says slavery is wrong and Marcellus agrees, saying that his father thinks so as well. But when Benjamin asks about the slaves in the home of Marcellus' father, Marcellus has to admit that they do have slaves, but contends that they are treated well and have plenty to eat - more than many free men. Benjamin sarcastically says that it's a fair trade - food for freedom. Benjamin also says all men are equal and that when a man is enslaved, it's not the slave who lowers all of mankind, but the slaver.

There's a conversation between the emperor and Gallio about Marcellus and his strange reaction to the crucifixion of Jesus. The emperor accuses Marcellus of being weak and Gallio objects. When Gallio mentions the Messiah, the emperor becomes agitated. Later, Gallio thinks about the situation in Rome in general and wonders if he will be around to see the Roman Empire fall.



Chapters XI through XIII

Chapters XI through XIII Summary

An imperial tribune appears with a message from the emperor instructing Marcellus to go to Palestine to learn all he can about the man called the Messiah and the people who worship him. Marcellus also receives a letter from his father and Diana and notes that Diana's letter has been tampered with. The tribune is very rude and reaches for Theodosia and Demetrius intervenes, beating the tribune to a bloody pulp. Marcellus gives Demetrius money and offers his freedom but Demetrius refuses, saying that someone might construe it as a sign Marcellus was involved in the beating of a Roman officer. Marcellus and Demetrius part and Marcellus goes to the tribune, who is making threats. Marcellus tells him that it would be a good idea for him to go now and make his complaint against Demetrius formal and points out that everyone is going to see the beating he took at the hands of a slave and will know that his rudeness to a respectable young woman prompted it. The man realizes Marcellus is right and stops his threats.

Time passes and Marcellus realizes how heavily he depended on Demetrius for diversion. One day Marcellus arrives at Benjamin's shop for his daily Aramaic lesson to find a letter has arrived from Demetrius who says he is now in Jerusalem, living with a young Greek called Stephen, a follower of Jesus. Demetrius says Stephen has shown him the emblem of the fish, used to identify those who follow Jesus' teachings. He tells Marcellus of another of the followers, a man named Barsabas Justus, who would be a good source of information for Marcellus. Demetrius suggests Marcellus enter the country posing as a merchant willing to pay high prices for local goods, and to search out a guide to lead him on a shopping expedition further in the country. Demetrius says Marcellus could manage to hire one of Jesus' followers for this task, and that the information he seeks could be forthcoming during a short trip with the man. Demetrius cautions Marcellus to show no signs of recognition if they should meet and says that the followers of Jesus are being watched closely for signs they are continuing to spread the principles of his teachings. Demetrius says it seems pointless since Jesus has died.

It's very easy to find Justus, the man Demetrius felt would be a good guide, in the house of Benoysef who is a weaver. Marcellus soon encounters Stephen who says that Demetrius felt he had been recognized by a Roman tribune and left with plans to return when it is safe. Stephen says Demetrius told the entire story of Marcellus' true purpose for being in the country and that one of the men Marcellus saw in the house of Benoysef was John, who was also at Jesus' crucifixion but who apparently didn't recognize Marcellus. Stephen reveals that Jesus' mother was also present at the crucifixion. He then asks to see the robe.

Marcellus and Justus set off on their journey and Marcellus soon learns that Justus isn't eager to talk about Jesus. When Marcellus asks about the fish - referring to the emblem relating to Christianity - Justus purposely misunderstands and says the people of the area eat lots of fish. A few days later, Justus seems to unbend slightly when Marcellus



berates a boy for mistreating their pack asses but still doesn't confide in him. When they arrive at a small town called Sychar, they're met by a young woman and some others, and Justus carries on a private conversation with her, returning later to talk to her alone while Marcellus remains at their camp. This happens again and Marcellus reminds himself not to be angry at the obvious snub, that he has contracted Justus only for a business venture.

Then Justus urges them to hurry, saying that a young crippled girl named Miriam sings in the park at Cana every evening. Marcellus laughingly says that by the time they arrive at the pace Justus has set, he may have lameness in common with the girl. The girl was bitter after becoming lame but one day came out of her grief and began to sing, offering no reason for the change. Justus says the girl's mother is Naomi who is a weaver, and that they will go to her house.

When they see Miriam, Marcellus is amazed at her beauty and her talent. When he meets her the following day, she says the reason for her sudden change from anger to peace is a secret. Marcellus pretends interest in the weaving done by Naomi, touting terms he learned from Benjamin and citing Benjamin as the source of his knowledge. When Justus says that a young Greek named Demetrius had become friends with Stephen and that he had also mentioned Benjamin, Marcellus acts as if it is a coincidence. As Justus wanders off and Naomi goes back in the house for more articles, Miriam tells Marcellus that she knows he isn't a merchant and asks why he is really in the area. He says it's also a secret.

Chapters XI through XIII Analysis

Benjamin begins teaching Demetrius Aramaic and Demetrius helps Benjamin in the shop. Demetrius then teaches Marcellus who presents Benjamin with gifts of wool and cotton. Demetrius and Marcellus then debate the Ten Commandments while practicing their Aramaic. The two are becoming closer through their mutual study. In one discussion, Marcellus says he doesn't understand the commandment regarding sculptures, that even the sculptures of the gods are beautiful. Demetrius says it's unfair to command that "thou shalt not covet," without admonishing the rich man to share.

Anyone who knows the stories of the Bible will realize the foreshadowing in the letter written by Demetrius shortly after he flees. In that letter, he explains that he lives with a young Greek named Stephen who was a follower of Jesus. Historically, Stephen is killed for his belief. This is another indication that Demetrius and Marcellus are eventually going to be drawn more fully into Christianity.

