

## "Bibliography on Eunuchry in the Bible and Antiquity"

**Eunuch:** u'-nuk (caric; spadon; eunouchos):

- A eunuch is literally 'a keeper of the bed.'
- *Eunouchos* conveys the idea of superintendent of the bedchamber, bed keeper, bed guard.
- The definition and official position of a eunuch included men who were incapable of marriage, not sexually attracted to women, those who were asexual (or not feel attraction to either sex), those unwilling to marry a woman for personal or religious reason, those who had been castrated, or in rare cases those born with genital defects which made siring of children impossible. In antiquity, eunuchs included castrated and physically intact males who were incapable of or not desirous of sexual encounters with women.
- The kings of Israel and Judah followed their royal neighbors in employing eunuchs (1) as guardians of the harem (2Ki 9:32; Jer 41:16), and (2) in military and other official posts (1Sa 8:15 margin; 1Ki 22:9 margin; 2Ki 8:6 margin; 2Ki 23:11 the King James Version margin; 2Ki 24:12,13 margin; 2Ki 25:19 margin; 1Ch 28:1 margin; 2Ch 18:8 margin; Jer 29:2; 34:19; 38:7; compare Ge 37:36; 40:2,7; Ac 8:27).
- Josephus informs us that eunuchs were a normal feature of the courts of the Herods (Ant., XV, vii, 4; XVI, viii, 1). From the single reference to the practice in the Gospels (Mt 19:12), we infer that the existence and purpose of eunuchs as a class were known to the Jews of Jesus' time. Jesus speaks of three classes of eunuchs for whom his discussion of 'divorce' in marriage does not hold.

### Further Reading

P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., "Biblical Detective Work Identifies the Eunuch," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 2002.

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