



# FAITH NOTES

## October

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2020

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Church Family and Friends,

We have recently spoken of the Authority of Christ in our Sunday messages. Many scriptures have been given to show just where Christ receives His authority and just what He has authority to do. But it occurred to me that those who object to the idea of a Savior, or to God(Jesus) in general, is that there are no extra-biblical references to a person referred to as Jesus of Nazareth.

The same book I referenced last month, *The Shortest Leap*, by A.L. Van Den Herik, refers to a 2010 broadcast of *Larry King Live* where Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists, made the claim that "there is not one shred of secular evidence there ever was a Jesus Christ." Stating further that the idea of Jesus and Christianity is a modern invention, creating the figure of Jesus from other gods who had similar origins and stories as the stories of Jesus. In other words, Biblical writers completely made up the person and work of Jesus, shaping the character into what they wanted it to be. So then, what authority to shape and mold our lives would such a literary creation have?

Herik refutes Johnson's claim rather easily(a claim that was not disputed in the least when made on the aforementioned show) by pointing to many different references to Jesus in non-christian sources, all within 150 years of His life (some 2,000 years ago). I just want to give you a sampling of those references. Sources include Roman, Greek and Jewish historians Tacitus, Suetonius, Thallus, Phlegon, Pliny the Younger, Lucian, Celsus, Josephus, as well as The Jewish Talmud- the written record of Jewish oral tradition, and even Roman Emperors Trajan and Hadrian.

Of course, there is also the famous Emperor Nero who blamed a fire that devastated the city of Rome on Christians in 64 A.D. Tacitus referred to this event and specifically claimed that Christians were named after one known as Christus (Christ), who "suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius, at the hands of...Pontius Pilate." That "ultimate penalty", of course, was crucifixion.

References range from dealing with Christians who cause "continuous disturbances" at the "instigation of [Christ]", Christians who refuse to worship any other than Christ, the birth story of Jesus, those seeking natural explanations for the darkness(that set in at the crucifixion) during the full moon of Passover, a proclamation declaring Jesus would be "hanged" (crucified) for "practicing sorcery and enticing Israel to apostasy", and even the reported resurrection 3 days after His crucifixion.

Herik lists no less than twelve extra-biblical sources providing information about Jesus during the 150 year period after the life of Christ. Add to that the number of Christian sources, and the number swells to forty-three! In comparison, there are only ten references to the Roman Emperor Tiberius(contemporary of Jesus, and Caesar during the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus) during the same time period. No one doubts the existence of Tiberius, and yet Jesus is easily dismissed by those who deny or flat out refuse the Authority of Jesus to save.

Jesus was indeed a real person, but He is also God! He is indeed the Savior of the world, and seeks to be Lord of your life. Our need of HIm is just as real as He is. Will you submit to His authority? Will you trust Him?

In Christ,

Rev. Daniel