Near Cana, Marcellus finds that Justus is well liked and full of fun. As they talk about the natural hot springs of the area, the talk turns to fishing on the Sea of Galilee and one boy says that the fishermen once caught a lot of fish, but he's hushed before he can talk more. It seems likely the child is referring to one of the miracles reported in the Bible.



Chapters XIV through XVII

Chapters XIV through XVII Summary

Justus and Marcellus make their way toward Sepphoris where Justus lives. On the way, Marcellus purchases a donkey, blanket and saddle and presents it as a gift to Justus' grandson, Jonathan, who is elated and asks Marcellus if he is like Jesus in that he gives away his possessions. He then says that Jesus healed his foot. Justus later questions Marcellus who says that his people have many gods, that he worships none of them and that he doesn't truly believe in any single religion. He apologizes and Justus says that it's not wrong, that Marcellus is a good man, that he wants to believe and that he deserves a religion.

Later, Jonathan tells Marcellus that his friend, Thomas, wanted to ride the donkey and that he refused. Jonathan says that Thomas is lame and he obviously feels bad about his refusal. That night, Jonathan talks to his grandfather about the situation, saying that he wished Jesus had healed Thomas as well. Justus says that Jonathan can do things for Jesus now by doing what Jesus would want of him, and Jonathan comes to the conclusion that he will give Thomas his donkey, though it is obviously an incredibly painful sacrifice for the child to make. Justus and Marcellus agree to take Jonathan along on the next leg of their journey, and as they pack Marcellus says that he wants to visit Miriam. When Justus points out that there is no more garment weavers there with items for sale, Marcellus says he wants to learn more about Jesus. Justus agrees to help, but Marcellus refuses to talk to Jesus' mother and doesn't reveal that he was among the soldiers who crucified Jesus.

Marcellus later tells Miriam that he saw Jesus crucified but again doesn't reveal his role. At Miriam's urging, Justus agrees to tell Marcellus "everything." Justus tells Marcellus that a man need never fear losing his physical body, but should fear only for his soul. Marcellus is angry and Justus apologizes, saying he should have known Marcellus is not ready for the "meat" of the word, but should have milk. Later, Marcellus hears the story of Jesus feeding the multitude and puts it down to generosity - those who had food sharing with those who didn't. He calls that willingness to share a miracle but discounts anything more. Later, Justus tells Marcellus the story of Lydia, a woman afflicted by a malady for many years who had pushed her way through a crowd to touch Jesus' robe and then scamper away, though Jesus had felt the touch and demanded to know who had touched him so that Lydia returned, confessing it was she and reporting that she was healed. Marcellus, knowing firsthand the power of the robe, tells himself that the malady had run its course at that moment but doesn't believe it and admits to Justus that he believes that story.

Camped later outside Capernaum, Marcellus wakes to find a man outside the tent, then learns that it's Demetrius, who tells of his flight, his coming by Marcellus' whereabouts, and that he is now "one of them." Demetrius says it isn't easy, including the admonition to refrain from fighting. When Marcellus says that surely even "they" are allowed to



defend themselves, Demetrius points out that Jesus didn't. Demetrius presents the word "Christian" for Marcellus and explains that he was Baptized, though he was then in a fight and now wonders if he must be baptized again or if he has given up his opportunity to be a Christian.

Demetrius travels ahead to Capernaum with money given to him by Marcellus. A Jew with a food stall accuses him of having stolen the money after Demetrius doesn't buy anything from the man's horrible food and Demetrius is arrested and taken to the Roman fort. When Marcellus arrives in town, he meets a man named Bartholomew who had been with Jesus when a storm arose on the sea. Marcellus admits that Bartholomew is a believable man and that he wouldn't lie, but Marcellus is then faced with deciding what he believes about Bartholomew's story - that Jesus had called for calm and that the sea had instantly been calm. Marcellus considers the story later, and says he could dismiss Bartholomew's story if he hadn't known of Jesus. He says the problem is that if you admit to some act or event, there was no way to draw an arbitrary line saying that some other event was impossible. The conversation continues with Justus telling Marcellus that Jesus is alive. Marcellus says it can't be true because he saw Jesus die. Justus says he isn't refuting that, but that three days after his burial he was seen. Justus describes a series of sightings, including several at which he was present. He says he knows that Jesus is alive and is waiting to see him.

In the prison, Demetrius is deprived of water for the entire day and that evening the Syrian prisoner who is dishing out water purposely spills most of Demetrius' water. Demetrius begins a fight which is eventually interrupted by the captain. Demetrius is taken to the commander, the Roman named Paulus who was second in command to Marcellus at Minoa. Paulus inquires after Marcellus and says that he'd heard Marcellus wasn't well. When Demetrius says that Marcellus had been deeply depressed, Paulus immediately knows that it's because of the robe.

Paulus sends for Marcellus. The Roman soldier who calls for Marcellus identifies him as a tribune, and Justus is immediately certain that his friendship with Marcellus has ended in the betrayal of his fellow worshipers. Marcellus assures him it is not so, but Justus doesn't believe it. Though Marcellus asks Justus to wait for him, Justus rises early to retrieve Jonathan who is visiting the lame Thomas with plans to leave immediately for home.

Chapters XIV through XVII Analysis

After Marcellus learns that Jonathan is going to give away his donkey - a prized possession for the child - he considers the nature of this man named Jesus who would inspire such an action. Marcellus believes that Jesus should have lived, and that he should have been given the opportunity to "impress people." Marcellus still hasn't learned of the resurrection at this point or the fact that Jesus' death was prophesied.

