

## JOSEPHUS ON JESUS

Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.63-64 (ca. AD 93)

“About this time arose Jesus, a wise man, [**if indeed it be lawful to call him a man. For he was a doer of wonderful deeds, and a teacher of men who gladly receive the truth.**] He drew to himself many [**both of the Jews and of the Gentiles. He was the Christ**]; and when Pilate, on the indictment of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him at the first did not cease to do so, [**for he appeared to them again alive on the third day, the divine prophets having foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things about him.**] And even to this day the race of Christians, who are named from him, has not died out.”

(Note: Bracketed words in bold are most likely late Christian interpolations into the original statement of Josephus.)

Reconstructed Original Wording of *Antiquities* 18.63-64

“About this time arose Jesus, a wise man. He drew to himself many; and when Pilate, on the indictment of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him at the first did not cease to do so, and even to this day the race of Christians, who are named from him, has not died out.”

Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.200

“Ananus . . . called together the Sanhedrin, and brought before them **the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ**, James by name, together with some others, and accused them of violating the law, and condemned them to be stoned.”

### Origen's Statements about Josephus:

“For in the 18th book of his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and as promising purification to those who underwent the rite. Now **this writer** [Josephus], **although not believing in Jesus as the Christ**, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless-being, although against his will, not far from the truth-that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ),- the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice.” –Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.47 (ca. AD 254)  
(Note: bold type is for emphasis only.)

“And to so great a reputation among the people for righteousness did this James rise, that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the *Antiquities of the Jews* in twenty books, when wishing to exhibit the cause why the people suffered so great misfortunes that even the temple was razed to the ground, said, that these things happened to them in accordance with the wrath of God in consequence of the things which they had dared to do against James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ. And the wonderful thing is, that, though **he** [Josephus] **did not accept Jesus as Christ**, he yet gave testimony that the righteousness of James was so great; and he says that the people thought that they had suffered these things because of James.” –Origen *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17  
(Note: bold type is for emphasis only.)

Note: These two statements from Origen in the third century indicate clearly that Josephus's statements about Jesus at that time did *not* contain the Christian interpolations that are now found in them. Origen even cites the exact reference (“the 18<sup>th</sup> book of his *Antiquities*”) so we know he was describing this very statement in Josephus. But Origen's copy of Josephus clearly did not contain the statement “He was the Christ.”