



# The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus

*William Whiston*

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THIS IS A REPRODUCTION OF THE ORIGINAL THAT WAS PRINTED IN 1851. IT HAS OVER 60 ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE BOOK.

**Encounter the world and traditions that Jesus knew.**

**Illuminate your understanding of the New Testament.**

In *The Complete Works* you will discover what the New Testament writers knew about Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, and Solomon and examine an in-depth history of Herod and his infamous family.

Josephus left us the earliest independent accounts of the lives of Jesus, John the Baptist, and James the brother of Jesus. Much of what we know about the beliefs of the Sadducees and Pharisees comes from Josephus. Without Josephus, we would know very little about the Essenes, the ancient Jewish group most frequently associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Features include:

*The War of the Jews*—an account of the Jewish revolt against Rome up to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem

*The Antiquities of the Jews*—a history of the Jews from Creation to the Roman occupation of Palestine

*The Life of Flavius Josephus*—the autobiography of Josephus, who fought against Rome and later served the empire

*Against Apion*—a defense of the origin of Judaism in the face of Greco-Roman slanders

*Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades*—a text Whiston attributed to Josephus

Index of parallels between Josephus's *Antiquities* and the Old Testament including the Apocrypha

## The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus Details

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# From Reader Review The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus for online ebook

## Ethan says

The works of Josephus as translated by William Whiston in the 1700s: Josephus' biography/defense, the Antiquities of the Jews, the Wars of the Jews, and Against Apion. The Kindle edition also features some defenses of Josephus by Whiston.

Josephus is attempting to tell the story of Israel to the Romans, attempting to make sense of the Jewish War, and above all, to justify himself and his conduct in relation to the Jewish War. History has not seen as many brazenly self-propagandistic writers like Josephus who go out of their way to justify themselves about anything and everything. Josephus must always be the hero; God forbid anyone question his decisions or judgment.

Josephus remains an important source for Jewish history from the days of Alexander the Great to his own time, particularly in his treatment of the Herods. He is a witness to the rise of early Christianity; the extent of that witness has been disputed for a long time. Josephus is quite biased against the Jewish zealots who instigated and perpetuated the First Jewish War; they're portrayed in a quite terrible light, but we're likely not to know any better since he remains the best source that comes down to us.

It must always be remembered that Josephus is trying to explain the Hebrews and Judaism to a Greco-Roman world, and he has no compunction in describing Jewish realities in Greek paradigms. Jewish sects are described as if different philosophical schools; Hebrew poetry is described as if it is like Homeric verse. For too long many have gone down unproductive rabbit trails in trying to legitimate the use of these descriptive systems; we do well to note that Josephus has no problem distorting the reality of his own heritage in order to make it comprehensible to the pagans to which he writes.

Another problem is the Whiston translation. It's not the best to begin with, and his notes and 1700s understanding is woefully out of date and likely inaccurate. Caveat emptor with all of his notes. Will someone please do us the favor of translating Josephus for the modern world?

An important source for Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.

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## Curtis Chamberlain says

What a spectacular historical compilation! This book is one of my favorite resources when looking for accurate data on the Holy Roman Empire or Jewish history.

In invaluable resource for any student of history or theology!

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## Brock Meier says

While some commentators caution the readers of this massive work to take some of its history with a few

grains of salt, you won't find a more comprehensive and detailed account of this time and place (the first centuries BC and AD, Judaea).

Flavius Josephus records the unimaginable horror, depravity, and sheer carnage of the "Jewish Wars" in excruciating detail. As I read through the first volume, I kept thinking to myself—"This has to be the bottom, it can't get any worse"—but it always did. By the time I finished I was mentally and emotionally exhausted. This was a time when wars were fought with the brutality of mankind on conspicuous and unfettered display.

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## **Janet Mueller says**

I use this book as a reference to my daily Bible study. The text gives insight into historical aspects of the Bible & clarifies persons as well as their part in the history of God's people. The translation is clear & easy to absorb.

Fascinating read as Josephus writes of evidence of remains of 'the Giants', recorded in Scripture, which he himself has seen. Genesis 6 , 'Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God (fallen angels) saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of men & they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.' Josephus wrote, 'For many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence that they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, That these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants.' The book's translator writes, "This notion, that the fallen angels were, in some sense the fathers of the old giants, was the constant opinion of the antiquity." Josephus writes, "For which reason they removed their camp to Hebron; and when they had taken it, they slew all the inhabitants. There were till then left the race of giants, who had bodies so large, and countenances so entirely different from other men, that they were surprising to the sight, & terrible to the hearing. The bones of these men are still shown to this very day, unlike to any creditable relations of other men." Antiquities of the Jews 5.2.3. "He was seen by one of the enemy (Philistines), his name was Achmon, the son of Araph, he was one of the sons of the giants. He had a spear, the handle of which weighed three hundred shekels, & a breastplate of chain work, & a sword." Ant. 7.12.1.

The 'pillar of salt', written in the Old Testament about Lot's wife who turned to look back upon the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah, was addressed, "But Lot's wife continually turning back to the city as she went from it, and being too nicely inquisitive what would become of it, although God had forbidden her to do so, was changed into a pillar of salt, for I have seen it, and it remains to this day." Antiq.1.11.4. Translator, William Whiston, writes about this, "This pillar of salt, was, we see here, standing in the days of Josephus; and he had seen it. That it was standing then, is all so attested by Clement of Rome, contemporary with Josephus; as also that it was so in the next century, is attested by Irenaeus with the addition of an hypothesis, how it came to last so long, with all its members entire. Whether the account that some modern travelers give be true, that it is still standing, I do not know."

