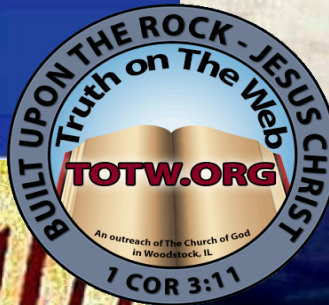
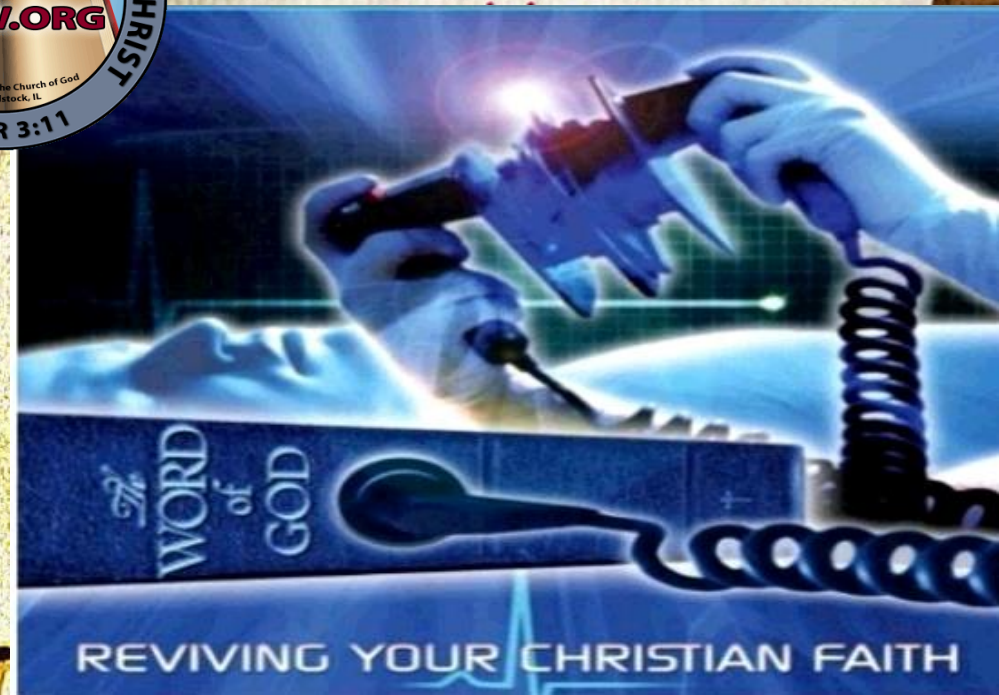
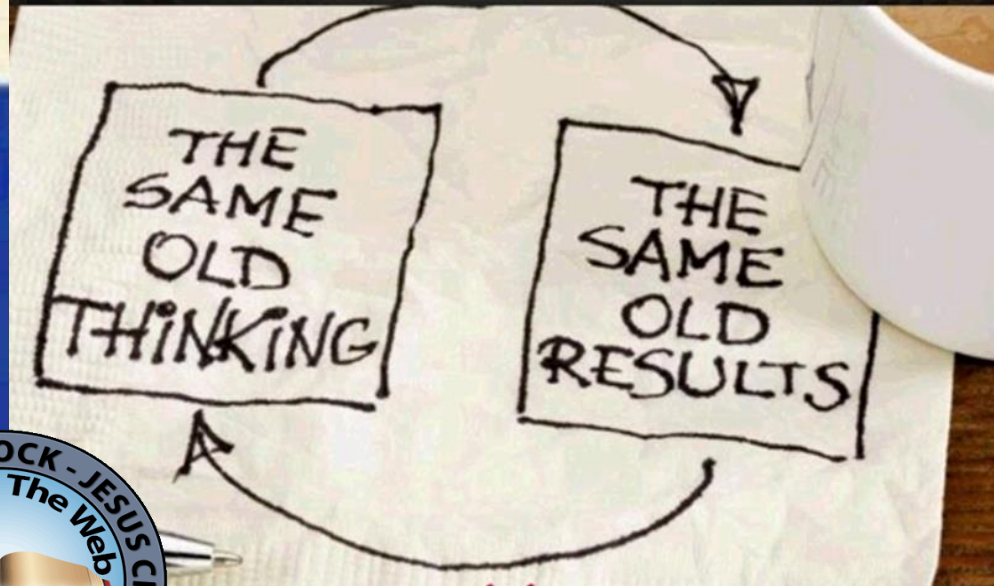


