

<https://freethinkingministries.com/historical-references-to-christ-from-non-biblical-authors/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mara_bar_Serapion_on_Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ux6oqEhuqrE>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_hD3xK4hRY



SETTING THE STAGE:

➤ **Scripture affirms the existence of Jesus:**

- His pre-existence — John 1.1-3
- His divine incarnation — John 1.14; 6.38
- His atoning death — John 3.14-15
- His resurrection — John 20.16-17

➤ **Is there more evidence than Scripture?**

- Not everyone regards Scripture as being inspired
- Was Jesus a myth? Did Jesus actually exist?



“Like I said though, nobody outside the New Testament attests to a historical Jesus.”

-Godless Engineer

Is it fair to dismiss the testimony of Scripture?

❖ **The Bible is the most well-documented work of history.**

- ❖ More than 25,000 MSS supporting the Bible
- ❖ Closest MSS to within 80yrs of autograph
- ❖ Compare: *Caesar's Gaelic Wars* — 10 MSS, 900yrs
- ❖ Compare: Herodotus' *Histories* — 109 MSS, 1300yrs

Dismissing Scripture as a valid historical document is unfair.

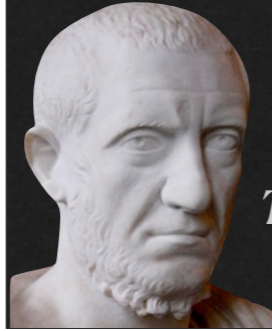


Odyssey article — <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44779492>

Herodotus — <https://www.equip.org/article/the-bibliographical-test-updated/> along w/ update re: Iliad and Odyssey

Herodotus, called the Father of History, noted for his work "Histories." Quotes from Herodotus — "In peace, sons bury their fathers. In war, fathers bury their sons." Or "Of all men's miseries the bitterest is this: to know so much and have control over nothing."

“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...”

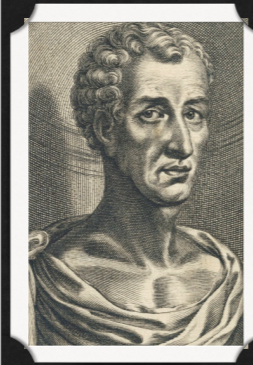


Tacitus, Annals, 2nd Century AD

DID
JESUS
EXIST

Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, 15.44

“The poor wretches have convinced themselves, first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody; most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once, for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws.”



Lucian of Samosata
The Passing of Peregrinus, 2nd Century AD

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Lucian of Samosata in his [The Passing of Peregrinus](#), paragraph 13

“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. 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.”



Josephus
Antiquities of the Jews, ~AD95

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Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.63-64

“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 sanhedrim 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.”



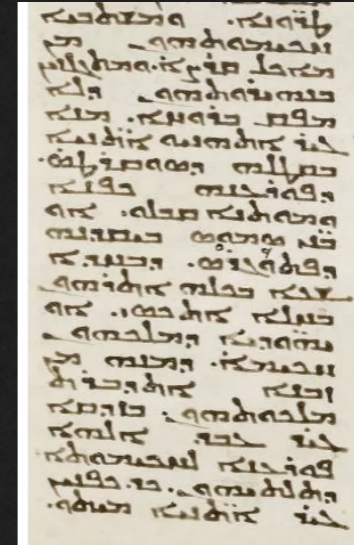
Josephus
Antiquities of the Jews, ~AD95

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Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.9

“For what benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death, seeing that they received as retribution for it famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras...? Or the Jews by the murder of their Wise King, seeing that from that very time their kingdom was driven away from them? For with justice did God grant a recompense to the wisdom of *all* three of them. For the Athenians died by famine; and the people of Samos were covered by the sea without remedy; and the Jews, brought to desolation and expelled from their kingdom, are driven away into every land.”

Mara ben Serapion letter, late 1st century AD

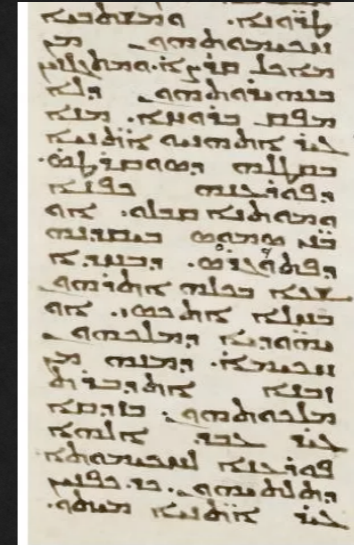


Detail from MS 14658, 183v, British Library

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Mara ben Serapion letter, dated to the late 1st century. Letter from father to son. Contains affirmative references to Jesus, alongside references to Socrates (470-399BC) and Pythagoras (570-495BC).

