

# Josephus

(Dr. Swift's Library)



Review by Ella Rose  
Mast

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### A Book Review By Ella Mast

**J**OSEPHUS WAS THE JUDEAN HISTORIAN who wrote his history of his people, as well as the story of the fall of old Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The old translated book entitled Josephus was quoted and misquoted over the years, but in early Christian era we find that the church fathers quoted him quite often. Today even though he has been presented as a Jewish Historian, still we see interest in the writings of Josephus, wonder why? Also since he was born in 37 A.D. then was active in events at the downfall of Old Jerusalem, did he, or did he not have anything to say about **JESUS THE CHRIST?**

Today we have a new book entitled Josephus, written by Steve Mason and he asked some of the same questions, and still he does not quite succeed as he brings out different facts. Josephus grew up in old Palestine, and being an Israelite of the king and Levi lineage he was thus a Priest according to our new author, and therefore he must have known a lot about the Israelite religion, and the events which took place in old Judea as the time came for the fulfilment of Prophecy, that the Temple would be destroyed. Josephus is portrayed as having worked in Galilee for a time, for the Judean government which we now know had been taken over by the enemy. And in his writings then Josephus reached back into events which occurred at the end of the old testament period to lay the background for his story of the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem. Thus he was covering the effect on his own people and of those who had taken over the power in that old land, from the Israelites, and he would then show the results of that occupation.

Now; in these writings of Josephus that are now being presented then Josephus talked about John the Baptist, and also especially James who he called. The brother of Jesus. In the early Christian era it was two famous

church leaders especially who quoted Josephus in their writings, and these two were Origen and Eusebius.

Today as you study the book now by Steve Mason, published in 1992, it would not be interesting unless you knew who the people of the Bible really are, as well as the people of this book. However knowing that then this is very interesting as we learn more about the writings by Josephus as to that time in our history.

The writings of Josephus provided much on the background information for readers of early Christian writings such as the Gospels. Josephus gave us a history of King Herod, and his sons, Archelaus and Antipas; also he wrote of the Roman Pontius Pilate, and his part in the events that took place at that time, as well as the High Priests Ananus (Annas) and Caiaphas, as well the temple in Jerusalem, and even of the region, Galilee where Jesus spent much time. Josephus also wrote of the Samaritans, and the two different types of Pharisees, and then of course of the Sadducees. Thus you see how the writings of Josephus filled the gap in history, between the close of the old Testament, and the birth of Christianity for the New Testament.

Now we read that most early Christians saw themselves as 'true Israel', and as heirs of the Biblical traditions, thus we find them drawing on the words of Josephus, and his description of what occurred in the siege of old Jerusalem by the Romans.

The early fathers were quoted as reminding of the events such as the act of Cannibalism which occurred at that time, as the lady ate her own child, so as to show the type people who were then in Old Jerusalem, for Israelites would not have done such a thing.

It has been a teaching in Christianity that the Destruction of old Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was God's punishment of the Jewish people for their rejection of Jesus. Then by the time of Martin Luther, his tract on "The Jews and

their Lies" reflected the common trend that the Romans were God's instrument, punishing the Jews for their delusions regarding their false Christ, and their persecution of the true Christ.

In those early years Origen and Eusebius travelled extensively in the Roman world and both were able to read and to understand the writings of Josephus. Origen mentions Josephus, many times, and at one point he recorded that some months before the destruction of Jerusalem that strange voices were heard in the Temple saying: "We are departing from here" (Josephus' Was 6.299-230). The early fathers saw this as the moment of collapse for the whole temple regime and actually Judaism itself, (Lam.109) Origen then talks about how the Jews then turned against the disciples, and he sites that the History of Josephus tells of the evils being practiced against the disciples of the CHRIST, and how many people because of their persecution were killed.

Now; consider this, if you were thinking of Josephus as a Jew then you would have trouble understanding why he would be writing more in favour of the Christians than of the Jews?

Josephus wrote that during the Roman siege of old Jerusalem that at one time the Roman General pulled his troops back so as to allow any people who wanted to leave the old city could do so, As Dr. Swift also pointed out, this allowed any of the Israelites who were still in the old city to come out, and this they did. Then the final siege began and then would come the fall of the old city after much hardship for those people who remained.

