

Did Tacitus Mention Jesus Christ?

Christians lie that Tacitus spoke of Jesus and so Jesus existed. That is just their scraping at the bottom of the barrel in a desperate question for corroboration that Jesus lived. The evidence for Jesus is not good and there is no independent evidence. You may not need independent evidence for everybody but you always need it for figures like Jesus who seem too good and miraculous to be true and when their main events, birth, deeds and death strain credibility. Morally speaking independent evidence is necessary as well for the story is based on terrible accusations against the Jews and the human race and Jesus spends more time criticising people than preaching love.

Tacitus mentioned Christ not Jesus. Surely Tacitus knew that there were several people using the title Christ or given it in that age? Why no first name?

It could be that the extreme penalty Christ got under Pilate was torture to death for the context is about torture.

Tacitus is regarded by Christians as verifying Jesus' existence which is odd. Why is Tacitus reliable for that and not when he hints how Christ was mischievous for causing a mischievous superstition?

TACITUS

The Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus who died in 117 AD condemned Christianity. In 115 AD he wrote his Annals and declared that Christ – he doesn't call him Jesus - had been made to face the supreme penalty (?) under Pontius Pilate, lived in Judaea and created a new system of pernicious superstition.

ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Chrestianos appellabat. auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluent celebranturque. igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens haud proinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt.

Translation: 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 Judæa, 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. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.

Christians say he plucked this information the Roman legal records and sceptics counter that he was only taking for granted what Christians were saying which would mean he could not be used as proof for the existence of Jesus. Some historians even today take Christian yarns for granted. They are only speculating that Tacitus used records. His information was so skeletal and general that he did not need to. And even if he did use records there is no reason to believe they were authorised Roman ones or even Roman ones at all!

Tacitus said, according to some translations of his work, that Christ had the extreme penalty or other translations make out that he wrote that Christ was executed. The best understanding is that as the context is about Christian torture and perhaps death but not necessarily that the penalty Christ got was also torture. There is no reason to believe though some do that extreme penalty means execution or crucifixion. Tacitus did not say that Christ was crucified. He wrote scathingly about the Christians trying to turn his readers against them and if Christ had been crucified he would have said so for crucifixion was a disgrace and marked the victim as a criminal. It would have repulsed those who had heard of Christ. The Tacitus Christ is not necessarily Jesus Christ.

Tacitus said that the death of Christ was a temporary setback for the Christians for Christianity exploded in Judaea and in Rome as if the Christians existed when Christ died. The gospels say that everybody had turned against Jesus and there is no evidence that any of the handful who stood by Jesus believed in him at that time. They probably did not and proved it when they did not attend the execution. So it was a case of destruction of Christianity rather than a setback. He said that the superstition was "checked for a moment" when Christ perished and then exploded again – but killing the ringleader and not the supporters is a strange kind of checking and the gospels say the Romans and Jews never went after the apostles even though it was feared that the people might come out in support of Jesus perhaps as a result of the apostles raising the alarm.

Tacitus has to be saying that the whole group that followed Christ was eliminated as well which makes the apostles and the New Testament authors to be serious liars and impostors.

Tacitus says the Christian faith was a shameful and evil and dangerous religion during the spread afterwards. If he read that in the records he allegedly had then one wonders how Christians can insist upon the importance and reliability of these records. Why is he is trusted with Christ who lived decades before and not trusted with his negative history of the Christian Church as a sect full of poison and evil though this history is more recent and the sect was intermingled with his society? Prejudice and wishful thinking are the answers!

When Tacitus believed the slander – if that is what it was! - about the Christians perhaps he was depending on hearsay for all the information he gave on Christ and Christianity (which Turton admits to believing in his *The Truth of Christianity*, page 379) or perhaps he never believed that a Christ existed but just wanted to say he was tortured or executed for that was considered to be a one sentence refutation of Christianity in those days as even Paul's First Corinthians attests. People couldn't believe that an tortured or executed man could be the Son of God. Obviously, if Christianity was so bad its supporters would have been killed as soon as they opened their mouths which contradicts the book of Acts which has them preaching with impunity for long enough. Tacitus is hinting that it was a secretive religion for only one that keeps its head low could be slandered like that. This makes sense if the Jews and Romans went to such trouble to get rid of Jesus for they would not have let a new cult get off the ground. Nobody trusts secret cults and their stories that much. The secrecy would suggest that it was not the resurrection that was responsible for the conversion explosion – if there was an explosion at that time which nobody apart from cranks believes now. The secrecy was useful if the Church sought to fabricate evidence for a Jesus of history.

