CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Jewish Antiquities

Flavius Josephus · *c. 93–94 · William Whiston*

Those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account: so Josephus begins the preface to the Antiquities, in William Whiston's English. The hosted text is the full work, from the Creation to Josephus's own age. For grades 11–12. Quote Josephus, not only the table of contents. Gravity, and respect for the Scriptures he is retelling.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Why does a Jewish priest writing in Greek retell his people's story from the Creation down to his own day, and how should a school read Whiston's Josephus as a witness beside Scripture, not as a replacement for it?

"Those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account, but for many reasons, and those such as are very"

Preface

Josephus, in William Whiston's English, opens by asking why men write history at all. His own reason, already prepared in the Jewish War, is to set out the antiquities of the Jews for Greek readers, from the Creation to his own time. Teach the work as a witness: a priest who lived the fall of Jerusalem, retelling the Scriptures and the later history of his people. For grades 11–12. It is not a substitute for Genesis or for the later biblical books. Quote the preface and the narrative, not only the chapter list. Gravity; no sneer at the faith Josephus is defending.

KEY CHARACTERS

Josephus
A Jewish priest, already the author of a history of the war, who here retells his people's antiquities for Greek readers

Moses, and the patriarchs
As Josephus retells them, beside the Scriptures and not instead of them

The later high priests and princes
The post-biblical stretch of the work, down toward Josephus's own age

The Greek-reading audience
The readers for whom he says he takes this trouble

WHY A MAN TAKES THE TROUBLE OF A HISTORY

> *"Those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account, but for many reasons, and those such as are very"*
>
> Preface

Grades 11–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Why Men Write Histories

THE PREFACE

Josephus sees that writers have different motives. He will give his own, and will ask the reader's patience for a long work that begins with the constitution of the world.

- The first sentence is exact, including "do not, I perceive."
- Translator: William Whiston. Quote this English.
- For grades 11–12.
- The preface is the right door; do not start only at Adam from a later chapter heading.

> *"Those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account, but for many reasons, and those such as are very"*
>
> Preface

02

From the Creation to His Own Age

THE SCOPE

Book I begins with the constitution of the world and the disposition of the elements, and with the posterity of Adam. The later books come down through Moses, the kings, the exile, and the years near Josephus's own life. Teach the span honestly.

- This hosted file is the Antiquities, not The Jewish War (a different work).
- Do not treat Josephus as a replacement for the Bible; he is a later witness retelling and continuing.
- Keep Whiston's wording, including his older biblical names as printed.
- 11–12.

> *"Those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account, but for many reasons, and those such as are very"*
>
> Preface

03

A Priest, After the Fall of the City

THE AUTHOR

Josephus writes as a Jew, a priest, and a man who has already written of the war. The Antiquities are, among other things, a defense of his people's age and law before a Greek-reading world.

- Teach that motive. It is not vanity only.
- Gravity about Jerusalem and about the Scriptures he retells.
- Do not use the book as a weapon in a later quarrel.
- Quote him, not a summary only.

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>
> Preface

04

Whiston's English

THE EDITION

This is the long-standard public-domain English of William Whiston, Project Gutenberg #2848, complete as hosted. Notes may stand with the text; quote Josephus first.

- The preface's first sentence is the right first quotation.
- Some of Whiston's notes are dated; they are not the antiquity itself.
- Not a modern popular abridgment.
- Complete, as this file prints it.

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>
> Preface

05

Beside Scripture, Not Instead of It

HOW TO TEACH IT

When Josephus retells Genesis, or Moses, or the kings, a school should keep the biblical text in view, and should notice both the faithfulness and the additions of the later historian.

- That comparison is the educational use of the book.
- Respect; no sneer.
- 11–12.
- Do not invent episodes that are not in this file or in Scripture.

> *"Those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account, but for many reasons, and those such as are very"*
>
> Preface

A People's Antiquity · A Priest as Witness · From Creation to His Own Day · Beside Scripture · Why Histories Are Written

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. Jewish Antiquities opens, in William Whiston's English: "Those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account." PG #2848, complete as hosted. For grades 11–12.
2. This is the Antiquities, not The Jewish War. Quote Josephus, not only the table of contents or Whiston's notes.
3. Josephus retells the Scriptures and continues the story to his own age. Teach the book as a witness beside the Bible, not as a replacement for it. Respect; no sneer.
4. Keep Whiston's wording and his older names as printed.
5. Gravity about Jerusalem and about the law he is defending. Do not use the book as a weapon in a later quarrel.

Quotations are verbatim from the William Whiston, Project Gutenberg #2848, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/jewish-antiquities/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.