Of Jesus Christ, Josephus writes, "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, & many of the Gentiles. He was (The) Christ; & when Pilate, at

the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those who 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 & ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; & the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." Ant. 18.3.1.

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### **Rod says**

The first half of the book is a chronological exposition of the "Old Testament". The second half is an eye witness account of the war of the Jews and the Roman Empire including the fall of Jerusalem. It is very detailed with graphic imagery.

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### **Jeff says**

I gave this book a "4" for a couple reasons. First of all, the 200 or so pages in The Antiquities of the Jews that cover the Herodian Dynasty are really intriguing. The political maneuverings, the personal friendships with Antony and Roman Caesars, as well as the antipathy of Cleopatra towards Herod the Great reveal a world that was interconnected in a way that I had had no idea before reading this. The internal drama of the Herodian family plays out like a work of Shakespeare. The vast remainder of The Antiquities is basically just a carbon copy of the Old Testament and I recommend that if you have to choose between reading one or the other I recommend the OT. If you've read the OT you will find most of The Antiquities quite tedious I think though there are interesting insights here and there. I did feel that Josephus made a huge attempt to remain detached from the material he was presenting and simply "reveal the facts." When it comes to his own life or the reporting of things done by the Romans one gets the feeling of a much more "rosy-colored" perspective.

Secondly, the Wars of the Jews actually was quite exciting to read...especially for an "old" book. I found myself wanting to read on at the end of every section to find out what would happen. This book covers events of which Josephus was an actual eyewitness and therefore is much richer in detail. It gives an overview of the Herodian Dynasty but does not go even close to the depth that The Antiquities do on that subject.

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### **Stephanie says**

Certain parts of this book were very interesting, especially the Antiquities. It is not easy reading, however. Only those really interested in the historical perspective should plan on investing their time.

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### **Steven Kent says**

Nope, I cannot claim to have read this volume from cover-to-cover, but I have read much of it... including the spurious accounts of his own conversion to Christianity.

It's been a while, but as I recall, Flavius Josephus was a Jewish scholar writing a history of his people for the Romans. Jewish scholars discount him because he wrote for the Romans.

He possessed a restless mind. His plan, as I recall, was to spend a few years practicing life as a Pharisee, then as a Sadducee. I think he planned to try a third discipline but discovered such a deep appreciation for the Pharisaic belief system that he stayed put. As I say, it's been a few years.

I loved Josephus's descriptions of Old Testament era history. I found his explanations of the era between Ezra and Christ indispensable. He is, of course, the only source we have about the siege of Masada.

He is a good writer. Many question his veracity, and maybe they are right; but for novice historians, he is an excellent source.

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### **Alan says**

Tough read, but definitely some very interesting history.

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### **Shane Hill says**

Tremendous read about Jewish History and some tantalizing anecdotes about early Christianity as well from Josephus!! Very dense and detailed book....for those that love ancient history and in particular Jewish History, this is a must read!

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### **Dave Wheeler says**

It is what it says and is in a readable state as in was well edited.

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### **Lee Harmon says**

I don't know if this is a particularly good translation; I've nothing to compare it to, since I've never read any other. It's not the translation I wish to promote, it's the writings. Every Bible scholar, especially New Testament scholars, simply MUST read Josephus.

Josephus was a Jewish historian who wrote his books during the same years that most of the New Testament was being written. That is, the latter three decades of the first century. Josephus was not particularly well-liked among Jews; he abused his governorship, he defected to the enemy when captured by the Roman legions, and he wrote his history of the war to present the Romans in a good light. Given to exaggeration, he taints nearly every chapter of his War of the Jews with self-glorification and political and religious aims. Yet, he remains our most important historian for the war of 67-70 CE, which proved to be the springboard for the spread of Christianity, and to be honest, it's his personal agendas that make his writing so interesting.

Oddly, as much as Josephus was hated, he became very important to Christians, because of his references to Jesus Christ. But scholars now doubt their authenticity. In one passage, the famed Testimonium Flavianum, Josephus names Jesus as the Messiah. Some through the centuries even claimed Josephus to be a Christian. (If you read my book about Revelation, you'll come away with just the opposite opinion; Josephus may have

played a surprising role in the story of Revelation!)

This book contains all four of Josephus' writings:

The Jewish War, which describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The Life of Flavius Josephus, his own autobiography, which ends up as little more than a defense against the various attacks on his integrity during his governorship in Galilee.

Jewish Antiquities, a Bible-driven history of the Jews from the beginning of time.

Against Apion, a defense of Judaism.

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### **Jan Stone says**

Completed a lifelong goal of reading the works of Josephus by reading a few pages each day I was home (I did not take the book with me when I travelled).

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### **D.A. Cairns says**

Heavy, heavy, heavy reading. Unless you're a history nut, or you are insane, leave this one alone. It does possess some interesting nuggets in amongst the endless tales of paranoid and violent despots, but the language is almost impossible to understand: long sentences with weird syntax and very big and obscure words. It's obviously not meant to be read cover to cover, but I attempted it anyway. It was my toilet book, so I figured I could wade through it all eventually.

Wrong. I bailed about two thirds of the way through The Antiquities of the Jews. My tip, if you are brave enough to take on The Works of Josephus, is to speed read through. You'll get the gist and avoid the apoplexy caused by the language.

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### **Mark says**

Put a lot of things into a historical point of view. Helpful to understand the setting and culture.

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