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Early Christian and Non-Christian Attestations about Jesus Outside of the Bible

“Even if you silenced the voices of the New Testament authors, you would still have a robust description of Jesus and his followers from ancient, hostile non-Christian voices in the fallout...There are more non-Christian voices in this extrabiblical collection (ninety-two historical figures) than Christian ones, and regardless of their social stature, ethnicity, motivation, or region, the common description of Jesus (at their core) remains the same.” (p. 110) J. Warner Wallace: Person of Interest 

The Chart below contains examples of both Christian and non-Christian attestations of Jesus’s existence within the first and second centuries (well before the [Council of Nicaea](#)). It’s my hope and prayer that the resources shared below will equip you for conversations with friends, family, and neighbors needing historical evidence that Jesus was a real Jewish man, who was crucified and worshiped.

***Reference Point: Jesus’s crucifixion, empty tomb, & bodily resurrection occurred around AD 30 or 33.**

Name	Quote	Topics Covered
Thallus (AD 52) Samaritan historian Non-Christian	<p>“Another historian, Sextus Julius Africanus, wrote a text entitled <i>History of the World</i> in AD 221 which quoted Thallus’s chronicled statement pertaining to the darkness that was observed at the time of Jesus’s death.” [1]</p> <p>“On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by the earthquake, and many places in the Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his <i>History</i>, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun.” [1]</p> <p>Julius Africanus’s historical writings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus existed. - Jesus died. - Notable weather conditions coincided with Jesus’s death.
Josephus (AD 37-101) Jewish historian Non-Christian	<p>“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and many of Greek origin. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.” [2]</p> <p>Josephus’s Antiquities of the Jews (18:3:3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus existed. - Brother of James. - Referred to Jesus as a wise man. - Referred to Pontius Pilate. - Acknowledged that Jesus performed miracles.
Clement (AD 70-96) First century church leader	<p>Clement “wrote a letter to the church at Corinth (ca. AD 70-96). In it he speaks of the teachings of Jesus (13:1), his death (21:6), and his resurrection from the dead (24:1).” [5]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus existed. - Affirms Jesus’s death and resurrection.

<p>in Rome</p> <p>Christian</p>	<p>The First Letter of Clement to Rome</p>	
<p>Ignatius (AD 50-117)</p> <p>Disciple of John, Bishop in Antioch</p> <p>Christian</p>	<p>“For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God’s plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit.” [3]</p> <p>Ignatius, Letter to the Ephesians, 18.2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus existed. - Jesus was the promised Messiah. - Jesus is God.
<p>Tacitus (AD 56-120)</p> <p>Ancient Roman historian</p> <p>Non-Christian</p>	<p>“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 Judea, 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.” [4]</p> <p>Annals 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus (Christus) existed. - Jesus had followers. - Pontius Pilate existed. - Nero persecuted Christians. - Tacitus “hated” Christians because their allegiance was to Jesus not to the worshiped gods of the culture.
<p>Polycarp (AD 69-155)</p> <p>Disciple of John, Bishop at Smyrna</p> <p>Christian</p>	<p>“Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal high priest himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth...and to us with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ and in his Father who raised him from the dead.” [3]</p> <p>The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippian 12.2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polycarp was martyred for being a Christian. - Preached Jesus was a real man. - Preached that Jesus was/is God.
<p>Mara Bar-Serapion (AD 70 - Unknown)</p> <p>Stoic (Syrian) philosopher</p> <p>Non-Christian</p>	<p>“What benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as judgment for their crime. Or, the people of Samos for burning Pythagoras? In one moment their country was covered with sand. Or the Jews by murdering their wise king?...After that their kingdom was abolished. God rightly avenged these men...The wise king...Lived on in the teachings he enacted.” [4]</p> <p>A Letter of Mara, Son of Serapion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus existed. - Confirmed Jesus’s Jewish heritage. - Claimed Jesus was wise. - Affirmed Jesus’s death.
<p>Justin Martyr (AD 100-165)</p> <p>Christian apologist</p> <p>*Apologia is Greek for “Reasoned Defense”</p>	<p>“And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, and appearing formerly in power as Man, and Angel, and in the glory of fire as at the bush, so also was manifested at the judgment executed on Sodom, has been demonstrated fully by what has been said.” [3]</p> <p>Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 128. Translation from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers, I:264.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus existed. - Justin was martyred for following Jesus. - Jesus was/is God. - Jesus was the Messiah.
<p>Pliny the Younger (AD 61-113)</p>	<p>“Th never to falsify their wordy (the Christians) were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Followers of Jesus worshiped him as God. - Christ was a reference to Jesus.

Governor of Bithynia; Connected with Trajan Non-Christan	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,, 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.” [4] Pliny. Letters 10.96-97 (Pliny to the Emperor Trajan)	
Suetonius (AD 121) Roman writer & historian Non-Christian	“Because the Jews at Rome caused constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (Christ), he (Claudius) expelled them from the city (Rome).” [4] Suetonius. Claudius 18.2 Christianity Under Claudius. F.F. Bruce	- Jesus was referred to as Chrestus. - Jesus had followers
Phlegon of Tralles (AD 140) Historian Non-Christian	Origen refers to Phlegon's book of history: “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” [5] Origen. Against Celsus. 2.14. Online	- Jesus existed. - Jesus was crucified. - Notable weather phenomenon occurred around the time of Jesus's death.
Lucian of Samosata (AD 166) Greek Satirist Non-Christian	“The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day,—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account.... You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then 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.” [5] The Lucian of Samosata Project	- Jesus existed. - Jesus had followers. - Jesus was crucified. - Affirmed that Christians would not worship the gods of Greece.

“The narration of the facts is history; the narration of the facts with the meaning of the facts is doctrine. ‘Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried’ that is history. ‘He loved me and gave Himself for me’ that was the Christianity of the primitive Church.” - J. Gresham Machen; *Christianity & Liberalism*, p. 25

1. J. Warner Wallace; *Cold Case Christianity*. Page 216.
2. Bancarz, Steven. 2017. “A List Of Extra-Biblical Sources For The Historical Jesus.” *Reasons for Jesus*. <https://reasonsforjesus.com/a-list-of-extra-biblical-sources-for-the-historical-jesus/>.
3. Barnett, Tim. 2016. “Nine Early Church Fathers Who Taught Jesus Is God.” *Stand to Reason*. <https://www.str.org/w/nine-early-church-fathers-who-taught-jesus-is-god>.
4. Warner, J. n.d. “Is There Any Evidence for Jesus Outside the Bible?” *Cold Case Christianity*. Accessed July 8, 2024. <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/is-there-any-evidence-for-jesus-outside-the-bible/>.
5. Windle, Bryan. 2022. “Top Ten Historical References to Jesus Outside of the Bible.” *Bible Archaeology Report*. <https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2022/11/18/top-ten-historical-references-to-jesus-outside-of-the-bible/>.