

## The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks – 14

Flavius Josephus, Jewish priest, scholar, and historian who wrote *History of the Jewish War* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*, provided much valuable information concerning New Testament times. He also provided some remarkable evidence which touches on the fulfilment of Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

- F.F. Bruce comments, "Here in the pages of Josephus, we meet many figures who are well known to us from the New Testament: the colourful family of the Herods; the Roman emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius and Nero; Quirinius, the governor of Syria; Pilate, Felix and Festus, the procurators of Judea; the high-priestly families - Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias and the rest; the Pharisees and Sadducees and so on. Against the background which Josephus provides we can read the New Testament with greater understanding and interest." - *The New Testament Documents, are they Reliable?* p.104.

Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2 recording how Herod Antipas had killed John the Baptist, commented about John, "though he was a good man, who bade the Jews practise virtue, be just to one another and pious toward God...." The striking fact about this mention by Josephus, is that while the Jewish leaders did not accept John's authority as a prophet - **Luke 7:29-30** - it was John who identified Jesus as "**the Lamb of God**" - **John 1:29** - Josephus commends John as "a good man", rather than a fraud.

- Last but not least is Josephus' mention of Jesus in *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.3. While the comment in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* refers to this entry in *Antiquities* as "the tampering (if not invention) of a later Christian copyist", respected scholars like F.F. Bruce find no textual evidence for this to have been a later interference with the original text. The general scholarly view is that while this passage in Josephus, called the *Testimonium Flavianum*, is most likely not authentic in its entirety, it is broadly agreed upon that it originally consisted of an authentic nucleus, which was then subject to Christian interpolation and/or alteration. Although the exact nature and extent of the Christian redaction remains unclear broad consensus exists as to what the original text would have looked like

An Arabic version, studied by Professor Schlomo Pines, contains the passage without the parts sometimes considered as additions. Prof. Pines quoted the passage which he translated from the Syriac of the Arabic version, whose wording ties in well with the New Testament, in *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its Implications* (Jerusalem, Israel Academy of Arts and Humanities, 1971) -

- "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous, and many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders".

There are those who refuse to accept Jesus as a historical figure, but they can do so only by ignoring the evidence of history. What can they say against the positive testimony of a historian who clearly did not espouse his teachings? More next time, God willing.