

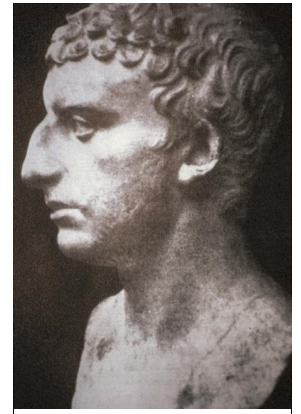
## Book Study #11

## ACTS

## Josephus

**Josephus** (AD 37 – c. 100), also known as Yosef Ben Matityahu (Joseph, son of Matthias) and, after he became a Roman citizen, as Titus Flavius Josephus, was a first-century Jewish historian and apologist of priestly and royal ancestry who survived and recorded the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 . His works give an important insight into first-century Judaism.

Josephus was an important apologist in the Roman world for the Jewish people and culture, particularly at a time of conflict and tension. He always remained, in his own eyes, a loyal and law-observant Jew. He went out of his way both to commend Judaism to educated Gentiles, and to insist on its compatibility with cultured Graeco-Roman thought. He constantly contended for the antiquity of Jewish culture, presenting its people as civilized, devout and philosophical.



A Roman portrait bust said to be of Josephus

The works of Josephus provide crucial information about the First Jewish-Roman War and are also important literary source material for understanding the context of the Dead Sea Scrolls and post-Second-Temple Judaism. Josephan scholarship in the 19th and early 20th century became focused on Josephus' relationship to the sect of the Pharisees. He was consistently portrayed as a member of the sect, but nevertheless viewed as a villainous traitor to his own nation, a view which became known as the classical concept of Josephus. In the mid 20th century, this view was challenged by a new generation of scholars who formulated the modern concept of Josephus, still considering him a Pharisee but restoring his reputation in part as patriot and a historian of some standing. Scholarship post-1990 sought to move scholarly perceptions forward by demonstrating that Josephus was not a Pharisee but an orthodox Aristocrat-Priest who became part of the Temple Establishment as a matter of deference, and not willing association (cf. Steve Mason 1991).

Josephus includes information about individuals, groups, customs and geographical places. Some of these, such as the city of Seron, are not referenced in the surviving texts of any other ancient authority. His writings provide a significant, extra-Biblical account of the post-Exilic period of the Maccabees, the Hasmonean dynasty, and the rise of Herod the Great. He makes references to the Sadducees, Jewish High Priests of the time, Pharisees and Essenes, the Herodian Temple, Quirinius' census and the Zealots, and to such figures as Pontius Pilate, Herod the Great, Agrippa I and Agrippa II, John the Baptist, James the brother of Jesus, and a pair of disputed and undisputed references to Jesus. He is an important source for studies of immediate post-Temple Judaism and the context of early Christianity.

Josephus's two most important works are *The Jewish War* (c. 75) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 94).[6] *The Jewish War* recounts the Jewish revolt against Rome (66–70). *Antiquities of the Jews* recounts the history of the world from a Jewish perspective. These works provide valuable insight into first century Judaism and the background of early Christianity.

**NOTE:** Apologetics is the whole of the consensus of the views of those who defend a position in an argument of long standing. The term comes from the Greek word *apologia* (ἀπολογία), meaning a speaking in defense. Early Christian writers (c 120-220) who defended their faith against critics and recommended their faith to outsiders were called apologists.[1] In modern times, apologists refers to authors, writers, editors of scientific logs or academic journals, and leaders known for defending the points in arguments, conflicts or positions that receive great popular scrutinies and/or are minority views.