Think BIBLICALLY



RENEW

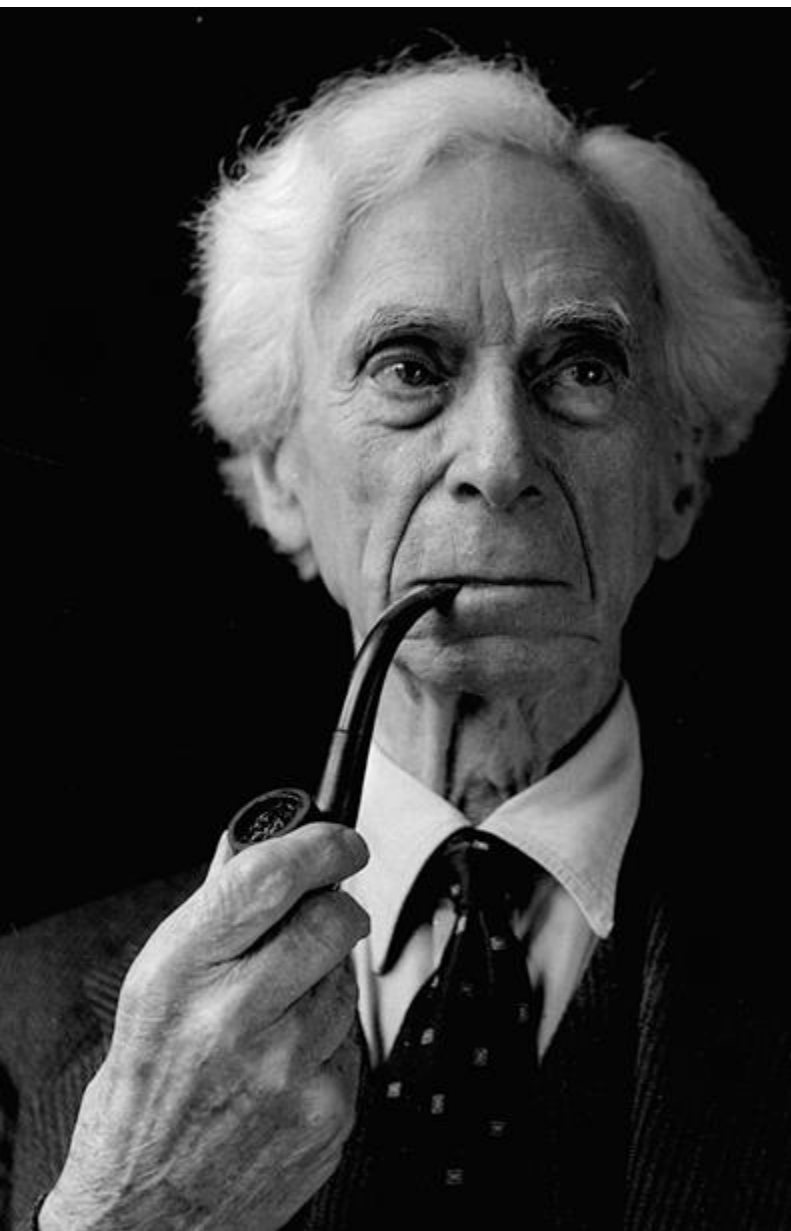
your mind
ROMANS 12:2



Jesus of Nazareth:

Myth or Messiah?





"Historically it is quite doubtful that Jesus existed, and if he did we do not know anything about him, so that I am not concerned with the historical question, which is a very difficult one."

– Bertrand Russell

What shall we say of this?

- It ignores a vast body of historical evidence which establishes the existence of Jesus. The New Testament documents, Jewish testimony (e.g., Josephus and the Talmud), and Roman history (Tacitus, Suetonius) all declare the historical existence of Christ.
- It is impossible that a religion that has impacted humanity as Christianity has, was grounded in a man who did not even exist.
- If Christ never existed, why do men like Russell consume so much time opposing him? Do they expend such energy on other “mythical” characters?
- Most infidels are at least candid enough to concede the existence of Jesus

“Some writers may toy with the fancy of a ‘Christ-myth,’ but they do not do so on the grounds of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the ‘Christ-myth’ theories.”

