

Encountering Jesus

Saturday, January 13, 2018 | Featuring Dr. Wave Nunnally

Session 1: What can we know about Jesus from Evidence Outside the Bible?

- I. *Will the Real Jesus Stand Up?*** *A Brief Comparison of the Person, Teaching, and Works of the Jesus of the Canonical Gospels and the Apocryphal Gospels.* Enrichment 13.4(Fall, 2008)90-98.

To access the study online, please visit
enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200804/200804_090_Real_Jesus.cfm

II. *Historical Evidence in Ancient Texts*

Josephus Flavius (c. AD 37-100) *Antiquities* 18:63-64

“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders”

(Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and Its Implications*, 1971).

Josephus Flavius *Antiquities* 20:200

“...Ananus [the high priest] thought that he had a favorable opportunity because [the procurator] Festus was dead and Albinus [his successor] was still on the way. And so he convened the judges of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned.”

Thallos Histories (c. AD 55)

(commented on in Sextus Julianus Africanus [AD 160-240] *History of the World*)

“In the third [book] of his Histories, Thallos calls this darkness [that occurred at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion] an eclipse of the sun, which seems to me to be wrong” (cf. Mk 15:33).

Mara ben Serapion (c. AD 73)

“What advantage did...the Jews gain by killing their wise king?”

Pliny the Younger (AD 61-112) Governor of Bithynia

Letter to Emperor Trajan 10.96 (AD 111)

“...they [Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before sunrise and reciting an antiphonal hymn to Christ as God...”

Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 55-100) *Annals* 15.44.2-3

“Nero substituted as culprits and punished in the most unusual ways those hated for their shameful acts, whom the crowd called Chrestianoī. The founder of this name, Christ, had suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate. Suppressed for a time, the deadly superstition erupted again not only in Judea, the origin of this evil, but also in the city [of Rome], where all things horrible and shameful from everywhere come together and become popular. Therefore...they were covered with the skins of wild animals and torn to death by dogs; or they were crucified and when the day ended, they were burned as torches.”

Suetonius (c. AD 69-130) *Life of Claudius* 25.4

“He [Claudius] expelled the Jews from Rome [in AD 49; cf. Acts 18:2], since they were always making disturbances because of the instigator *Chrestus* [a common Latin misspelling of the Greek *Christos*].”

Suetonius *Life of Nero* 16.2

“Punishment was inflicted upon the Christiani, a class of people of a new and evil-doing superstition.”

Lucian of Samosata (c. AD 115-200) *The Death of Peregrinus* 11, 13

“[Peregrinus] was second only to that one whom they still worship today, the man in Palestine who was crucified because he brought this new form of initiation into the world. That first lawgiver of theirs persuaded them that they are all brothers the moment they transgress and deny the Greek gods and begin worshipping that crucified philosopher and living by his laws.”

Celsus True Doctrine (between AD 117-138)
as cited in *Origen's Against Celsus* 1.28, 32, 38

“...He fabricated the story of his birth from a virgin...he came from a Jewish village and from a poor country woman who gained her substance by spinning...she was driven out by her husband who was a carpenter by trade, when she was convicted of adultery and had a child by a soldier named Panthera after she had been driven out by...her husband.....and while she was wondering disgracefully, she secretly bore Jesus...because [Jesus] was poor, he hired himself out as a laborer in Egypt, and there learned certain magical powers which the Egyptians are proud to have. He returned full of pride in these powers and gave himself the title of God.”

Grafitto of Alexamenos (c. AD 150)

“Alexamenos worships his god, Christ.”



FIGURE 1

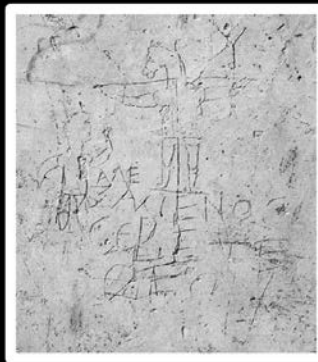


FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3

Tosefta *Shabbat* 11:15; Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 104b

“It is taught that Rabbi Eliezer said to the Sages, ‘Did not Ben Stada bring spells from Egypt in a cut in his flesh?Ben Stada is Ben Pantera. Rabbi Hisda said, ‘The husband was Stada; the lover was Pantera. The mother was Miriam the dresser of women’s hair...she was false to her husband.’”

Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 107b

“Jesus escaped to Egypt...And a teacher has said, ‘Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray.’”

Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 43a

“The rabbis taught: Jesus had five disciples—Mattai, Naqai, Netser, Buni, and Todah.”

Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 43a; 67a

“They crucified him on the Eve of Passover...because he practiced magic and enticed Israel to go astray.”

Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 106a

“Rabbi Yochanan said, ‘In the beginning [he was] a prophet and in the end [he was] a diviner.’ Rabbi Papa said, ‘This is what they say: She was the descendent of princes and governors, but played the harlot with carpenters.’”

Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 106a

“Woe to him who makes himself alive by the name of God!”

III. Conclusions

- There was a man called Jesus (*all 17*).
- He was from a Jewish village (*Celsus*).

- His earthly father was a carpenter (*Celsus; rabbis*).
- His mother's name was Mary (*rabbis*).
- Mary was of royal ancestry (*rabbis*).
- He and His family were poor (*Celsus*).
- He claimed virgin birth (*Celsus*).
- His opponents claimed that Mary was unfaithful (*Celsus; rabbis*).
- His opponents claimed that He was illegitimate (*Celsus; rabbis*).
- He escaped to Egypt and later returned to Israel (*Celsus; rabbis*).
- He had a brother called "James" (*Josephus*).
- He was known as a teacher (*Josephus; Lucian; rabbis*).
- He had disciples (*Josephus; rabbis*).
- He founded a new community of "brothers" based on his "laws" [= "teachings"] (*Lucian*).
- He was known to be wise (*Josephus; Mara; Lucian*).
- He was known to be virtuous and godly (*Josephus*).
- He was known as a prophet (*rabbis*).
- He worked miracles, though opponents claimed He used magic (*Josephus, Celsus; rabbis*).
- His opponents claimed that He "led Israel astray" (*rabbis*).
- He was called "the Christ" (*Josephus; Pliny; Tacitus; Suetonius*).
- He claimed divinity (*Celsus*).
- He was worshipped by his followers as God (*Pliny; Lucian; Alexamenos Graffito*).
- He was condemned by a Jewish court (*Mara*) on the Eve of Passover (*rabbis*).
- However, He was crucified (*Lucian; Alexamenos Graffito; rabbis*) by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (*Josephus; Tacitus*).
- His earliest followers claimed He was resurrected from the dead (*Josephus; rabbis*).
- He "was perhaps the Messiah" (*Josephus*).

A. In other words, every major assertion of New Testament authors about Jesus' biography (Who He was and what He did) is supported by first and second century evidence outside the Bible!

B. A fifth Gospel: the “Gospel of Public Domain”

- The contents of this “Gospel” corresponds PERFECTLY with the gospel being proclaimed publicly in Acts, and written about in the Epistles (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15, etc.).
- The “Gospel” reflected in these sources is ORAL: the authors of these sources are NOT reflecting the content of the biblical Gospels.
- The first century church was so successful in its proclamation of the gospel, even without written Gospels, that it had penetrated the entire culture of the Roman empire (Acts 17:6)!

IV. Helpful Resources

- F.F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the NT*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- John Dickson, *The Christ Files: How Historians Know What They Know About Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

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Text file available at www.centralfaithbuilders.com