Tacitus says that the superstition rose in Judaea. It did not. Mark says that Jesus lived in Galilee and launched his cult there in a huge way and went to Judea to preach the good news apparently after John had been jailed. Most of Jesus' activities took place in Galilee (Galilee, Biblical Dictionary and Concordance, New American Bible). Why would Tacitus try to be accurate in relation to Christianity for it was the dirt, imagined and real, his audience wanted not the facts?

Tacitus never mentions Jesus but just Christ. Tacitus refers to Jesus as Christ thinking that Christ was Jesus' name but it was only his job description (page 51, *Jesus the Evidence*). Lots of people were called Christ and were executed under Pilate so could there have been a mistake? Tacitus is depending on hearsay and so he cannot be accepted as evidence for Jesus. When he thinks the Christians are depraved and evil it shows that his source for the religion and Christ was or was probably gossip. It was all he had to go by. It was all anybody could go by in those days in relation to Jesus and his sect. If Tacitus had known about Jesus he would have called him the so-called Christ instead of giving him a royal title that implied that Rome had no business running Jesus' country when he was crucified.

The gospels say poor Pilate was blackmailed by the Jews to kill Jesus. And why did Tacitus not exonerate Pilate being the whitewasher he was for Rome if Pilate was really forced by the Jews?

And Tacitus calls Christ the founder of the name Christian. Jesus was not. The name started off decades later as a nickname. You don't say that Jesus was the founder of the name Mormon even though Mormonism is supposed to be true Christianity unless he was there in 1829 when the Mormon Church was established.

Jesus could not have been the only Christ tortured or crucified or at least executed under the maniacal Pilate so Tacitus who is writing for those who don't know anything about this Christ would have named him if he meant Jesus or if there had been any decent reason to believe in the existence of Jesus. It could well be that Tacitus thought that Christ was somebody other than Jesus and the evidence supports that notion. Somebody who perhaps used the Roman name Chrestus and not Jesus. Perhaps it was somebody who had no name but Christ. This would not be Jesus who took the title Christ late in his ministry according to the gospels.

If you read Tacitus one thing is very strange. He says Nero cruelly persecuted a class of men called Christians and that Christ the founder of their name underwent the extreme penalty under Pilate and the pernicious superstition was stopped but broke out again in Judea and in the capital probably meaning Jerusalem. He then says the Christians were loathed for their hatred of the human race. He never says it is a religious sect but a superstition started by Christ. The question is, what superstition does Tacitus have in mind? Some speculate that he meant the resurrection of Jesus. But Tacitus being a pagan would have believed Jesus could have risen from the dead. He could have thought that Jesus was just a wayward god like many of the other wayward gods of Rome. When he says the extreme penalty endured by Christ stopped the superstition for a while only for it to break out again he means the whole corpus of Christian teaching. Tacitus was suggesting that the Christian teaching was religious and full of vice and hatred and in that sense it was superstitious nonsense. Since he condemns the Christians for vices and hatred that is probably the superstition.

The gospels themselves show us that Christianity is vice and encourage the idea that the more you sin the more you will love God when he forgives you. The claim that true Christians hate the human race is accurate for the Bible sees nothing

but sin in the world and you can't hate the sinner for if you hate the sin that is personal and involves the sinner being hated. Jesus came to pretend to hate sin but his real purpose was to reward it by paying the price for it in our place so that we could come to him with weak and nearly useless repentance and still get away with it. But the intensity and ferocity of his condemnation of Christian immorality suggests that he had a dangerous and violent sect in mind. This would suggest that the sect was not that of Jesus Christ which wasn't that bad. It suggests that he had the wrong messianic sect in mind. In other words, maybe there was a sect of violent zealots following some Christ who died under Pilate and by mistake he thought they were the Christian sect.

Tacitus is no help at all in verifying the historical Jesus. All he does is prove that this man's existence is doubtful.

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BIBLE VERSION USED

The Amplified Bible

The King James Version