



HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS

Within a few decades of his lifetime, Jesus was mentioned by Jewish and Roman historians. These texts match the Biblical accounts of the life and death of Jesus. It is clear that Jesus was known by historians. Nobody doubted his existence.

Flavius Josephus

The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus is seen as the best source for information about the Israel of Jesus' lifetime. Around 93AD he wrote a 20-volume history of the Jewish people.

Although Josephus was not a follower of Jesus, he was around when the early church was getting started. He would have known people who had seen and heard Jesus.

In one passage of Jewish Antiquities he wrote about an execution. Josephus identifies the victim, James, as the 'brother of Jesus-who-is-called-Messiah.' He also wrote about Jesus, describing a man 'who did surprising deeds', who was condemned to be crucified by Pilate.

Tacitus

Tacitus was a Roman senator who wrote the 'Annals of Imperial Rome', a first-century history of the Roman Empire written around 116 AD.

He wrote about the burning of Rome in 64 AD. Tacitus mentions that Emperor Nero falsely blamed '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.'

This is a clear connection to the version of Jesus' execution by Pontius Pilate in the Bible.

Pliny

Pliny was a Roman governor who lived around the same time as Tacitus. He wrote to the Emperor Trajan that early Christians would 'sing hymns to Christ as to a god.'

Suetonius

Suetonius was a first century Roman historian. Within his work he mentions Jesus, writing that the Emperor Claudius had expelled Jews from Rome who 'were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Christus.'