Jesus was a Real Person Last edit April 10, 2022

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I created this document to help people understand that there is good evidence outside of Biblical references that Jesus was a real, historical, person. This document has some quotes from resources I found on the Internet (that I believe are reliable).

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/>

“Tacitus—or more formally, Caius/Gaius (or Publius) Cornelius Tacitus (55/56–c. 118 C.E.)—was a Roman senator, orator and ethnographer, and arguably the best of Roman historians. “

“...Nero substituted as culprits and punished in the most unusual ways those hated for their shameful acts … whom the crowd called “Chrestians.” The founder of this name, Christ [*Christus* in Latin], had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate …”

“Tacitus presents four pieces of accurate knowledge about Jesus: (1) *Christus*, used by Tacitus to refer to Jesus, was one distinctive way by which some referred to him, even though Tacitus mistakenly took it for a personal name rather than an epithet or title; (2) this *Christus* was associated with the beginning of the movement of Christians, whose name originated from his; (3) he was executed by the Roman governor of Judea; and (4) the time of his death was during Pontius Pilate’s governorship of Judea, during the reign of Tiberius. (Many New Testament scholars date Jesus’ death to c. 29 C.E.; Pilate governed Judea in 26–36 C.E., while Tiberius was emperor 14–37 C.E.[6](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note06))”

“The other strong evidence that speaks directly about Jesus as a real person comes from Josephus, a Jewish priest who grew up as an aristocrat in first-century Palestine and ended up living in Rome, supported by the patronage of three successive emperors. ...In his two great works, *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, both written in Greek for educated people, Josephus tried to appeal to aristocrats in the Roman world, presenting Judaism as a religion to be admired for its moral and philosophical depth. *The Jewish War* doesn’t mention Jesus except in some versions in likely later additions by others, but Jewish Antiquities does mention Jesus—twice.”

“Being therefore this kind of person [i.e., a heartless Sadducee], Ananus, thinking that he had a favorable opportunity because Festus had died and Albinus was still on his way, called a meeting [literally, “sanhedrin”] of judges and brought into it the brother of Jesus-who-is-called-Messiah … James by name, and some others. He made the accusation that they had transgressed the law, and he handed them over to be stoned.[13](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note13)”

“Around this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, *if indeed one ought to call him a man*.[21](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note21) For he was one who did surprising deeds, and a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. *He was the Messiah.* When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who in the first place came to love him did not give up their affection for him, *for on the third day, he appeared to them restored to life. The prophets of God had prophesied this and countless other marvelous things about him.* And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, have still to this day not died out.[22](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note22)” ….The article notes that most scholars view the words in italics as later edits by Christians. But the rest of the quote is likely from Josephus.

“▸ Celsus, the Platonist philosopher, considered Jesus to be a magician who made exorbitant claims.[39](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note39)

▸ Pliny the Younger, a Roman governor and friend of Tacitus, wrote about early Christian worship of Christ “as to a god.”[40](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note40)

▸ Suetonius, a Roman writer, lawyer and historian, wrote of riots in 49 C.E. among Jews in Rome which might have been *about Christus* but which he thought were incited *by* “the instigator Chrestus,” whose identification with Jesus is not completely certain.[41](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note41)

▸ Mara bar Serapion, a prisoner of war held by the Romans, wrote a letter to his son that described “the wise Jewish king” in a way that seems to indicate Jesus but does not specify his identity.[42](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note42)

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<https://www.history.com/news/was-jesus-real-historical-evidence>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/14/what-is-the-historical-evidence-that-jesus-christ-lived-and-died>

<https://christianity.org.uk/article/who-was-jesus-was-he-real>

<https://welcometotruth.com/blogs/apologetics/is-jesus-real>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsJWNrqqpO8>

<https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=316&article=876>

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Book: “Evidence That Demands a Verdict” by Josh McDowell (c)1972 by Campus Crusade for Christ You should read Chapter 5 “Jesus-A Man of History,” starting on page 83 and continuing to page 89.

Evidence discussed in this chapter includes: a brief summary of Christian and New Testament documents. The Bible is reliable and gives an overwhelming description of Jesus and his life. Writings of the “Church Fathers” support that Jesus was an actual person in history.

Ignatius (AD 35 to 107) <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/martyrs/ignatius-of-antioch.html>

Polycarp (AD 69 to 156) <https://isjesusalive.com/polycarp-early-use-of-new-testament/>

Justin Martyr (AD 100 to 165) <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/evangelistsandapologists/justin-martyr.html>

Irenaeus (born around AD 135 ) … studied under Polycarp in Smyrna <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/evangelistsandapologists/irenaeus-gnosticism-gaul-erasmus-persecution.html>

Origin (AD 185 to 254) <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/scholarsandscientists/origen.html>

Eusebius (AD260 to 340) <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/scholarsandscientists/eusebius-of-caesarea.html>

There is a discussion of non-Biblical sources that support Jesus was an actual person in history starting on page 84 of “Evidence That Demands a Verdict.” The quotes below are from this book.

Tacitus (a Roman Historian…born around AD53) “...Christians, who were hated for their enormities, Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate…”

Lucian (“satirist of the second century”) “...spoke scornfully of Christ and the Christians…” “...the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world…”

Flavius Josephus (born AD 37, became a Pharisee) “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him aman, for he was a doer of wonderful works…” “He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among 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…” “And the tribe of C0hristians so named from him are not extinct at the day.” written in early second century

Seutonius (AD 120, Roman historian) “As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of CHrestus…, he expelled them from Rome.”

Pliny the Younger (AD 112, Governor of Bithynia ) “...the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sant in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god…”

Tertullian (AD 197, Jurist-theologian of Carthage) Tertullian “mentions the exchange between Tiberius and Pontius Pilate.” “Tiberius accordingly, in those days the Christian name made its entry into the world, having himself received intelligence from the truth of CHrist’s divinity, brought the matter before the senate, with his own decision in favor of Christ.” “The senate…rejected his proposal.”

Thallus “One of the first Gentile writers who mentions Christ is Thallus, who wrote in 52 A.D. However, his writings have disappeared and we only know of them from fragments cited by other writers.” “Thallus, in the third book of his histories…it was at the season of the Paschal full moon that Christ died.” Thallus also refers to the darkness at the time of the crucifixion.

Mara Bar-Serapion (“letter written sometime after A.D. 73”) “...pointed out that those who persecuted wise men were overtaken by misfortune. He instances the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras and CHrist…”

Justin Martyr (about A.D. 150) “writing to Emperor Antoninus Pius, referred him to Pilate’s report…” ‘ “They pierced my hands and my feet”, he says, “are a description of the nails that were fixed in His hands and His feet on the cross; and after He was crucified, those who crucified Him cast lots…” ‘

Jewish Talmuds.”Jesus is referred to as ‘Ben Pandera’” “...and hanged him on the eve of Passover.” “...the illegitimate birth of Jesus was a current idea among the Jews…” “...they found naught in his defence and hanged him on the eve of Passover.” “And do you suppose that for (Yeshua of Nazareth) there was any right of appeal? He was a beguiler…” “Sanhedrin 43a also makes references to the disciples of Jesus.” “An early baraita…speaks of Jesus by name.”