F.F. Bruce

The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?

**no serious scholar has ventured to
postulate the non-historicity of
Jesus.**

Otto Betz

- **Dawkins:** Jesus is 'intelligent,' 'a great moral teacher'
- **Ehrman:** "He certainly existed, as virtually every competent scholar of antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees"



Jesus existed, and those vocal persons
who deny it do so not because they
have considered the evidence with the
dispassionate eye of the historian, but
because they have some other agenda
that this denial serves.

— *Bart D. Ehrman* —

Cornelius Tacitus (55-120 AD) was a Roman historian who lived through the reigns of over a half dozen Roman emperors. He was called the ‘greatest historian’ of ancient Rome, an individual generally acknowledged among scholars for his moral integrity and essential goodness. He was known as one who never consciously sacrifices historical truth.

Tacitus most acclaimed works are *Annals* and the *Histories*.

"But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also."

Annals 15.44.

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Christ lived in the period of 14-37AD – being the reign of Tiberius.
- 2) While serving as procurator (26-36 AD), Pontius Pilate put Christ to death.
- 3) Christ had followers who were called Christians.
- 4) The "superstition" is stated to have begun in Judea, and then spread across Rome.

Gaius Suetonius Tranquilla was a Roman historian (AD 117-138), being an annalist of the Imperial House, as well as a court official under Hadrian (AD 76-138). Among his annals pertinent to our search, he authored *Life of Claudius* and another titled *Lives of the Caesars*

“Because the Jews at Rome caused constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.”

Life of Claudius.

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Jews continually stirred up troubles over Christ.
- 2) Jews were banished from Rome because of it.

“Because the Jews at Rome caused constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from the Rome.” - *Life of Claudius*.

Acts 18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (**because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:**) and came unto them.

"Nero inflicted punishment on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous religious belief."

Lives of the Caesars, 26.2

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Christians held to new beliefs.
- 2) Christians were punished by Nero.

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (61-112 AD), or Pliny the Younger, was the governor of Bithynia (112 AD) and a Roman senator. He wrote to emperor Trajan asking for guidance on how he should treat the Christians in his province. He explained that he had been killing both men and women, boys and girls. There were so many being put to death that he wondered if he should continue killing anyone who was discovered to be a Christian, or if he should kill only certain ones. He explained that he had made the Christians bow down to statues of Trajan. Pliny goes on to say that he also “made them curse Christ, which a genuine Christian cannot be induced to do.”

"...they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honour it; after which it was their custom to separate, and then meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind." *Epistles* X 96

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Jesus was worshipped as a god.
- 2) Christians met on a fixed day of the week.
- 3) They sang songs to Christ.
- 4) Christians were committed to holy behavior.

Emperor Trajan (AD 53 - 117), Imperator Caesar Divi Nervae Filius Nerva Traianus, was one of the most famous Roman emperors of all time. The following quote is a reply to Pliny, who had asked for directions in how to treat the Christians.

"The method you have used, my dear Pliny, in investigating the cases of those who are accused of being Christians is extremely proper. No search should be made for these people; when they are accused and found to be guilty they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that when the individual denies he is a Christian, and gives proof that he is not (that is, by adoring our gods) he shall be pardoned on the ground of repentance, even though he may have formerly incurred suspicion.

Documents without the accuser's signature must not be admitted in evidence against anyone, since this introduces a very dangerous precedent, and is by no means consistent with the spirit of the age." *Pliny letters* X, 97.

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Christians were being punished for religious reasons.
- 2) They could save themselves by worshipping "our gods."
- 3) Christians were being turned in by other citizens.

Pontius Pilate (1 BC - circa AD 37) was the fifth Roman procurator of Judea (AD 26 - 36), under Emperor Tiberius, who sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. The following quotes refer to the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*, a document now missing. Its existence is strongly supported by Epiphanius (*Heresies* 50.1), Justin Martyr (*First Apology*) and Tertullian (*Apology*).

"At His coming the lame will leap as a deer, and the stammering tongue will clearly speak: the blind will see, and the lepers will be healed; and the dead will rise, and walk.' And that He did those things, you can learn from the Acts of Pontius Pilate." *First Apology* 48.