There is a convoluted conversation between Marcellus and Justus regarding the giving of gifts. Justus tells of a wedding in which Jesus arrives late and turns water into wine.



Justus says that Marcellus isn't ready to understand the story and Marcellus says that Jesus was such a good man that the water consumed in his presence tasted like wine. Marcellus later tries to justify the event, saying that the pot had previously held wine and the water carried the aftertaste. Marcellus and Justus then point out that Jesus could have spent time with Miriam, accounting for his being late to the wedding. Marcellus asks why Miriam would have been instructed not to tell of Jesus' visit, if that's what resulted in her changed attitude. It's Justus who says that if no one ever knows of a gift, the giver is rewarded in his own heart - the more important reward than having public acclaim. They go on to compare that to Jonathan's gift of the donkey, noting that it was impossible for that gift to remain a secret. The conversation seems to come to an end when Marcellus points out the flaw in their reasoning - that with Jesus' death, Miriam would have been freed to tell. Justus says merely, "probably not," but doesn't explain.

Justus, pointing to the fact that slavery is wrong, takes offense at the fact that Demetrius stands while everyone else sits for breakfast. Justus goes to stand with Demetrius who urges Justus not to be concerned with the situation. As Justus is still obviously fuming, his grandson Jonathan says that Marcellus treats Demetrius just as Justus treats the boy hired to care for the donkeys. The apt observation causes Justus to admit that he needed to think about the issue in more depth.



Chapters XVIII through XX

Chapters XVIII through XX Summary

Marcellus admits to Paulus that he isn't certain what to think of the stories being told by the Christians about Jesus. Paulus warns Marcellus that there will soon be a series of arrests of Christians because their numbers are growing and they cannot be ignored. He says they've prompted the anger of officials because they are no longer tithing at the temples and that they patronize only each other in business. Paulus says that unless a business owner has a fish on his doorway, he might as well not open for business. Paulus warns Marcellus to leave the country but Marcellus refuses to do so until he's satisfied as to the validity of the story that Jesus has risen from the tomb. Marcellus travels to Jerusalem, cited by Paulus as the place many Christians are openly worshiping Jesus. Based on Paulus' predictions that Christians would soon be arrested, Marcellus is amazed that there are no outward signs of turmoil. As Demetrius and Marcellus walk, Marcellus argues that believing Jesus rose from the dead is ridiculous - a statement with which Demetrius agrees. Then Demetrius says he still believes it to be true, which angers Marcellus until he realizes that he's not arguing with Demetrius, but with himself. Demetrius says he understands because he went through the same process as he came to believe.

In Jerusalem, Demetrius learns that a group of some three hundred claiming to be Christians gather for supper nightly, but soon discovers that the ideals preached by Jesus are falling by the wayside. Stephanos says that all they've accomplished with the organization is to provide free food and lodging for anyone who claims to believe. He says the idea, called Ecclesia, was that Christian families could sell their belongings and live together. The reality is that many had very little so brought almost no money and expected to be cared for in return. Stephanos says another problem is that those who gave much felt they had greater power over the organization. Stephanos goes to Marcellus, asking to see the robe again and tells Marcellus that though he helped put Jesus to death but can be forgiven.

The next morning Marcellus is awakened at daybreak as Roman soldiers search for Christians. Demetrius, at the gathering place for Christians, watches as Simon is arrested and the others ordered to return to their homes, never again meet, and never mention the name "Jesus."

Marcellus goes in search of Demetrius and learns that Simon is to be beheaded. He then sees Stephanos talking to a crowd, saying that they killed the Deliverer and now seek to destroy his prophets. Then someone throws a stone and Stephanos is soon unconscious while Marcellus, unable to face down the entire crowd including a group of soldiers, watches helplessly. As the crowd disperses, Stephanos raises feebly on one elbow, shouts out that he sees Jesus, and dies. Marcellus talks briefly by a soldier who says that he could have sworn Stephanos was calling for someone to rescue him, and Marcellus says that his rescuer was Jesus who is more alive than any man present.



When the shop owner, Benyosef, comes outside, Marcellus says that Jesus may never come for either of them, but that He came for Stephanos. Marcellus leaves word that they are to tell Justus when they next see him that Marcellus fully believes everything he's been told.

That night, Simon - now called Peter because that's the name Jesus bestowed on him - awakes in prison to find himself free. He walks out without incident and finds more than a dozen Christians gathered around Stephanos' body - including Marcellus who notes that his presence is considered suspicious and slips away leaving Demetrius behind. After Stephenos has been buried and Demetrius has given his own room to Simon Peter, Demetrius returns to Marcellus. Marcellus' first words are that he is now a Christian.

When Marcellus returns to Rome, he notes that it's a busy place and that he would never have noticed except for his quiet time away. His parents immediately sense the difference about him and when he explains to his father, the older man is upset. He tries to tell Marcellus that he must not tell the entire story to the emperor, especially any indication that he personally believes it. Lucia meets Demetrius while Marcellus is greeting his mother. Lucia says that Marcellus' return has the servants in a happy uproar and that she believes it is alright for them to be so, as long as it doesn't become a habit. Demetrius points out that even the slaves are people and that, as such, they do have the right to be happy whether someone tells them they can be or not.

Meanwhile, there's plenty of intrigue at court. The Roman official Demetrius beat is still away and his wife had been having an affair with Gaius. She's now angry that Gaius is paying so much attention to Diana though Diana doesn't return the notice.

