

## RECONSTRUCTING JOSEPHUS

It is agreed that Flavius Josephus did not write the testament about Jesus in his book but some scholars say it was tampered with and was not totally inauthentic. That still invalidates the text as being much good for you don't know what was left out or altered. The Christians have always needed him to at least mention Jesus for if he did not that was as good as saying the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels was just hype and lies. The forger and today's believers are as needy as each other.

An Arabic version of Josephus (it's in page 82, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Volume One or see page 175, Jesus Hypotheses) was found in 1971 that says that Jesus was maybe the Messiah and drops the stuff about him doing big wonders and does not say he was maybe more than a man or that the Jews had anything to do with his crucifixion. It says that Pilate sentenced him to die which does not necessarily mean he did die and after that his followers said they saw him alive - so it does not say he rose but only that people said he did. So it does not even say that Jesus rose from the dead for it neither affirms or denies that Jesus died. It therefore admits that there was no reason why Jesus couldn't have survived the crucifixion. It does not say that the tribe of Christians has survived to the present day or that Jesus taught only the truth. It just says he was a wise and good man who had many Jewish and Gentile disciples who said he appeared three days after he died on a cross because of Pilate and who might have been the Christ the prophets foretold. The Arabic version seems to come from the fourth century. The question is how anybody can know it is that old when the copy is a tenth century one! (see page 45, He Walked Among Us). And another problem is that the manuscript was written by a Bishop Apapius (page 83, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Vol 1.) But at least it proves that the version we have already got could have been an interference and afterwards interfered with itself. Perhaps the Arabic version is the first version of the Testament. It might have been what was originally forged.

Josephus could not even say that Jesus was maybe the Christ for that made Rome look bad and called the Jews to disloyalty to Rome. Jesus had to be referred to as either "called the Christ" or a "false Christ".

It seems all reconstruction theories are doomed to failure because Jesus was simply not famous enough at that time to merit a place in Josephus' work. What if he wrote, "At this time there lived a man called Jesus if it be lawful to say he was a man at all? The tribe of Christians named after him exists to this day." How about that for a reconstruction? The words attributed to Josephus "if he ought to be called a man" could mean "if he ought to be called a person" which would be an euphemism for saying "if he existed". Or maybe he wrote, "At this time there was said to be a Jesus, etc."

It is imagined that the reconstructed version would not be of much help doctrinally to the Church so that was why it was never cited and Eusebius or somebody altered it for religious propaganda purposes to make it useful and gave it popularity (Josh McDowell's Evidence for Jesus: Is It Reliable?). This is altogether nonsense for the Gnostic heretics who threatened the very existence of the early Church denied that Jesus was crucified and the Church needed something like Josephus's Testament to say that he was. When they never used the reference to the crucifixion though they desperately needed a witness from outside their own ranks for the Gnostics did not trust anybody in the Church that proves that the reference to the crucifixion was not in Josephus even if there was some material about Jesus in it. There was nobody else they could use either which suggests that there was no evidence for the biggest thing in Jesus' life, his crucifixion.

Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography, John Dominic Crossan, HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1994 remarks on page 38 that Josephus' treatment of the story of John the Baptist is strange and uncharacteristic of Josephus. Josephus would never praised apocalyptic and end of the world prophets such as John and was against them as they promoted instability in the empire. Yet he describes John as a good man. He says that John's followers obeyed his every request and was about to gain such control over a huge number of people that Herod started to worry and decided to get rid of him. Strangely Josephus takes some time to assert that John's baptism did not have sacramental powers but was merely a sign of repentance. He says it was administered to the Jews. Then he says that "others" joined John's huge fan base. He doesn't say who the others are. This has been worked over by someone. The account simply says that John was executed at Macheras. The gospels alone say that John was executed by beheading. They say that the daughter of Herodias manipulated Herod to have him killed. The account may have been invented by the author of the first gospel because it matches a story in Livy's History of Rome Book 39 that could have been known to him when he sojourned in Rome.

John Dominic Crossan asks why John baptised in the Jordan when there was plenty of water in other places. He concludes John was symbolically taking people to the wilderness. They got baptised and were sent back into the promised land as it were after being purified in the waters. The baptism was a symbolic purification and shows that John was expecting a holy war and sanctioning it. This war would drive the Romans out of the Holy Land (page 49, Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography).

Some scholars accept some phrases in the report about Jesus as genuine but the whole thing could easily be an

interpolation. Perhaps the bit: “At this time there was a man called Jesus if it be right to call him a man” meaning that Jesus was first known through apparitions so Jesus might have been a vision and not a man was all he wrote. Christians argue that he said that because Jesus did miracles and taught the truth that was why he was reluctant to call him a man. This is obviously not true for Josephus had no problem calling the Jewish prophets who did miracles and taught the truth men. The passage looks as if somebody didn’t like Josephus saying that Jesus perhaps should not be called a man and altered it. That would mean Josephus wrote that Jesus was possibly a vision – he could have been an unknown man who allegedly started appearing to people after his supposed resurrection. It is possible that apparitions happened and were claiming that Jesus had been put to death discreetly under Pilate and that the apparitions were the first time Jesus was ever heard of. Perhaps some of those who had the visions eventually pretended to have known Jesus before his crucifixion. If you are going to argue that some of what Josephus has was really written by Josephus the simplest reconstruction is this: “At this time there was a man called Jesus if it be lawful to call him a man was a teacher of the truth and a worker of miracles and the tribe of Christians named after him is not extinct to this day.” In the Testament as we have it we see that the main point is that there was a possible man called Jesus and the other details are just to support this assertion. The forger wouldn’t insert this unless there were people doubting the existence of Jesus.