“'They pierced my hands and my feet,' was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were driven into His hands and feet. And. . . they cast lots for His clothes, and after they crucified Him distributed it among them. And that these things did happen , you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate.' *First Apology* 35.

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Christ performed amazing miracles.
- 2) Christ died on a cross with hands and feet pierced with nails.

Hadrian, Emperor Caesar Traianus, (AD 76-138), was considered a man of culture and the arts. The following quote comes from a letter sent to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, about how to treat Christians.

"I do not wish, therefore, that the matter should be ignored without examination, so that these men may not be harassed, nor an opportunity given for malicious proceedings to be offered to informers. If, therefore, the provincials can clearly show their charges against these Christians, so as to answer before the tribunal, let them pursue this course only, but not just petitions, and mere outcries against Christians. For it is more fitting, if any one brings an accusation, that you should examine it."

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Christians existed during the reign of Hadrian.
- 2) Christians were in conflict with society.

Lucian of Samosata lived during the second century. He was a Greek satirist who was scornful of Christians. He wrote several books: *The Passing Peregrinus* and *Alexander the False Prophet*.

"The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day--- the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains their contempt for death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly good alike, regarding them as merely common property."

The Death of Peregrinus, 11-13

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Christians worshipped Jesus.
- 2) Jesus started Christianity.
- 3) Jesus was crucified for what he taught.
- 4) Jesus' disciples believed Jesus' teachings.
- 5) Early Christians taught that when one was converted he or she had eternal life.
- 6) They lived by faith - they believed Jesus.
- 7) They held all things in common.

Acts 2:44-46 And all that believed were together, and **had all things common;**
And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

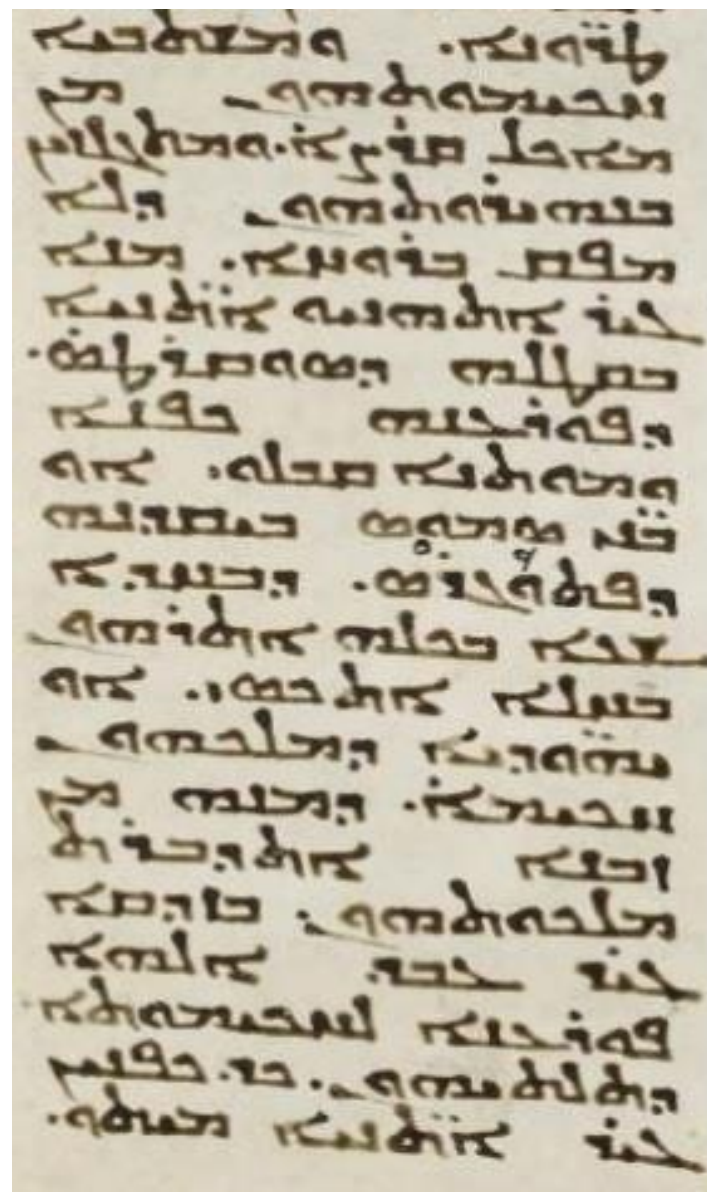
Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: **neither said any of *them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.**