When Marcellus arrives for his meeting with the emperor, he first meets with Diana and proclaims his love. The emperor is enamored of the idea of living forever but is angry at Marcellus' account of Jesus and his version of living forever. The interview ends with the emperor telling Marcellus that he has to make a choice - he can denounce Jesus and marry Diana or leave without her. As their interview comes to an end, the emperor calls for the robe. When he touches it, he instantly pulls away and orders it removed from his room.

Chapters XVIII through XX Analysis

One of the points Paulus makes is that if Marcellus believes the stories about Jesus, he also has to believe that Jesus is a god. They discuss the fact that if there is going to be someone who rises from the tomb to live and rule again, it would be better if it were someone with good intentions rather than any of the existing Roman rulers. The sarcasm is very thick but it seems that both men, at least to some degree, are seeking something or someone who can be an honorable ruler. Demetrius and Marcellus have the conversation related to why Jesus did not demand a worldly throne. Demetrius says that Jesus would not have done that, and that he began with the common person. Marcellus says the commoners have no courage but Demetrius says that isn't true - that



they don't fear death because they know that they will live forever with Jesus. Demetrius compares the faith Christians have to tools - the faith is worth nothing unless one does something with it.

Marcellus and Simon Peter had made plans to meet at Golgotha prior to Simon's arrest and Marcellus now goes there to wait for Simon Peter insisting that he'll keep the appointment. They meet and Marcellus says that he will return to Rome and report everything to the emperor though Simon Peter says that the emperor will want proof and that Marcellus will be punished for saying Jesus has come to set up a new kingdom. As they head back toward town, Simon Peter stops to talk to a lame beggar. The man asks for money but Simon Peter says he has none. Then he tells the man he will give what he has to give, takes the man's hands and instructs him to walk, which he does. At Marcellus' questions, he says only that he felt the power of Jesus strongly at that moment, as he has since his release from prison. In fact, others can see this new sense of authority in Simon Peter. It was noted the moment he arrived at the house where the Christians were gathered.

While in prison, Simon Peter says that he could better face his discomfort and his death sentence if he felt that he was leaving behind a strong body of believers. He now realizes that his press to encourage believers to sell their belongings and live together was impatience on his part, and that he should have followed Jesus' teachings - allowing the belief to rise naturally like yeast in bread dough.

While waiting for Simon Peter to arrive at the appointed time at Golgotha, Marcellus tells Demetrius that Simon will come. He says that Simon's unexplained escape from prison is an embarrassment to the authority and that they really don't want to make any more of it than necessary. Marcellus predicts that Simon Peter is - at least for the moment - safe from arrest and persecution.



Chapters XXI through XXV

Chapters XXI through XXV Summary

Diana and Marcellus again meet the following day, just before noon, and Marcellus tries to tell her about Jesus. She calls it a nice story and tells him that it need not affect them. Marcellus tries to explain, but it's obvious she simply doesn't understand the depth of the story. She tells him that she'll always love him, knowing they won't be together again. The emperor summarily dismisses him and he's ordered to leave immediately. He learns that Demetrius has been detained, having fought when Marcellus' belongings were packed up.

Marcellus jumps ship at Capua carrying the heavy gift of gold his father had given him. Marcellus notes that the gift was generous and seemed almost to be a way of saying that Marcellus was free to go where he wished. Marcellus stops at a farm that grows small melons and is offered work. He's told there's a need for a scrivener, but when he arrives at the house the owner of the farms - Kaeso - rants about all help and Marcellus refuses to be browbeaten. He tells Kaeso that those who have need of his job may be forced to listen, but that he is not. He goes to the field, picks melons for awhile and learns some about the other laborers. When Marcellus is summoned to the house, he stops his work, distributes the melons he'd picked among the other laborers, including one man who had derided him. At the house, Kaeso again yells at Marcellus until Marcellus says that he won't stand for the screaming, and that he believes that Kaeso wants Marcellus as his scrivener mainly because he is dissatisfied and believes Marcellus has an answer. Kaeso doesn't deny the claim. When Marcellus demonstrates that he can read and write in multiple languages, Kaeso says that he wants him because others will know that he has a scholar in his employ. Kaeso's wife, Antonio, later says that Marcellus is depriving Kaeso the pleasure he would have in knowing that Marcellus is the son of a senator. In fact, Kaeso has not asked his name.

Marcellus soon meets Antony, Antonio's son, who loves to sculpt despite his father's opposition. He first shows Marcellus a sculpture of two gladiators but Marcellus correctly assumes Antony has no interest in fighting and proposes a sculpture of a bathing pool surrounded by interesting people instead. Later, Kaeso says that Marcellus need not entertain Antony. Marcellus says that Antony's desire to create is the same as the desire that drove Kaeso, but that Kaeso's plantation is complete and he seeks an outlet in clay - a concept that Kaeso understands and soon becomes interested in Antony's work. The pool soon becomes a real project to be completed on the plantation property, and everyone knows Marcellus had something to do with it. Every evening, Marcellus tells stories of Jesus. Marcellus encourages some changes - the increased wages of an overseer and on one occasion Antony offering to help a laborer with her heavy basket, which earned him the praise of many. As the season comes to a close, Marcellus prepares to leave, saying to Antonio that he believes his work is complete and referring to more than the plantation's seasonal accounting.



Marcellus tells a final story - that of Jesus' resurrection - then departs, not understanding why he must go to Rome, only that he is being led to go there. At the town of Alatri, Marcellus learns that Gaius is dead, that he was probably poisoned, that Lucia has married Tullus who is a good friend of Marcellus, and that Marcellus is believed dead after having hurled himself into the sea.

