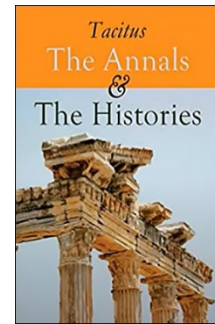


The Annals & The Histories

by Publius Cornelius Tacitus

Known throughout academia simply as Tacitus (56-120 AD). He was a Roman historian, proconsul, and distinguished aristocrat, owing his rank to the Flavian emperors. He is rated by most scholars as one of most reliable Roman historians of any era due to his intimate knowledge of persons and events. Published in 116 AD, *The Annals* is now widely considered one of the most reliable sources for contemporary Roman history. Although the accuracy of some information has been called into question. His lack of sympathy for Jews and Christians should alert us to his Roman biases in general. His early life simultaneously aligned with the writings of the New Testament authors; the Gospel of John would have been penned when Tacitus was about forty years old, giving him a unique opportunity to learn of these men.



Annals, Book 15, Chapter 44

“But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures 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 one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths.

Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus (race track), while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.”