

ORIGEN AND BOOK 20 - DOES HE MENTION JESUS CHRIST?

Christians want to believe that the historian who lived around the time of Jesus, Josephus, gave witness that there was such a man and who reportedly rose from the dead. One bit written about Jesus is dubious so they are happy that in Josephus' book 20 there seems to be a more conclusive reference to Jesus as being the brother of James.

Josephus only mentioned James the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ.

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; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity. 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; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: 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, 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; 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. 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.

Origen wrote, "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 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. See his Commentary on Matthew, Book 10, 17th Chapter.

Origen is clear then that the Testament of Flavius is Josephus which reads like he was a firm believer in Jesus is an insertion by some fraudster.

He wrote this against critic of Christianity Celsus concerning Josephus, Now this writer, 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. Against Celsus, Book 1.

Ian Wilson wrote, "In the third century AD the Christian writer Origen expressed his astonishment that Josephus, while disbelieving that Jesus was the Messiah, should have spoken so warmly about his brother. This information from Origen is incontrovertible evidence that Josephus referred to Jesus before any Christian copyist would have had a chance to make alterations" (Jesus the Evidence, page 53, Pan, London, 1985). This would naturally be about the book 20 record of the brother of the so-called Christ, James, being put to death. The trouble is, our current book 20 does not mention this great commendation. And it only takes a few minutes to tamper with a text so who is Ian Wilson trying to kid that nobody had a chance to interpolate before Origen? We don't know the circumstances so how can we be sure?

It is a mistake to argue that Josephus must have originally written a condemnation of Christ in the Testament for the line with its calling Jesus so-called Christ could be taken to say it all, that he didn't like him, and so was enough to make Origen write as he did. Origen would have known anyway from the life story of Josephus that he never acknowledged Christ. So Josephus did not need to mention Jesus at all. There is no evidence against the possibility that Origen's copy of Josephus never mentioned Jesus but just mentioned James and that Origen knew from other sources that Josephus had no time for Jesus.

Origen and Eusebius both stated that the reason Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD was because the Jews had killed James the brother of Jesus and that Josephus declared it in his book. The problem is that Josephus' works as we now have them never did. He Walked Among Us (page 73) tries to pretend that perhaps Origen made a mistake and Eusebius followed him and that Origen was thinking of what had happened soon after the killing of the Baptist to Herod's men. Not only is that

implausible (two scholars making the same mistake?) and mere useless speculation but the Church always thought that the destruction of Jerusalem happened because it was predicted by Christ and happened because the Jews rejected Christ. Therefore they would not have followed Josephus to the extent for contradicting their faith unless they couldn't deny that he wrote that the destruction happened for a different reason. Eusebius did do his homework and had the Josephus writings before him. We see then that something has been lost from Josephus where he speaks of this James and it is only the one place. That means there could have been an interference and what we have now about James is all that is left. If so then the insertion of a Jesus bit could have been made or perhaps Josephus wrote that James was the brother of John who invented Jesus the so-called Christ and the "John who invented" has been lost? Even if it makes it possible that the passage was interfered with that is enough for us to say that there is no evidence that Josephus really spoke of Jesus. Maybe he did but we can't say one way or the other so he is of no service to us.

Josephus according to Eusebius and Origen and not our version of him wrote that the siege of Jerusalem "happened to the Jews in requital for James the Righteous, who was a brother of Jesus known as Christ, for though he was the most righteous of men, the Jews put him to death". The book 20 record they had has it that Josephus expressed his sadness at James' tragic murder which took place at the hands of the Jews. No way would he have done that. He didn't need to when he was writing history not his emotional biography. It was an offence against his religion to say that the disciples of false prophets like Jesus deserved to live. The Law of God given through Moses decreed death for apostates and heretics. The charges against James, that he was a law-breaker were true. He broke the Law by twisting Old Testament texts to make it seem as if they spoke of Christ and claimed to be a prophet of God when he wasn't. Their Josephus does not tell us who James was or anything about him which is strange. If James was the blood-brother of Jesus who claimed to be a king then the Romans would wanted rid of James and would have killed him to phase out a possible bloodline of the throne of Israel. Josephus would have been insulting his own people and Rome by praising James then. I am saying that somebody has been editing the passage which means that the reference to James being the brother of Christ may have been an insertion.