Meanwhile, the empress tricks the emperor into naming her grandson Caligula as his successor to the throne after the death of Gaius. Demetrius has been appointed Diana's bodyguard. When word comes of Marcellus' drowning, Demetrius reassures her that it isn't true. When he receives a melon with a fish lightly carved in the skin, he shows Diana, using it as proof that Marcellus is alive and well. Every night, Marcellus works at making rope and secrets what he needs to get Diana away from the palace, if the need should arrive. When it becomes clear that the empress intends for Diana to become Caligula's "diversion," Diana agrees to leave with Demetrius. They make their way toward Rome and are taken in by Kaeso and his family. Later, the newly-appointed emperor Caligula circulates the rumor that Demetrius kidnapped Diana.

Marcellus watches the emperor's funeral and contacts the family slave named Marcipor with the information that he is alive and the question of whether he should return to his family. Marcipor says there are some four thousand Christians in the city and that forty of their leaders are meeting in nearby tombs. Demetrius later arrives at the home of Marcellus' father, badly wounded and Marcipor confides that Demetrius is alive in the catacombs. Lucia, home for a visit, says her husband has gone to raid the catacombs. Marcipor goes to find Marcellus. Marcellus and Simon Peter return to the house where they're told Demetrius is quickly losing ground and isn't likely to live long. Simon Peter prays for him throughout the night and Demetrius is eating breakfast the following day when the family awakes. It's understood that Demetrius must leave at once or risk being captured, and Gallio agrees to take him in search of a ship going to Greece. When Marcellus meets up with Diana, they agree to marry immediately, and do so.

Upon their return to Rome, Marcellus is arrested and Diana ordered to dinner with the emperor. There, Marcellus is formally charged and ordered to defend himself. He explains that he serves Jesus who wants not an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly one. When he's sentenced to death, Diana leaves the table and says that she has no desire to remain in an empire that is failing because of an uncaring emperor, earning herself the death penalty as well. They leave the room together, under guard.

Chapters XXI through XXV Analysis

The emperor talks with Diana about the Christian movement that's sweeping the area. He tells her that it will eventually begin to falter, despite the fact that it seems strong at the moment. He says that the men who run it will begin to offer offices in return for favors, will squabble as the organization gains strength and will eventually fall. This seems to be an analogy of Rome's past and future. The emperor says that as long as Christianity is "afoot," it will remain solid, but that it will falter when it has a horse to ride. This seems to be referring to the weakness of a young, fledgling organization that grows



into a strong one. He seems to be saying that Rome would be better off if the country had remained "afoot."

Marcellus' handling of Kaeso regarding wages is interesting. Marcellus tells Kaeso that he will take whatever Kaeso believes him (Marcellus) to be worth. Kaeso says that he paid the last scrivener a set amount and Marcellus responds that it's interesting that Kaeso - a man of obvious wealth - can afford so little, but doesn't object to the wage and doesn't ask for more. Kaeso immediately doubles the offer.

The new emperor is a mere boy of sixteen. He's a frail youngster who has been overindulged to the point that he believes nothing matters except his own comfort and desires. That's why he seeks out Diana. Though the emperor is dying, Caligula needs "diversion." It seems that his grandmother, the empress, is so interested in indulging the child as he prepares to take the throne that she will do anything to appease him. However, it's noted that he goes so far in his pursuit of Diana that he's admonished for it. It's not clear whether Diana's love for Marcellus is the driving force that makes her willing to run away or if she's merely realizing the extent of her vulnerability without Marcellus to care for her.

Diana's actions while on the melon farm are very similar to those of Marcellus. She is anxious to perform the tasks she's given, though she is actually working in the vineyards only to avoid detection by the guards who are searching for her. When Diana asks for instruction, it's met with surprise. When she's told she's expected only to pretend to work, Diana objects. This is exactly the role Marcellus has taken with his newfound Christianity. Though it's pointed out that the movement would benefit by having him as a member in name only, he seems intent on working.

Diana seems to suddenly realize the depth of Marcellus' conviction regarding Christianity only when he stands up for himself to the emperor. It's then that she refuses to continue to stand on the side of Rome. Diana isn't the first to consider that Rome is headed for its downfall because of the corruption.

The fate of Diana and Marcellus is not spelled out, but it's assumed that the emperor's command that they be put to death is carried out. Before he calls for Marcellus, he's warned that the Christians are not afraid of death and won't back down - a fact that he wagers on. When Marcellus' words anger the emperor to issue the sentence, the emperor expects to be applauded. He's angry and becomes sullen when he is the only person in the room laughing with glee at the impending death of the son of the senator.



Characters

Marcellus

Marcellus is a young Roman Tribune and the son of a Roman Senator. As the story opens, he admits to his sister that he had attended a banquet for a high Roman official who would one day likely become emperor, and that he had laughed at the fact that the official was snoring while an ode to him was being read. Marcellus' laughter costs him dearly and the official immediately arranges for Marcellus to be sent to Minoa - the assignment obviously a punishment. Marcellus knows that the discipline in Minoa is very lax and resolves to immediately make an impact. He does so, demanding - and receiving - order among the soldiers. His demands are willingly met the moment he shows that he cares for his men by making an injured soldier comfortable.

