

# Ancient Evidence for Jesus from Non-Christian Sources

## Evidence from Tacitus (56-120AD)

“Nero fastened the guilt ... 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 ... Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome...”

## Evidence from Pliny the Younger (61-113AD)

“They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food - but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.”

## Evidence from Josephus (37-101AD)

“About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he... wrought surprising feats.... He was the Christ. When Pilate... condemned him to be crucified, those who had... come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared ... restored to life.... And the tribe of Christians... has... not disappeared.” *-Jewish Antiquities*

## Evidence from the Babylonian Talmud (A.D. 70-200)

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."

## Evidence from Lucian (115-200 A.D.)

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.

## Summary

First, both Josephus and Lucian indicate that Jesus was regarded as wise.

Second, Pliny, the Talmud, and Lucian imply He was a powerful, revered teacher.

Third, both Josephus and the Talmud indicate He performed miraculous feats.

Fourth, Tacitus, Josephus, the Talmud, and Lucian all mention that He was crucified. Tacitus and Josephus say this occurred under Pontius Pilate. And the Talmud declares it happened on the eve of Passover.

Fifth, references to the Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection are in both Tacitus and Josephus.

Sixth, Josephus records that Jesus' followers believed He was the Christ, or Messiah.

Seventh, and finally, both Pliny and Lucian indicate that Christians worshipped Jesus as God.