It is unthinkable that so shortly after saying Herod got rid of the harmless John the Baptist just because he had a lot of followers and there was a fear that they might rebel under his guidance that Josephus would write that Jesus was active and was allowed to copy the Baptist by winning over many people for that wouldn’t happen.

Josephus is depicted as calling the believers Christians when in fact the name was only given to believers at Antioch and a host of names were used, Nazarenes, Jesusers, the Way and so on. Only two New Testament writers use Christian and it was given as an insulting nickname which was why it was slow of catching on and also there was the problem that there were as many Jesus faiths as there was followers of Christ. The official name used by Rome as late as 60 AD was Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) so Josephus did not mention Christians.

Later he referred to James as the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ which could mean that he thought that James was the brother of some obscure man who had come back as a ghost which would mean that Josephus did not claim to have any evidence that Jesus lived. We have seen from Paul that Jesus was entirely known through visions and so it might have been “revealed” by some prophet that Jesus was an unknown brother of James’ through a long-lost mother. It is possible that brother of Christ or the Lord or whatever was a honorific title given to James. Josephus would not mention Christ without trying to debunk him for he didn’t like false Christs and was devoted to Rome’s cause and it was dangerous to draw attention to James being of Christ’s royal blood if the expression is literal. That is why many believe that the reference to Christ in the text is an interpolation. All agree that Josephus was tampered with by a Christian copyist so there is no reason to take any reference to Christ at face value.

It is certain that some interfering person inserted the “clarification” that James was Jesus’ brother. Hegesippus declared that James was holy from birth, was allowed into the holy places of the Jews as a unique privilege, and was so strict about the Jewish law that he wore linen and wouldn’t touch wool, and he wouldn’t wash himself or cut his hair. Because his loyalty to Jewish tradition was so rigid he was nicknamed James the Just or Righteous. The brother of a man who altered the Jewish traditions and condemned them and who was believed to have been a false Messiah and who yearned for the destruction of the Temple, the very life-force of Judaism, would not have been so greatly esteemed among the Jews. The designation of James as Jesus’ brother, if literally meant, is an insertion. Early tradition was in the habit of describing people who looked like Jesus or were like him other ways as brothers and even as twins. Thomas was reckoned to be the twin of Jesus. Hegesippus wrote in the early second century and had been a Jew before he converted to Christianity. Palestinian in birth, he knew what he was talking about.

According to the letter of Paul to Philemon Christians believed you could make somebody you loved your brother or sister by blood even if they were not a blood relation. Paul told Philemon that Onesimus was not just a brother in the Lord but a blood brother from now on. A brother in the Lord means a non-literal brother but Paul’s saying Onesimus who was not related to Philemon was more than that and a blood brother indicates plainly that you can become a literal blood brother by adoption. This practice could have confused people about James and made them think he really was born a brother of Jesus’.

Even if the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ reference is real, it was not a statement Josephus even hinted he had any evidence for. It was James he wrote about. He wasn’t even looking at the Jesus evidence. It therefore has no more value than somebody saying that Katie King visited the séances of Florence Cook while writing about Florence. Katie King was a materialised spirit that was perhaps the medium, Florence, in disguise.

James is certainly not the brother in any sense of the rebellious and turbulent figure we have in the gospels. That he was given this title of the just or the righteous proves plainly that the gospel history is dubious. How could the supporter of a heretic like Jesus been so greatly esteemed among the Jews of Palestine?

The fact that somebody had to put a heap of dogmatic assertions about Jesus in Josephus just to show he existed proves that Jesus did not exist. Paul clearly showed that the only reason to believe in Jesus was visions so that supersedes anybody else who said that Jesus lived for they came along after Paul's time. Also Paul had the most influence in the early Church and since he was an apostle and the apostles were special witnesses of Jesus and the heads of the Church it follows that what any of them says comes first. And by the way, there is no reason to believe that any gospel was really written by an apostle and most scholars agree. So if Paul says there is no evidence for Jesus but visions that is the case. Period.

## FINALLY

The idea that the Testament isn't all a forgery is really asking us to believe in the existence of Jesus over fanciful evidence. It is sheer speculation and everybody just guesses what the reconstruction is. However some Christians feel the Testament was just a complete replacement for what Josephus really wrote which might have been an accusation that he was a scoundrel who deserved to be executed and who arranged a fake resurrection. They wonder if the Jewish lie that Jesus was stolen from the tomb by his disciples that Matthew says they believe to this day could have been repeated in Josephus's treatment of Jesus.

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