

## Josephus

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by Ethan R. Longhenry

...Josephus is most famous for speaking of Jesus in Antiquities 18.3.3:

**“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”**

The authenticity of this passage, sometimes called the *Testimonium Flavianum*, is highly disputed. All extant manuscripts include this section, but many find it suspect because of its claim that Jesus is the Christ, a confession not otherwise seen or evident in Josephus. Therefore, some believe this passage to be a complete interpolation while many others believe that Josephus indeed mentioned Jesus' execution but a later Christian scribe expanded the reference. The *Testimonium* is quoted by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* in the early fourth century, and Origen may have known of it in the third century. Nevertheless, even if there were some later expansion of the *Testimonium*, Josephus still most likely makes some mention of Jesus, His execution by Pilate, and the existence of Christians, and thus represents one of the earliest non-Christian witnesses to the story of Jesus and the Christians.

Josephus' fellow Jews considered him a traitor for not dying at Jotapata and defecting to the Romans, and yet he still remained a stranger among the Romans of his day. His writings maintain much bias and he is frequently attempting to justify himself. Nevertheless, Josephus' telling of the first century and the end of Second Temple Judaism is the account that has been preserved to this day. Josephus is not inspired nor ought to be considered part of the New Testament, his witness to Jesus, other figures in the New Testament, and the background to not only the first century but Second Temple Judaism in general is of great benefit to our understanding.

— *excerpt from article*

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