**“Nay, Socrates did "not" die, because of Plato;
nor yet Pythagoras, because of the statue of
Hera; nor yet the Wise King, because of the new
laws which he enacted.”**



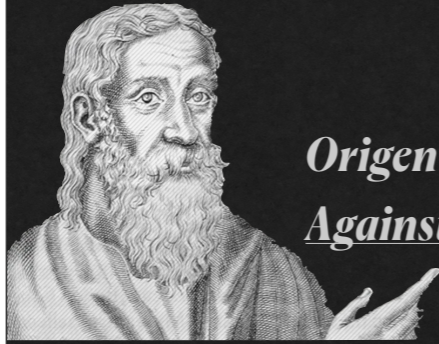
Detail from MS 14658, 183v, British Library

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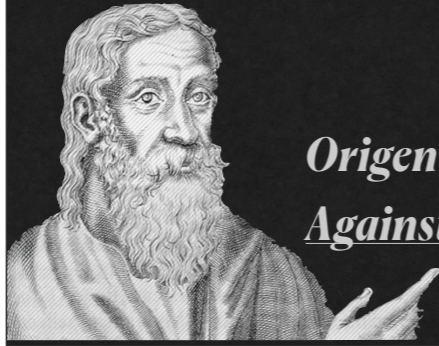
“Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his Chronicles, not only ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events (although falling into confusion about some things which refer to Peter, as if they referred to Jesus), but also testified that the result corresponded to His predictions. So that he also, by these very admissions regarding foreknowledge, as if against his will, expressed his opinion that the doctrines taught by the fathers of our system were not devoid of divine power.”



*Origen (quoting Phlegon),
Against Celsus, ~AD250*

DID
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EXIST

“But if Celsus believe the Gospel accounts when he thinks that he can find in them matter of charge against the Christians, and refuse to believe them when they establish the divinity of Jesus, our answer to him is: “Sir, either disbelieve all the Gospel narratives, and then no longer imagine that you can found charges upon them; or, in yielding your belief to their statements, look in admiration on the Logos of God, who became incarnate, and who desired to confer benefits upon the whole human race.”



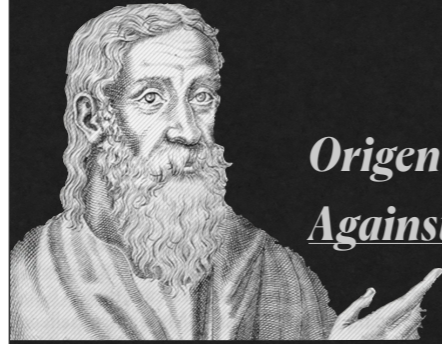
*Origen (quoting Phlegon),
Against Celsus, ~AD250*

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Note Origen’s argument against Celsus, logic which stands today — one cannot logically believe and disbelieve the Gospel message. They rise and fall together.

Origen, Against Celsus, chapter 33

“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, Phlegon too, I think, has written in the thirteenth or fourteenth book of his Chronicles.”

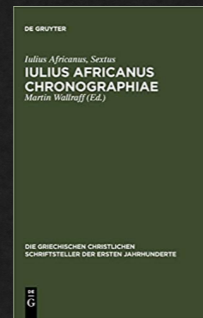


*Origen (quoting Phlegon),
Against Celsus, ~AD250*

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Origen, Against Celsus, chapter 33

**“On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness;
and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea
and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus,
in the third book of his *History*, calls, as appears to me
without reason, an eclipse of the sun... But it was a darkness induced
by God, because the Lord happened then to suffer.”**



*Julius Africanus (quoting Thallus),
Chronology, ~AD220*

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Julius Africanus quoting Thallus, Chronology, chapter 18

“From the point of view of Roman history of the first century, Jesus was a nobody. A man of no social standing, who achieved brief local notice in a remote and little-loved province as a preacher and miracle-worker, and who was duly executed by order of a minor provincial governor, could hardly be expected to achieve mention in the Roman headlines.”



R.T. France, New Testament Scholar

DID
JESUS
EXIST

Why do we not have a more robust historical record of Jesus? France answers this question:

Evidence for the Historical Jesus by McDowell and Wilson, p25 — quoting R.T. France

“I’ve written an entire book on what Jesus said and did... and for him to say and do anything, he had to exist... I don’t think there’s any serious historian who doubts the existence of Jesus.”



Bart Ehrman, Agnostic, NT Textual Critic

DID
JESUS
EXIST

Trained under Bruce Metzger — chose a different path than his instructor. Yet, listen to what he says about the historical Jesus:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qZfXVntEI4>

“Let me tell you, once you get outside of your conclave, this is not even an issue for scholars of antiquity. There is no scholar in any college or university who teaches classics, ancient history, New Testament, early Christianity, or any related field who doubts that Jesus existed... The reason for thinking Jesus existed is because he is abundantly attested in early sources.”



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DID JESUS EXIST?

- **The historical testimony of Scripture says yes.**
- **The historical testimony of secular sources say yes.**
- **If Jesus did exist:**
 - **I need to re-evaluate a lot of voices in the world.**
 - **Scripture must be seriously considered.**
 - **I must decide about Jesus:**

Lunatic

**Simply a
Good Man**

Liar

Lord

John 5:17 — claimed God was His Father

John 5:21 — claimed that He, as the Son, could give life

John 5:28-29 — promised to call for all the dead to new life

John 14:6 — claimed He is the only way to God

John 17:5 — claimed He was with God before the world was created

John 20:17 — claimed He rose from the dead and would soon ascend to Heaven

The claims He made and the manner in which He conducted Himself removes the first two options from before us. Jesus was either a liar or He is Lord.