Now; to understand the writings of Josephus we call attention to our author, Steve Mason's words in his book, Josephus, published in 1992. Although he tried to maintain this illusion that Josephus was a Jewish Historian, he did say that actually the word Jew simply meant Judean. He however tells us more about the life of Josephus, and how at that time he was sent to Galilee as a regional commander in this revolt of the Jews,

and in Galilee Josephus was of course in the company of the Romans, and then spoke on their behalf during the remainder of the siege. Just as happened with the Apostle Paul we find that from that the Jews then turned against Josephus. We wonder if we be correct in saying that Josephus found out who he was as did the Apostle Paul, and realized who the Romans were also? It was the Romans who appointed Josephus to write the history of the events that transpired at that time of the fall of old Jerusalem. Steve Mason then tells us that from the moment that Josephus surrendered to the Romans he faced relentless hatred from the Jews, and some tried to have him executed.

When the early Christian church declared that Josephus had said that Jesus was the Messiah, his fate was sealed, and his name does not appear in either version of the Talmud which was finally edited in the 5th. and 6th century and not in any other early Jewish writings was his name to be found. Thus we asked, was it only then the Christians who called Josephus a Jewish Historian, as they later translated his writings? However all will agree that it was from Josephus that much history of that time was obtained. He also wrote the history of his people, starting with Adam and Eve.

As the enemy gained strength in the early Christian era, then it was not until the 9th century that again the study of Josephus became popular in the western world. This interest began in Germany, and the people began to read once more about the early history of that old area of Palestine. Since this history which Josephus wrote did not come from Judaism, then what was its source? At last we must listen to Josephus, to his own words, we must understand his lineage, his thoughts, and why he wrote as he did, not as the interpreters of old thought he meant.

After all most of the ancient writers did not tell us much about themselves. Those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Gospels, or other writers as well did not tell us much about their own life, but Josephus tells us a great deal about himself, his life, his career, thus why then was his writings so ignored? In fact Josephus opens his "Life" with a pedigree of his Aristo-

cratic heritage, and this was most important to the understanding of his writings. Today we are told that we are not supposed to be interested in our heritage, our lineage, or any class lines. But Josephus wanted you to know that he was born into a certain race, and he expected to remain in that class. Thus his writings reflected this identification status of a certain lineage. In fact in that time the provision of a genealogy was necessary if there was any doubt of one's pedigree.

Thus we find that Josephus insisted that he came from Priestly, Royal roots. In fact these roots were in the Hasmonean line, thus both Priest and King and the first John Hyrcanus is the connection, and then Josephus blends in the Biblical-Israelite theme of desert sojourn, as preparation of divine service, and he was referring to the Essenes. In fact Josephus claims that God chose him to announce to the world the coming fortunes of His Roman Captors, thus he decided to surrender to the Romans. He says that he had earlier received the prophecy as to the success of Vespasian became Emperor, and that Josephus became famous in Rome.

Steve Mason in his book "Josephus" tells us that Josephus was very familiar with his native languages, both Hebrew and Aramaic traditions also, and he was familiar with the Greek language and literature before he left Judea. Our author then told us that, the Greek and Latin words for "Jew" simply meant Judean. In the works of Josephus then Josephus implied that Rome and Judea both had the same kind of traditions and aspirations. He also praised the Maccabees and opposed the wicked King Herod who wiped out his nation and its traditions.

In history we find that King Herod the Great reigned from 37-to-4 B.C. over all of Palestine, At his death his Kingdom was partitioned by the Roman Empire Augustus, and given to three of Herod's sons. Archelaus became national ruler of the Heartland of Judea, Samaria, and the coastal plain. Antipas governed Galilee along with the region of Perea across the Jordan river. It was he who executed John the Baptist. Philip was made Tetrarch of the N.E. Regions of Herod's Kingdom. His wife Herodias was taken by his step-brother Herod Antipas. Herod Agrippa a grandson of

Herod the Great executed the Apostle James, the brother of John, and imprisoned Peter who then escaped. All of Herod's grandsons were called King Herod, and even the great Grandson of Herod the Great, Agrippa II, became king of the north eastern lands of Palestine.

