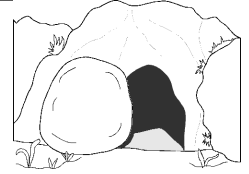


The Resurrection of Jesus

The Extra-Biblical Writers (8 of 12)



A key hinge of Christianity is the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Without the resurrection, Jesus of Nazareth bears a similar resemblance to other founders of world religions—revered, but in blinded devotion. With the resurrection, Jesus is separated from the founders of other world religions and can rightly make the claim: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).

One mistaken assumption of resurrection skeptics is the belief little evidence exists for the resurrection outside of the circle of Jesus’ disciples. The purpose of this article is to prove the fact of the resurrection was not only circulated among the original disciples but was documented among unbelievers too in extra-biblical writings.

For example, antagonistic remarks about the resurrection can be found amongst the pens of secular writers. While these unbelievers did not confess faith in Jesus, their writings indicate the resurrection was being circulated in the first century.

The Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus, once wrote, “...the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also...” (*Annals XV*, 44). In the context of this passage, the historian speaks of the “Christians” and their leader “Christus.” What influential teaching began in Judea and spread throughout the world due to the efforts of Christians? Read between the lines and Corne-

lius Tacitus is bearing first-century testimony to a belief in the resurrection of the dead. Suetonius, the court official under Hadrian, made a similar statement about the Christians in A.D. 64 (*Lives of the Caesars*, 26.2).

Lucian of Samosata, a 2nd-century Greek satirist, once wrote of Christians,

“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...” (*The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13).

Lucian obviously believes the Christian belief in “resurrection” is misguided. Yet, his work is an unmistakable admission that the Christians in the second century believed in life after death because of Christ!

Flavius Josephus was a first century Jewish historian. In his *Jewish Antiquities* he writes,

“...there was about this time Jesus...a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure...those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again

the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold...” (XVIII, 33).

Josephus was a Jew, not a Christian. Yet, his first-century historical writings admit the resurrection of Jesus. The belief in the resurrection was not just a hidden secret among early Christians. Others knew too.

In addition to uninspired secular and Jewish sources, we have uninspired Christian writers verifying the resurrection of Jesus. Such post-apostolic writers include...

- Clement of Rome, a first-century bishop in Rome.
- Ignatius, a disciple of the apostles who wrote several letters.
- Aristides, who wrote to the Roman Emperor Antonius Pius (A.D. 138-161).
- Justin Martyr (100-167 A.D.).

All of these men provide extra-biblical testimony to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is more abundant than the historical evidence for the life of Tiberius Caesar. Thirty-one authors refer to Jesus within 150 years of His life. Yet, only four authors confirm the historicity of Tiberius Caesar within 150 years of his life. If there is not enough evidence to believe in Jesus, we might as well quit believing in Tiberius Caesar too. *JRW*

Due to space restraints, we could not include the abundance of evidence but would be glad to supply the information...contact us and ask for it and we’ll provide it.