Acts 4:34-35 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: **and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.**

In tribute to their reputable integrity and lawful obedience, an anonymous letter was written about early believers to Diognetus about 150 C.E.:

"...Not distinguished from the rest of mankind by country, by speech nor by customs. They live in their own homelands but as sojourners; they share all things as citizens, and suffer all things as aliens. Every foreign country is their homeland and every homeland a foreign country...They obey the established laws, and surpass the laws in their own lives. They are put to death and are made alive. They are poor but make many rich. They lack all things yet abound in all things. They are abused and give blessing; they are insulted and give honor. When they do good they are punished as evildoers; when they are punished, they rejoice as those receiving life." (From Christian History Institute).

Mara Bar-Serapion was a Syrian. Sometime after 70 AD, he left a legacy manuscript, a letter, written to his son Serapion. The letter is now in the possession of the British Museum.



“What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that their Kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; He lived on in the teaching which He had given”

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Jesus was regarded as a wise king.
- 2) Jesus was executed at the will of the Jews.
- 3) The Jews were dispersed in judgment from God on account of this.
- 4) Jesus' teachings lived on.

Phlegon was a historian who lived in the first century. There are two books credited to his name: *Chronicles* and the *Olympiads*. Little is known about Phlegon but he made reference to Christ. The first two quotes are unique to Origen and the last quote is recorded by Origen and Philopon.

"Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his *Chronicles*, not only ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events . . . but also testified that the result corresponded to His predictions." Origen *Against Celsus*

"And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place . . ." Origen *Against Celsus*

"Phlegon mentioned the eclipse which took place during the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and no other (eclipse); it is clear that he did not know from his sources about any (similar) eclipse in previous times . . . and this is shown by the historical account of Tiberius Caesar." *De. opif. mund.* II21

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Jesus had knowledge of the future.
- 2) Jesus predictions came true.
- 3) The sun was darkened during Christ's death.
- 4) A great earthquake occurred during Christ's crucifixion.
- 5) The facts were recorded in a historical account of Tiberius.

Thallus (circa AD 52) wrote a history about the middle east from the time of the Trojan War to his own time. The work has been lost and the only record we have of his writings is through Julius Africanus (AD 221). Below Julius Africanus refers to Christ's crucifixion and the darkness that covered the earth prior to his death.

"This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his *History*, calls, as it appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun. For the Hebrews celebrate the passover on the 14th day according to the moon, and the passion of our Savior falls on the day before the passover; but an eclipse of the sun takes place only when the moon comes under the sun. And it cannot happen at any other time but in the interval between the first day of the new moon and the last of the old, that is, at their junction: how then should an eclipse occur when the moon is almost diametrically opposite the sun? Phlegon records that in the time of Tiberius Caesar, at full moon, there was a full eclipse of the sun from the sixth hour to the ninth — manifestly that one of which we speak."

The Extant Writings of Julius Africanus 18

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Darkness covered the earth at Christ's death.
- 2) The only question was: "What caused it?"
- 3) The time of the darkness agrees with Matthew 27:45.
- 4) An eclipse cannot account for the darkness - this was a miracle.

The Talmud ("teaching" or "study") is a multi-volume compilation containing the Mishnah (oral legal teachings) and Jewish commentary on the Mishnah (Gemara). It is the basis of Jewish religious life. The accepted version was compiled by Rabbis Akiba (died AD 135) and Meir and completed by Rabbi Judah in AD 200.

"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [Jesus] was hanged. . .
but since nothing was brought forward in his favor he
was hanged on the eve of the Passover." (*Babylonia
Sanhedrin 43a*)

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Jesus was hanged (i.e., crucified).
- 2) Jesus died on Passover eve.
- 3) No one defended Jesus.

Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

Flavius Josephus (AD 37-97), was born into a priestly Jewish family. He was a Pharisee and a historian for the Roman empire. He wrote several famous works: "Antiquities of the Jews" and the "Wars of the Jews." Historians say Josephus was not a Christian.

"Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism."

Flavius Josephus

Antiquities of the Jews 18.5.2

This reference bear witness:

- 1) John existed at of Herod's reign.
- 2) John was slain by Herod unjustly.
- 3) John preached repentance and baptism.

"Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned:"

Flavius Josephus

Antiquities of the Jews 20.9.1

This reference bear witness:

- 1) James existed at the time of Festus.
- 2) He was the brother of Jesus.
- 3) Jesus was called the Messiah/Christ.
- 4) James was put to death by the Sanhedrin

“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 surprising feats - 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 to this day.”

Flavius Josephus

Antiquities of the Jews 18.3.3

The majority opinion on Josephus is that the parts of the passage from book 18 of '*Jewish Antiquities*' which are in red below are the additions of a Christian scribe trying to make Jesus appear in a better light.

"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."

AUTHENTICITY OF JOSEPHUS

"At this time there a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and [he] was known to be virtuous. Many people from among the Jews and 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 the crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the messiah concerning whom the prophets have recorded wonders." (fourth century Arabic text of Josephus, found in tenth century Arabic text entitled *Kitab Al-Unwan Al-Mukallal Bi-Fadail Al-Hikma Al-Mutawwaj Bi-Anwa Al-Falsafa Al-Manduh Bi-Haqaq Al-Marifa*)

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"For in the 18th book of his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and as promising purification to those who underwent the rite. Now this writer, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless-being, although against his will, not far from the truth - that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ) - the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice." (Origen, *Against Celsus I, XLVII*)

"And to so great a reputation among the people for righteousness did this James rise, that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the *Antiquities of the Jews* in twenty books, when wishing to exhibit the cause why the people suffered so great misfortunes that even the temple was razed to the ground, said, that these things happened to them in accordance with the wrath of God in consequence of the things which they had dared to do against James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ. And the wonderful thing is, that, though he did not accept Jesus as Christ, he yet gave testimony that the righteousness of James was so great; and he says that the people thought that they had suffered these things because of James." (Origen, *Matthew X, XVII*)

The following list demonstrates a portion of the ancient documents which cite the passage about Jesus from Josephus:

AD 250	Celsus	<i>Id. Contr.</i>
AD 324	Eusebius	<i>Demonstr Evan</i>
AD 360	Ambrose	<i>Excid. Urb. Hierosolyn</i>
AD 400	Hieronym	<i>de Vir. Illustr. in Josepho</i>
AD 410	Isidorus Pelusiota	<i>the Scholar of Chrysostom</i>
AD 440	Sozomen	<i>Hist. Ecceles.</i>
AD 510	Cassiodorus	<i>Tripartit e Sozomeno</i>
AD 640	Unknown	<i>Chron. Alex.</i>
AD 740	Anastasius	<i>Abbas contr. Jud.</i>
AD 860	Photius	<i>Cod.</i>
AD 1060	Cedrenus	<i>Compend. Histor.</i>
AD 1120	Zonaras	<i>Annal.</i>
AD 1170	Gotfridus	<i>Viterbiensis Chron.</i>
AD 1480	Platina de Vitis	<i>Pontificum in Christo</i>

This is a partial list of documents which date from AD 250 to 1480. They are written in different languages and come from various countries, including Russia and Arabic countries. Altering an official Roman document would have been very difficult as long as Rome was in power. The archives could have been checked at any time. Then to have altered multiple copies that were in distribution in other countries and different languages would have been even more problematic. What is interesting is that the wording is identical from document to document. The rest of Josephus' statements, even about John the Baptist, are accepted by the liberals as historically accurate. So why are Josephus' statements about Jesus the only exception?

This reference bears witness:

- 1) Jesus was known as a wise man and was highly regarded.
- 2) Jesus is recorded as a miracle worker
- 3) Jesus was a teacher of truth for many Jews and Gentiles.
- 4) Jesus was being called the Christ / Messiah by people in his day.
- 5) Jesus was killed on a cross by Pontius Pilate.
- 6) Jesus reportedly appeared alive the third day after being killed.
- 7) Predictions by the prophets concerning the Christ may have been fulfilled by Jesus.

**HAPPY SABBATH
DAY!**

KEEP IT HOLY!

**HAPPY SABBATH
DAY!**

**KEEP IT
WHOLLY!**

**HAPPY SABBATH
DAY!**

KEEP IT HOLY!

**HAPPY SABBATH
DAY!**

Jesus of Nazareth:

Myth or Messiah?

