

WAS JESUS REALLY HISTORICAL?

- I. What Documentary Evidence Would You EXPECT?
 - A. Reports from PILATE?
 1. NONE have survived on ANY subject
 2. There is evidence they EXISTED
 - B. How about PHILO, who NEVER mentions Jesus?
 1. He lived and wrote in EGYPT
 2. He wrote on PHILOSOPHY and JEWISH thought
 - C. Most other writers would have had NO INTEREST
 - D. The absence of EVIDENCE is not evidence of ABSENCE
- II. Early Non-Christian References to Jesus
 - A. Ancient SECULAR writers
 1. Cornelius Tacitus (born AD 52-54) mentions Christ's execution by PONTIUS PILATE, in Judea in the reign of Tiberius
 2. Lucian of Samosata (2nd century) MOCKED those who WORSHIPED "the man who was CRUCIFIED in Palestine"
 3. Flavius Josephus (born AD 37) mentions Jesus RESPECTFULLY
 4. Suetonius (AD 120) blames CHRIST or instigating disturbances that forced the expulsion of the JEWS from Rome

5. Pliny the Younger (AD 112) explained that he made Christians “CURSE Christ, which a GENUINE Christian cannot be induced to do”
6. Tertullian (AD 197) claimed Tiberius knew the TRUTH of Christ’s divinity and defended the Christians before the SENATE
7. Thallus (AD 52) assumed the darkness on the day of Christ’s CRUCIFIXION was an ECLIPSE
8. Phlegon (1st century) mentions the remarkable “ECLIPSE of the sun during a FULL MOON” during the time of Tiberius
9. Letter of Mara Bar-Serapion (post AD 73) to warn his son not to persecute WISE men like Socrates, Pythagoras and CHRIST

B. References from the RABBIS

1. Admitted Jesus performed SIGNS and MIRACLES
2. Confirmed that Jesus was EXECUTED by “HANGING”
3. Tried to refute reports of Jesus’ VIRGIN BIRTH
4. Include reference to Jesus as a TEACHER with DISCIPLES

C. Encyclopedia Britannica ATTESTS to the historicity of Christ

III. The JEWISHNESS of Jesus

- A. Much of His teaching STYLE is similar to the rabbinic
- B. Many of His statements have PARALLELS in rabbinic literature
- C. He was unique in His insistence on PERSONAL AUTHORITY
- D. No later Gentile church could have FABRICATED a Jesus so thoroughly JEWISH or placed Him in a culture so CONSISTENT with His times