When Origen thought that it was odd that Josephus who didn't believe in Jesus praised his brother James so warmly then isn't he saying that it is probable that something here in Book 20 is not authentic? Could Josephus have considered glorifying a man like James who according to Hegesippus, who wrote in the early second century, that James never took a bath and went into the Temple dirty contrary to Jewish Law and the Law of God? No. It looks like James was a fanatic who liked to provoke the Jews and cause trouble and who cannot be considered worth listening to in matters of religion. According to the same source, James was a vegetarian, which was a most serious heresy for the law of Moses commanded meat-eating. The warmth that strikes Origen is not in our current Josephus and frankly never could have been.

The early Christians believed that the world was to end soon and Rome overthrown. That undermined service to the Roman Empire so there was no way Josephus could have dared to say he cared about James or that James was a good man. Yet the older version of Josephus says he did and our own version these days does not. This tells us that somebody probably inserted a pack of lies about James in Josephus and after Eusebius it was shorted and became our modern version. Essentially, Josephus probably never mentioned James at all. We have no evidence that he did.

There is a taunting element in what Origen and Eusebius had in their Josephus when he appears to gloat over Jerusalem being destroyed to avenge James. Josephus would not have written in such a fashion. He may have supported Rome but he loved his people. Rome would not be impressed by him if he held that God takes revenge for that would mean he believed their day was coming for they took over and desecrated the Holy Land.

James would have claimed to have been the earthly mouthpiece for Christ. He was in effect a Christ himself for that reason. A man claiming to be in touch with the true king is as bad as a man who claims to be the true king. For Josephus to praise James would mean he was betraying Rome which did not tolerate rivals. Josephus would not have done that. And if he had he would have been compelled to correct it. Calling James Jesus the Christ's brother would only draw attention to James' role too – Josephus simply did not refer to Jesus here at all.

It is a mistake to think that maybe when Josephus praised James and called him the brother of the so-called Christ he did not mean to infer he was accepting this Christ as a decent person. Of course he did for Christ would have been the centre of James' spirituality and life. Jewish law condemns the followers of fake prophets as evil and any Jew who respects them as evil apostates.

The real Josephus text says that many of the Jews were incensed when James was accused of transgressing the law and even died with him because they protested. Josephus did not praise James or say that he was the brother of Christ because that implies that James followed Christ and was a heretic which a righteous man in the eyes of the Jews would not do or be. And it is impossible to believe that the Jews would have died with him. The Jews would not have publicly killed James when it would have led to such a bloodbath. They were not that stupid. Josephus would have defended James instead of causing antagonism by expressing sorrow for him and saying nothing in his defence for it made Josephus look bad.

By the way, if Josephus reported that some of the Jews opposed the death of James and/or regarded the disaster that

followed as a retribution from Heaven for it, it is a clear hint that Josephus rejected the early Christian claim that James was one of the most important living witnesses and supporters of Jesus Christ. The Jews hated Jesus as a false prophet. The inference is that James either did not believe in Jesus or somebody inserted the words that link James to Jesus as his brother. If Josephus liked James that makes it hard to understand how he could say he was the brother of the so-called Christ which reflects badly on James and leave it at that. He would have said that James had nothing to do with the Christ so somebody did insert the words.

So we have proof that somebody was tampering with the reference to James and Christ in book 20 and have no reason to trust what is said about them in the version that is accepted now. Somebody was trying to fabricate evidence for the existence of Jesus where Josephus may have mentioned James. That shows the existence was being challenged at the time the forgery was put in.

Did Eusebius and Origen have a bad copy of Josephus?

If the Christians had been using a different Josephus from the correct one they would have known about it. Obviously, the Christians had passed off their Josephus as the real one. The one that was closer to the original surfaced later and became standard. This indicates that quite a bit of interfering with the text in the interest of Christian propaganda had taken place.

Even if Origen had verified the existence of the passage about James and Jesus it would not prove that it was not an interpolation for there was plenty of time to insert one before he came along.

Whatever the truth about book 20 is, people were keen to tamper with the Jesus bits!