

Non-Biblical References to Jesus and Christians

“About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.”

- Flavius Josephus: *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, Chapter 3.

“Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.”

- Publius Cornelius Tacitus: *Annals*, Book 15, Chapter 44.

"Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome."

- Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus: *Divus Claudius*, 25.

“Those who denied that they were or had been Christians and called upon the gods in the usual formula, reciting the words after me, those who offered incense and wine before your image, which I had given orders to be brought forward for this purpose, together with the statues of the deities - all such I considered should be discharged, especially as they cursed the name of Christ, which, it is said, those who are really Christians cannot be induced to do. Others, whose names were given me by an informer, first said that they were Christians and afterwards denied it, declaring that they had been but were so no longer, some of them having recanted many years before, and more than one so long as twenty years back. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the deities, and cursed the name of Christ. But they declared that the sum of their guilt or their error only amounted to this, that

on a stated day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god, and that so far from binding themselves by oath to commit any crime, their oath was to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and from breach of faith, and not to deny trust money placed in their keeping when called upon to deliver it.”

- Pliny the Younger: *Letter to Trajan*, 10.96

“What else can we say, when the wise are forcibly dragged off by tyrants, their wisdom is captured by insults, and their minds are oppressed and without defense? What advantage did the Athenians gain from murdering [Socrates](#)? Famine and plague came upon them as a punishment 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 and the Jews, desolate and driven from their own kingdom, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates is not dead, because of [Plato](#); neither is Pythagoras, because of the statue of [Juno](#); nor is the wise king, because of the ‘new law’ he laid down.”

- Mara bar Serapion: *Letter to Serapion*

“On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald ... cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy."

- *The Babylonian Talmud*: vol. III, Sanhedrin 43a, 281

“The Christians ... worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... [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.”

- Lucian of Samosata: *The Death of Peregrine*, vol. 4