

Early References to Jesus Outside the New Testament

by Ferrell Jenkins

Jewish Sources

Josephus (37/38 A.D. – ca. 95 A.D..)

- *Antiquities* XVIII.3.3
- *Antiquities* XX.9.1
- Reference to John the Baptist: *Antiquities* XVIII.5.2
- Slavonic addition to the *Jewish War* II.9.3 (This is very elaborate but highly questionable)

Gentile Sources

Tacitus (ca. A.D. 55-117)

- *Annals* XV.44.2

Suetonius (ca. A.D. 75-160)

- Claudius XXV. Suetonius mentions CHRESTUS, thought to be Christ. He also mentions the Christians in *Nero* XVI.

Pliny (A.D. 111)

- Pliny mentioned Christ when he wrote to the Emperor Trajan. *Letters* X.XCVI-XCVII.

Additional Notes

In addition to the primary sources one may have access to these quotations in the following collections:

- C.K. Barrett, *The New Testament Backgrounds* [Harper].
- Henry Bettenson (editor), *Documents of the Christian Church* [Oxford].
- D.J. Theron, *Evidence of Tradition* [Baker]
- One may also consult the standard Bible Dictionaries and church history works.

Editor's Note: The above information is given for those Bible students who have been confronted with the question of the historical existence and accuracy of the life of Jesus Christ. There is abundant evidence from both Jewish and Gentiles sources from the first century regarding the life and existence of Jesus Christ.

Josephus was a general in the Jewish army who was captured by the Romans during the conflict that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He recorded that destruction, and in his works he writes from the Jewish view of the Bible from Genesis until that time. **Tacitus** was a senator and historian of the Roman Empire. His two major works — the *Annals* and the *Histories* — examine the reigns of the Roman emperors Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, and those who reigned in the year 69 A.D. **Suetonius** was a Roman historian who belonged to the equestrian order who wrote during the imperial era of the Roman Empire. **Pliny** the Younger was governor of Pontus/Bithynia from 111-113 A.D. His exchange of letters with the Emperor Trajan mentions Christ and Christians in one exchange. As governor, he participated in the persecution of Christians in the first and second centuries. These references can be located on the internet and read for your education.

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