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Historical proofs of Christ!

This newsletter is going to give historical evidence of Christ's existence and the truth of His Word. If Christ and His teachings are correct, then all of Scripture must also be correct just as Christ said "All Scripture is God breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, the doctrine of creation, a young earth and the Fall must also be trustworthy. The following are small portions of some of the archaeological records or evidences found.

*The name of Pontius Pilate has been found on coins minted from AD 30-31. His name was also found at Caesarea. This shows the historical connection between Christ and Pilate.

*The Existence of the Pools of Bethesda and Siloam as we read about in John 5:1-9; 9:1-41.

*Over 25,000 Biblical sites have been identified by archaeology.

Non-Christian sources

*Tacitus (AD 55-120) Roman historian called the "greatest historian" of ancient Rome known for his moral "integrity and essential goodness." Best known for Annals and Histories. From the Annals about 115 A.D. we read: "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 Tiberias 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 Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center 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. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed." Tacitus, 15:44

*Suetonius: A Roman historian who was the chief secretary of Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138). He writes concerning Claudius, "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from the city." (Suetonius, Claudius, 25.) Concerning those Christians at Rome he writes, "After the great fire at Rome. . . Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief" (Suetonius, Nero, 16).

*Josephus: A Jewish historian (AD 37-97). After Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD he went to Rome and served as court historian

for emperor Vespasian. He writes, "There was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats. . .He was the Christ. . . he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold. . ." (Antiquities 18:3).

*Thallus: (AD 52) Julius Africanus quotes Thallus from his lost writings. Concerning the earthquake of Matthew 27:54ff Africanus writes, "On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun." (Julius Africanus, Extant Writings, XVIII).

*Pliny the Younger: A Roman author and governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor (AD 112). Pliny interrogated Christians turned over to him. He writes, "They (the Christians) were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate and then reassemble to partake of food - but food of an ordinary and innocent kind." (Pliny Letters).

*Emperor Trajan: In a response to a letter from Pliny, Trajan wrote, "The method you have pursued, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those denounced to you as Christians is extremely proper. It is not possible to lay down any general rule which can be applied as the fixed standard in all cases of this nature. No search should be made for these people; when they are denounced and found guilty they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that when the party denies himself to be a Christian, and shall give

proof that he is not (that is, by adoring our gods) he shall be pardoned on the ground of repentance, even though he may have formerly incurred suspicion. Informations without the accuser's name subscribed must not be admitted in evidence against anyone, as it is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and by no means agreeable to the spirit of the age." (Pliny Letters).

*Emperor Hadrian: Serenius Granianus, proconsul of Asia wrote to emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138) regarding the Christians. Hadrian replied, "I do not wish, therefore, that the matter should be passed by without examination, so that these men may neither be harassed, nor opportunity of malicious proceedings be offered to informers. If, therefore, the provincials can clearly evidence their charges against the Christians, so as to answer before the tribunal, let them pursue this course only, but not by mere petitions, and mere outcries against the Christians. For it is far more proper, if any one would bring an accusation, that you should examine it." (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History IV:IX).

*The Talmud: Organized by Rabbi Akiba before his death in AD 135. It states, "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf." But since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was hanged on the eve of the Passover." (Sanhedrin 43a).

*Lucian: 2nd century Greek satirist. He writes, "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; and then it was impressed on them by their

original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.” (Lucian, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13).

*Mara Bar-Serapion: A manuscript written by a Syrian named Mara Bar-Serapion while in prison sometime between the late first and third centuries AD. It reads, “What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the statute of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; he lives on in the teaching which he had given.” (Syriac Manuscript).

*Acts of Pontius Pilate: A lost document recorded by Justin Martyr (AD 150) and Tertullian (AD 200). Both state it was an official document of Rome that Pilate is said to have written: “And the expression, ‘They pierced my hands and my feet,’ was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were fixed in His hands and feet. And after He was crucified, they cast lots upon His vesture, and they that crucified Him parted it among them. And that these things did happen you can ascertain in the ‘Acts’ of Pontius Pilate.” (Justin Martyr, *First Apology* XXXV).

*Phlegon: A freedman of the Emperor Hadrian born about AD 80. Though his writings are lost, others quote him. Origen states, “Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his

Chronicles, not only ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events (although falling into confusion about some things which refer to Peter, as if they referred to Jesus), but also testified that the result corresponded to His predictions.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* XIV).

Origen also wrote, “And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberias Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place, Phlegon too, I think, has written in the thirteenth or fourteenth book of his *Chronicles*.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* XXXIII).

*Clement of Rome: (AD 90-125) A leading elder of the church at Rome. He writes, “The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed in the word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come. So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their first fruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe.” (Clement of Rome, *Corinthians*, 42).

*Ignatius: Bishop of Antioch who was condemned to die in Rome. He wrote letters to Polycarp about AD 110-115. He states, “Jesus Christ who was of the race of David, who was the Son of Mary, who was truly born and age and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and on earth and those under earth; who moreover was truly raised from the dead, His Father having raised Him, who in the like fashion will so raise us also who believe on Him.” (Ignatius, *Trallians*, 9).

*Quadratus: Wrote apology to Emperor Hadrian about AD 125. Eusebius records part of this letter: “The deeds of our Savior were always before you, for they were true miracles; those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only while our Lord was on earth, but likewise when he had left the earth. So that some of them have also lived to our own times.” (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History IV:III).

*Other Gnostic sources not included are: Gospel of Truth; Apocrypha of John, Gospel of Thomas, Treaty On Resurrection.