That same kind of caring is evident in many of Marcellus' dealings and actions, even before he accepts being a Christian. When Demetrius is forced to run away, Marcellus offers the slave his freedom. As the two study a new language together and discuss the prophecies that Jesus' life and death seem to fulfill, they become more like friends than slave and master. Marcellus' dedication to his job, his family and friends is an example of how he acts when he becomes a Christian. Forced to choose between his claims of Jesus' divinity and other earthly concerns, he forsakes all for Jesus - as he believes is correct. He shows that dedication to his death.

Demetrius

A Corinthian who is purchased by Lucia's father as a slave. He's angry about his status, and Lucia's father, seeming to know how to best reach the young man, releases him personally from the holding cell and then, a short distance later, releases his manacles. Demetrius is then given directions to the villa where he is to serve and instructed to go there. Lucia's father says it gives Demetrius time to consider whether to serve the family or run away, and that his decision to serve will make him more faithful. Upon arrival at the villa, Demetrius pushes past everyone and jumps into the pool. Lucia's father says that he is not to be reprimanded because the sight of the water probably drove him crazy. Demetrius is to serve Lucia's brother, Marcellus. As Demetrius and Marcellus are about to leave for Marcellus' duty station in Minoa, Demetrius gives Lucia a ring, his only keepsake, asking her to keep it for him.

Demetrius gets his first look at Jesus well before Marcellus sees Him. Demetrius is taken with Jesus' attitude. He says that their eyes met for a moment and that Demetrius saw a loneliness there, despite the fact that Jesus was surrounded by people who were calling for him to be their king. When Demetrius sees the crucifixion, he is convinced that Jesus is an innocent man, but he never blames Marcellus for his role in Jesus' death. Demetrius is dedicated to Marcellus and that dedication is never put to the test for Demetrius as it is for Marcellus. Demetrius is never forced to decide whether to claim



Jesus or face some penalty. It could be that Demetrius' faith - as that of a mere slave - is less of a threat than that of Marcellus.

Justus

A Christian who traveled with Jesus and later served as a guide to Marcellus as he pretended to be a merchant but was really gathering information about Jesus. Justus had first hand knowledge of many of the miracles - including the resurrection of Jesus - and eventually comes to trust Marcellus enough to share that knowledge.

Marcus Lucan Gallio

Father of Marcellus and a Roman Senator, Gallio knows the conditions of the fort at Minoa where Marcellus is sent and is angry at the assignment. When Marcellus returns from his second trip to Jerusalem and professes his faith to his father, Gallio's only concern is how Marcellus can relay this information to the emperor without putting himself in jeopardy.

Cornelia Vispania Gallio

Marcellus's mother. Cornelia is a quiet, undemanding woman who is loved by her servants because she never makes a request unless it's something for her own comfort. When she learns that her husband has made a loud speech in the senate and could incur the wrath of the local official, she's upset. By the next morning, she's over it simply because she isn't capable of remaining upset. When she learns that Marcellus is to be given a military command, she's elated until she learns that he won't be returning in victory because the post he's sent to is used chiefly for exile.

Paulus

The Centurion who serves as commander of the fort at Minoa until Marcellus arrives. Paulus explains the situation related to the Jews in the area, describing the many poor and sick who go to the "villainous old frauds" in search of healing and restoration. These "frauds" are apparently the priests and wealthy Jews who are entrusted with the religious well-being of their people but who would never allow a revolution against the Romans. Paulus goes so far as to say that the Roman Empire relies on the situation for stability and that without it, Rome would fall. Paulus says that his attitude on this subject and his mistake of speaking it aloud, earned him the exile to Minoa. Paulus and Marcellus become friends and Paulus attempts to save Marcellus from the pain of seeing the crucifixion, getting him drunk prior to the event and shielding him from seeing the nailing process. Paulus much later encounters Marcellus again and their friendship picks up exactly where it left off.



Lucia

Lucia is sister to Marcellus. She's a bright girl and has the ability to think about things, but is also somewhat spoiled. When Lucia encounters a set of twins who are newly acquired slaves and are obviously frightened, she takes pity on them and admits that it's because she wonders how she would feel in their situation. However, she later reminds them to behave. When Demetrius leaves with Marcellus, Lucia accepts a ring that is his only personal possession with the promise that she'll keep it against the time when he returns. At that time, she notes that even though he is a slave, she owes him for his willingness to go with her brother. When Demetrius returns, she quarrels with Demetrius over the status and rights of a slave.

Diana

Diana is a good friend of Lucia's who becomes interested in Marcellus. As Marcellus is being sent to Minoa, Diana rushes to tell him goodbye. They make no promises, but she waits for his return. She is granddaughter of the emperor and seems to be constantly fending off advances of high Roman officials. When Marcellus is sentenced to death for his Christianity, she stands with him, accepting the same punishment.

Theodosia

The daughter of an innkeeper in Athens. Theodosia is a good girl but something of a rebel. She spends time talking to Demetrius, though to be caught doing so would mean she would be reprimanded. It's when a Roman official takes liberties with her that Demetrius gets into a fight and is forced to flee.

Marcipor

A slave in the home of Marcellus and a man who befriended Demetrius upon his arrival at the home. It's noted that some who don't know the details of Marcipor and Demetrius think the two are related. Marcipor is also a Christian and helps find Marcellus when Demetrius is wounded.

Simon Peter

Another of those who traveled with Jesus and who comes to know Demetrius and Marcellus. Simon Peter is in Rome when Demetrius is wounded, spends the night praying over him and sees him returned to health.

Stephanos

A good friend of Demetrius and one of the strong followers of Jesus. Stephanos is among those to be arrested as the Christians are being rounded up by the soldiers, but is stoned in the street instead. Marcellus watches, unable to stop the attack. Stephanos lies in the street, apparently dead, but then rises up and calls out that he sees Jesus. It's this act that seems to serve as the catalyst for Marcellus' own conversion.