There was some mixing of the Israelite line into the Herod line, since the marriage of an Israelite daughter to a Herod, but only disaster came from that mixing. Josephus also tells us that several times the normal population gathered in Jerusalem at Passover, thus carrying forward our understanding that Israelites out in migration and permanent settlements still came back to old Jerusalem at Passover, and this is also out in the scriptures. Josephus also tells us that the High Priests in Jerusalem at the time of the Messiah were not Israelites, as he recorded that those in power selected their own High Priests, that together the Jewish Rebels and Idumeaus defeated the Chief Priests, thus further leading to God's punishment of the old city. He then enforces this known fact that at the time of Jesus the High.

Priest was a Sadducee, that the True Pharisees and the Sadducees were at opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum. From the immortality of the soul to the denial by the Sadducees who insisted on absolute freedom of will while rejecting an afterlife with its rewards or punishment, the gap was wide.

The Essenes received the unqualified praise of Josephus, while the Sadducees did not, although they were some of the most wealthy people in Judea at that time. He stresses that it was the Essenes who had been granted a knowledge of the future, because of their virtue. He states that the Essenes were to be found in each town of Palestine. In the book of Acts, our author states that the role of the Essenes according to Josephus presentation is taken by the early Christian movement. We would thus surely agree that this teaching carried over into early Christianity. As Josephus talks about John the Baptist, Jesus, and James, then since John the Baptist died before the birth of Josephus, then he must have been recounting tradition, either oral or written, and perhaps both.

Now; as to Jesus, the text of Josephus reads, "About this time comes Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is proper to call HIM a man. For he was a worker of incredible deeds, a teacher of those who accept the truth with pleasure, and He attracted many Judeans as well as man Greeks. This **MAN WAS THE CHRIST**. And when in view of his denunciation by the leading, ruling men of Judea, and the sentence of him to a cross by Pilate, still those who loved **HIM** at the beginning did not cease to do so. He appeared to them on the third day, **ALIVE** again, for the Divine Prophets had announced these countless other marvels concerning HIM. And even now the tribes of Christians named after him, have not yet disappeared."

As pertaining to James the one called, 'The brother of Jesus' Josephus had this to say: Ananus supposing he had the opportune moment with King Festus having died, and Albinus still on the way, convened the Judges of the council for the Sanhedrin and arraigned before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, James by name and some others. Having brought the charge that they violated the law, he handed them over to be stoned.

Those of his friends who were burdened with grief then sent messengers to King Agrippa II pleading for him to stop the doing of such things. They also went then to meet with Albinus as he was making his way from Alexandria." Thus James who was not one of the original disciples, still is mentioned in the Gospels as one of the brothers of Jesus, and we would say one of the sons of Joseph. Mary's son Jesus was of course God, Himself in the flesh. But James is also a leading figure in the Christian era, in the Churches' first generation of existence.

In the beginning of his book, Josephus, the author tells us that the Christians were at first indistinguishable from other Judeans, but by the end of the first century, the Christian Communities were seen as entirely non-Jewish, and this was because of the work of the Apostle Paul. The Christians were then meeting at night, in secret, and men and women together, they shared a worship of one who had recently been crucified as



'Son of God'. These Christians of that early age were rooted in ancient Judean (Hebrew) traditions.



## Dr. Wesley A. Swift

Dr. Wesley A. Swift, the son of a Methodist minister, was called to preach in his teens. He was a dynamic, inspired speaker who taught uncompromising Biblical truths ignored by modernist ministers. His anointed preaching brought forth a high spiritual dimension of understanding to the Kingdom Identity message, giving “life” and “power” to the Sacred Word. Even the antichrists acknowledge that, “Wesley Swift is considered the single most significant figure in the early years of the Christian Identity movement in the United States.”

Dr. Swift founded the Church of Jesus Christ – Christian in the 1940’s, a ministry that spread the Kingdom Identity message nation-wide to YHVH’s Children, the White spirit-race known Scripturally as “sons of God”. By teaching these truths to true Israel, this warrior-priest put fear in the hearts of the enemies of Christ.



Following Dr. Swift’s death in 1970, his widow Lorraine Swift faithfully carried on the Church of Jesus Christ – Christian. We are highly honoured to be able to continue Dr. Swift’s work, by placing those works that we have in print here on our web site ...preserving and earnestly contending for “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”...for any and all to read.

We, at the Covenant Church of Yahweh hope that you will study, enjoy, and appreciate Dr. Wesley Swift’s works.

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