

**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 below is recorded by Origen and Philopon.

Written A. D. 80

"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*

These references reveal several key things:

- 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 death.
- 5) The facts were recorded in a historical account of Tiberius.

#### **Greek Satirist:**

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

"The Christians. . . worship a man to this day - the distinguished personage who introduced this new cult, 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 self devotion . . . their lawgiver [taught] 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 on faith . . ." *The Passing Peregrinus*

This reference reveals several key things:

- 1) Christians worshipped Jesus.
- 2) Jesus was crucified for what he taught.
- 3) Jesus started Christianity.
- 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.

\* **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.

Written A. D. 80

"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 reveals several key things:

- 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.

An eclipse cannot account for the darkness - this was a miracle.

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Pamphlet 277

# Evidence for the Existence of Christianity and Jesus Christ in Secular History

#### **Roman Emperors:**

**Hadrian, Emperor Caesar Trainus**, (AD 76-138), was considered a man of culture and the arts. It appears he preferred peace rather than war. The following quote comes from a letter sent to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, about how to treat Christians.

Written A. D. 76 - 136

"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 reveals several key things:

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

**Emperor Trajan** (AD 53 - 117), Emperor Caesar Divi Nervae Filius Nerva Traianus, was one of the most famous Roman emperors of all time. His reputation as a successful military strategist is demonstrated by his military exploits, which expanded the Roman boundaries to the Persian Gulf. The quote below 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 reveals several key things:

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

#### Roman Officials:

**Cornelius Tacitus** (55-120 AD) has been called the greatest historian on ancient Rome. He lived during the reign of several Roman emperors and was a Roman historian and a governor of Asia [Turkey] in AD 112. He wrote two major works: *Annals* and the *Histories*.

Written . D. 52 – 54

"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures a class hated for their abominations, people called Christians by the populace. Christus [Christ], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius [AD 14-37] at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate. 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 reveals several key things:

- 1) Christ lived in the period of AD 14-37.
- 2) Pontius Pilate put him to death.
- 3) The word "superstition" suggests a religion.
- 4) Christ had followers who were named Christians.

**Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus** (AD 61-112), or Pliny the Younger, was the governor of Bithynia (AD 112) and a Roman senator. He wrote to emperor Trajan asking for guidance on how he should treat the Christians in his province.

Written A. D. 112

"Christians were "meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to do wicked deeds, never commit fraud, theft, adultery, not to lie nor to deny a trust. . . ." *Epistles X96*

This reference reveals several key things:

- 1) Jesus was worshipped like a god.
- 2) Christians met on a fixed day of the week.
- 3) The meeting occurred before sunrise.
- 4) They sang songs to Christ.
- 5) Christians were committed to holy behavior.

**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 quotes below 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 reveals several key things:

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

**Gaius Suetonius Tranquilla** was a Roman historian (AD 117-138) under Hadrian (AD 76-138). He was also the secretary of state and authored a book entitled *Life of Claudius*.

Written A. D. 41 - 54

"Because the Jews at Rome caused constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [Christ], he [Claudius] expelled them from the city [Rome]." *Life of Claudius*.

"Nero inflicted punishment on the Christians, a sect given to a new and mischievous religious belief." *Life of Claudius*.

This reference reveals several key things:

- 1) Christians held to new beliefs.
- 2) Christians followed Christ.
- 3) Christians were punished and banished from Rome.

#### Jewish Historians:

**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, 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." *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.3.3.

This reference reveals several key things:

- 1) Jesus was known as a wise man and was highly regarded.
- 2) Apparently Josephus is referring to Jesus' miracles.
- 3) Jesus was a teacher of truth for many Jews and Gentiles.
- 4) Jesus was killed on a cross by Pontius Pilate.
- 5) Jesus appeared alive the third day after being killed.
- 6) Predictions by the prophets came true in Christ.
- 7) Jesus is the Christ or Messiah.

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 reveals several key things:

- 1) Jesus was hanged (see Gal 3:13) or crucified.
- 2) Jesus died on Passover eve or Friday afternoon.
- 3) No one defended Jesus.

#### Other writings:

**Mara Bar-Serapion** was a Syrian who lived at least 73 years after Jesus Christ. He left a legacy manuscript, a letter, written to his son Serapion. The letter is now in the possession of the British Museum.

Written A. D. 73

"What benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as judgment for their crime. Or, the people of Samos for burning Pythagoras? In one moment their country was covered with sand. Or the Jews by murdering their wise king? . . . after that their kingdom was abolished. God rightly avenged these men. . . the wise king. . . lived on in the teachings he enacted."

This reference reveals several key things:

- 1) Jesus was regarded as a wise king.
- 2) Jesus was murdered.
- 3) Jesus' teachings lived on.