Objects/Places

Minoa

The fort where Marcellus is to be stationed.

Jerusalem

Where Marcellus and his men spend the Passover week and where Marcellus oversees the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Vestris

The ship on which Marcellus returns to Rome after being stationed in Minoa.

Clytia

The ship on which Marcellus and Demetrius sail for Greece.

Athens

Where Marcellus and Demetrius travel after Marcellus' breakdown.

The House of Eupolis

Where Marcellus' father had stayed while studying in Athens as a young man and where Marcellus is welcomed.

The Robe

The garment worn by Jesus and taken from him during his crucifixion. It's the garment Marcellus wins in a game of chance and the garment which Marcellus comes to believe has supernatural powers.

Villa Jovis

The palace where the emperor lives and where Diana stays after Marcellus leaves for Minoa.



The House of Benoysef

Where Demetrius stays while in Jerusalem after having run away.

Sepphoris

The Galilean village where Justus lives.

Capua

The town near where Marcellus jumps ship and is believed to have drowned.

Arpino

Where Marcellus works as a scrivener on a melon farm.



Themes

The Desire for Christianity

There are a large number of the characters who are seeking the peace of Christianity, though many of them don't know what they're looking for. Marcellus is one of those as the story opens and later comes to recognize that longing in others. For example, when he arrives at Arpina, he encounters the landowner - Kaeso. Kaeso is a wealthy man who is always angry. He yells at everyone and has no interest in being part of his son's life. The first time Marcellus meets him, he refuses to work as a scrivener. Then Marcellus tells Kaeso outright that he's searching for something. Marcellus is correct in that assumption and probably recognized it because he himself had recently been in the same situation.

In Marcellus' case, he was obviously open to the power of Jesus' life because he continually asked questions and truly listened to the answers. A person who wasn't earnestly looking for the peace of Christianity would have simply put the information he was given down to tall tales or outright lies. Instead, Marcellus searched for the truth about Jesus, His life and the kingdom Jesus promised.

It's interesting that both Marcellus and Demetrius are warriors, but both are willing to accept the peace they feel when they finally give themselves to Jesus.

Faith

Marcellus' final act - that of refusing to denounce Jesus even on threat of death - can arguably be cited as one of his greatest examples of faith. Marcellus says that Jesus has promised everlasting life for those who believe, and that there's to be a kingdom waiting past the bounds of the earth when a Christian dies, as long as he has held true to the cause and his faith. Marcellus has faith that Jesus' teachings are true and that he will travel on to a higher reward. An interesting fact is that he is so certain of this that he allows his wife, a young woman he seems to truly love, to follow his lead. It may seem that Marcellus' responsible act would have been to insist that Diana remove herself from the situation. But Marcellus has the faith that Diana truly believes as well, and trusts that Jesus will care for both of them at the moment of their deaths.

The faith of those who followed Jesus is also interesting. The book held true to scripture in that Peter, fearing for his own life, denied having known Jesus. Later, Stephenos - or Stephen as he's called in the Bible - has his faith rewarded and calls out that he sees Jesus coming to him as he dies.



Coming of Age

Several characters mature over the course of the story. One of those is Demetrius. Demetrius is an angry young man when he's purchased as a gift for Marcellus. Over time, he comes to accept his role as a slave and it's noted that he always puts Marcellus above himself and that he is willing to lay down his life for Marcellus. While he remains conscious of his role as a slave, he also seems to harbor some desire toward Marcellus' sister, Lucia. When Marcellus prepares to leave for Minoa, Demetrius doesn't hesitate to say that he will go with Marcellus. Before they leave, Demetrius gives Lucia a ring that seems to be a symbol of Demetrius himself. He asks her to keep it safe and becomes so bold as to slip the ring on her hand. Demetrius believes that slavery is wrong but believes that he has been treated well. The Demetrius of this time would likely never say anything to anyone of his master's family on the topic.

When he returns as a Christian, Demetrius seems more understanding of the hold the owners have over the slaves and the wrongness of it. When Lucia says that she hopes the slaves will not make a habit of their rowdy behavior, it's Demetrius who gently reproves her attitude, saying that she may own the people but doesn't have a right to say when they may be happy.

Style

Point of View

The story is written in third person from a limited point of view. The perspective varies between several characters, usually focused on either Marcellus or Demetrius. This perspective is really the only option available to the author because Marcellus and Demetrius are not always together. The point of view is not overly limiting because the reader learns what happens once the characters reunite. For example, Demetrius tells Marcellus all about his adventures and his arrival in Jerusalem when they reunite.

There is also a lapse in the story as Marcellus and Demetrius return home. During that voyage, the reader is left to see the story through the eyes of Lucia, Marcellus' sister. When that occurs, the reader learns about the voyage from Demetrius as he explains Marcellus' illness to Gallio, Marcellus' father.

Setting

The story is set in ancient Rome, Greece and the region of Jerusalem. The time is the months leading up to and following the death of Jesus. Both time and place are real with historically accurate facts, though some of the characters are not factual. The details offered of Jesus' crucifixion - including the Roman soldiers who gambled for his robe - is as the story told in the Bible. The death of Stephanos - or Stephen - is also Biblically accurate.

In addition to the physical location, the fact of family life and court intrigues are also representative of the place and period. For example, emperors were often considered mad by the time of their old age and empresses were often filled with hatred and spite as they sought to hold on to their own places in court. This is evidenced by the scene in which Tiberius is tricked into naming a sixteen-year-old boy as his successor.

