



Messenger Project Newsletter

The Messenger

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A NONPROFIT CORPORATION PROMOTING THE BIBLE THROUGH THE ARTS

Messenger Project Members

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Editor-Publisher of *The Messenger*
Raymond Genovese, Treasurer
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Messenger Notes



Lionel De Leon, Darryl Walker and Ray Genovese

Darryl Walker added lead vocals on the final two songs of our CD. We will be making some minor modifications before the final mix and hope to have everything completed in February, 2006.

We've made improvements at our website and now it is easier to download or listen to our music. Our entire library of songs are categorized in CD and biblical order. We included a special section for *The Word*, our original Christian rock opera. It includes mp3 files of the music with chord charts and scripts for performers and directors.

Lionel and **Joie De Leon's** *Name Him Jesus* was performed at the Huntington Beach **Community Bible Church** Christmas program on December 18th with the worship team and choir. Lionel didn't perform an offertory song on Christmas, but will resume on January 25th with *God, My Savior*.

Non-Biblical References

Tacitus was a Roman historian who wrote *The Annals* in 109 A.D. In this writing, he mentions Nero's decision to blame the Christians for the fire that destroyed Rome in 64 A.D.

Nero fastened the guilt . . . 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 . . . Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome.

Tacitus confirms that Christians derived their name from "Christus" (Christ), who suffered "extreme penalty" (crucifixion) under Pontius Pilate. His mention of "a most mischievous superstition" probably refers to the resurrection.

Pliny the Younger was a Roman senator who wrote a letter to Roman emperor Trajan around 112 A.D. regarding Christians .

They 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 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 confirms that Jesus was worshipped "as to a god" on a fixed day of the week with hymns and vows. He mentions Christians ate "food of an ordinary and innocent kind" to refute accusations by non-Christians of ritual cannibalism.

Flavius Josephus (37-100 A.D.) was a Jewish historian who wrote *Jewish Antiquities*, a 20 book history of the Jews from Creation to A.D. 66. In book 18 is a controversial passage that reads:

*Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. **He was [the] Christ.** And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, 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 these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

Origen (a 3rd century church father) referenced *Jewish Antiquities*, book 18, in his *Contra Celsus*, book 1, chapter 47. Origen wrote that Josephus didn't believe Jesus was the Christ. Church historian Eusebius may have added or altered this section to Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* (referred to as *Testimonium Flavianum*) sometime in the early 4th century.

The **Babylonian Talmud** is a collection of rabbinical writings compiled between 70-500 A.D. Writings that mention Jesus (Hebrew Yeshua) before 200 A.D. include:

On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald . . . cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy."

"Hanged" is synonymous with "crucified" (Galatians 3:13 compares Jesus' crucifixion to the curse of being "hung on a tree"). Jesus' miracles were considered "sorcery" by the Jews (in Matthew 12:24, Pharisees accuse Jesus of healing by the power of Beelzebub). "Enticing Israel to apostasy" was Jesus claiming to be the Christ (in Luke 23, the assembly of priests and rabbis accuse Jesus of subverting the nation by claiming to be Christ, a king).

Lucian of Samosata was a 2nd century Greek satirist who wrote:

The Christians . . . worship a man to this day--the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . [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

Though Lucian was making fun of Christians, he portrayed them accurately. These non-Biblical references give additional insight to the birth and formation of Christianity.