

Josephus on Jesus and his brother James

Flavius Josephus (a.d. 37–c.100) is the author of what has become for Christianity perhaps the most significant extra-biblical writings of the first century. His works are the principal source for the history of the Jews from the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (b.c. 175–163) to the fall of Masada in a.d. 73, and therefore, are of incomparable value for determining the setting of late inter-testamental and New Testament times.

There is no serious scholarly debate that Josephus wrote about Jesus. Scholars do debate what exactly he wrote about Jesus in Chapter 3 of his *Antiquities of the Jews*, with some scholars concluding that what I highlighted in the left column was added by a later interpolation.

Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter 3, SEDITION OF THE JEWS AGAINST PONTIUS PILATE; CONCERNING CHRIST, AND WHAT BEFELL PAULINA AND THE JEWS AT HOME Section 3, reads:	The Testimonium Flavianum in Syriac and Arabic, by ALICE WHEALEY reads "The Testimonia of Agapius and Michael the Syrian as already indicated, Agapius' Arabic Testimonium differs widely from the textus receptus. Pines translated it as follows:
3. (63) 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 wonderful works—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; (64) 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 at this day.	at this time there was wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.

^{1, 2}

Josephus also wrote about James, the brother of Jesus Christ:

1. (197) And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator; but the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. (198) Now the report goes, that this elder Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons, who had all

¹ THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS: NEW UPDATED VERSION, Complete and unabridged in One Volume, Copyright © 1987 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Translated by William Whiston, A.M.

² New Test. Stud. 54, pp. 573–590. Printed in the United Kingdom © 2008 Cambridge University Press, doi:10.1017/S0028688508000301

performed the office of a high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests: (199) but this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; (200) when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. **Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned;** (201) but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; (202) nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrin without his consent; —(203) whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.³

³ Chapter 9, CONCERNING ALBINUS UNDER WHOSE PROCURATORSHIP JAMES WAS SLAIN; AS ALSO WHAT EDIFICES WERE BUILT BY AGRIPPA, Section 1, THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS: NEW UPDATED VERSION, Complete and unabridged in One Volume, Copyright © 1987 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Translated by William Whiston, A.M.