Language and Meaning

The story is easy to read and comprehend and will be more so for anyone with an understanding of the Bible stories of Jesus, his crucifixion and the aftermath of his death. There are words that are specific to the time and most readers will likely encounter some words that are unfamiliar. In many cases, these are architectural words and their meanings may be discerned from the context.

There story is divided between dialog and exposition with both seeming reasonable and believable. The dialog may seem overly modern but is likely necessary for reader understanding. While an antiquated dialog may have been more realistic, it would likely have been more difficult to fully understand. Some readers may find points of contention



in which facts do not seem entirely historical. For example, there is no evidence that the Roman soldier who won the robe came to be a Christian.

Structure

The book is divided into twenty-five chapters. In keeping with the idea that the main characters lived in Rome, the chapters are titled in Roman numerals. There are no title chapters to give a clue as to the contents of any particular chapter. The chapters are roughly divided into events. For example, chapter XIV (twenty-four) ends with Marcellus and Justus talking about Miriam and the secret of how she came to have such a beautiful voice and how she came to change her life from the bitterness to acceptance. As the next chapter opens, they arrive at the village where Miriam lives. Chapter five ends with Marcellus learning about the trip to Jerusalem and chapter six begins as they begin to travel.



Quotes

"My son,' Gallio interrupted himself, 'there is always something fundamentally wrong with a rich man or a king who pretends to be religious. Let the poor and helpless invoke the gods. That is what the gods are for - to distract the attention of the weak from their otherwise intolerable miseries.'" Chapter I, Page 15

"Yes, sir,' assented Paulus, his gusty storm having blown out - 'but you will find that these damned scoundrels in Jerusalem know good wine when they see it, and aren't mean about sharing it with the Roman legions. That' - he added, with cool mockery - 'is to encourage us to be on the lookout for any foolhardy patriot who speaks bout the lost kingdom.'" Chapter III, Page 58

"They're authentic - the gods. Some of them want war, some want peace, some of them don't know what they want - except an annual feast-day and a big parade." -Paulus, Chapter IV, Page 64

"I don't know,' mumbled Demetrius, in a puzzled voice, 'but - he is something more important than a king.'" Chapter IV, Page 74

"This tatterdemalion throng wanted him to be king; wanted him to live at the Insula, instead of Pilate. Then the few, who had helped him into power, would begin to make themselves great. But Jerusalem would continue to be what she was now. A change of masters wouldn't help the people." Chapter V, Page 84

"After the Clytia had swayed to and fro sleepily for a couple of stadia, he mumbled, 'Lucretius was crazy. He knew too much about the unknowable. He sat along - and thought - and thought - and thought - until he lost his mind ... That's what I'm doing, Demetrius.'" Chapter VIII, Page 136

"Maybe this will seem a crazy thing to say: it was almost as if this Galilean had come from some far-away country where people were habitually honest and friendly and did not quarrel; some place where the streets were clean and no one was greedy, and there were no beggars, no thieves, no fights, no courts, no prisons, no soldiers; no rich, no poor." Chapter VIII, Page 147

"Thou shalt not covet. Good advice; no doubt. But is it fair to tell the poor man he mustn't be envious of the rich man's goods - and then forget to admonish the rich man



that he has no right to be so selfish?" - Demetrius discussing the Ten Commandments, Chapter XI, Page 194

"The man should have lived! He should have been given a chance to impress more people! A spirit like that - if it contrived to get itself going - could make the world over into a fit habitation for men of good will! But Jesus was dead! A little handful of untutored country people in Galilee would remember for a few years - and the great light would be extinguished." Chapter XIV, Page 246

"If he said, 'Put down your crutches!' you would put them down. If he said 'Pay back the money you have stolen!' you would pay it back." Miriam explaining Jesus to Marcellus, Chapter XV, Page 270

"By the gods! - when crazy old Tiberius dies, I'll wager he stays dead! By the way - do you mean to go back and tell the old fool this story? He'll believe it, you know, and it will scare the very liver out of him!" Chapter XVIII, Page 337

"There was to be no further mention, in public or private, of the name of Jesus the Galilean, who has been found guilty of treason, blasphemy, and offenses against the peace of Jerusalem. This edict was to be considered the first and last official warning." Chapter XIX, Page 356

"If you tell Tiberius what you have told me, you will be just one more monkey in his menagerie." - Marcellus' father, Chapter XX, Page 386

"It does possess a peculiar power, Your Majesty, for those who believe that it was worn by the Son of God." - Marcellus explaining the power of the robe, Chapter XXV, Page 506



Topics for Discussion

Describe Marcellus as the story opens. What are the personality traits that make him a good soldier? Will these translate to his being a good Christian? Why or why not?

What is the relationship between Marcellus and his family? What are the family connections to the government?

What is Lucia's attitude about slavery? How do those differ from her father's attitudes? From Marcellus' attitudes? What does Demetrius eventually tell Lucia about a slave's right to happiness?

How does Demetrius get his first look at Jesus? What is his first impression? How does that impression grow/change as he learns more about Jesus?

Who is Paulus? How does he try to shield Marcellus from his duty in the crucifixion of Jesus? How does Marcellus come by the robe? What are his intentions with regard to the robe at that time?

What impact does the robe have on Marcellus? on Demetrius? on others? What is the source of those impressions?

What is the relationship between Demetrius and Marcellus as the story begins? How does Christianity change their relationship? Why does Demetrius continually refuse his freedom?

What actions does Marcellus take that indicates his changed state?