

Authenticity of the New Testament

صحة العهد الجديد

Examining Authenticity of the NT

1. Is the copy we have today similar to the original? (Authenticity of the Text - صحة النص)
2. Are the authors reliable? (Reliability of the Source - صحة المصدر)
3. Did the events mentioned actually take place? (Authenticity of Biblical History - صحة الأحداث)

صحة النص - Authenticity of the Biblical Text

- Are the biblical texts we have in our hands today similar to the originals?
- How do we assess authenticity of the text?
 - Number of copies available - عدد المخطوطات
 - The earliest manuscripts discovered - أقدم مخطوطات اكتشفت
 - The discrepancy between the copies - الفرق بين المخطوطات

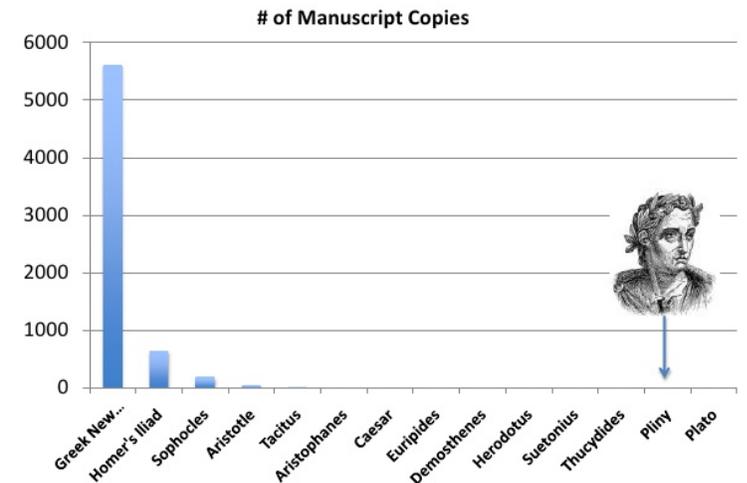
Authenticity of the New Testament Text

| Authors/Works | Recorded | Dates of Mss. | Time Span | Copies Survived |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Caesar | 100–44 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1,000 YRS | 10 |
| Livy | 59 B.C.–A.D. 17 | A.D. 300 | 400 YRS | 27 |
| Plato | 427–347 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1,200 YRS | 7 |
| Tacitus (<i>Annals</i>) | A.D. 56–120 | A.D. 800 | 900 YRS | 3 |
| Pliny the Younger (<i>History</i>) | A.D. 61–113 | A.D. 850 | 750 YRS | 7 |
| Thucydides (<i>History</i>) | 460–400 B.C. | A.D. 100 | 600 YRS | 20 |
| Suetonius (<i>De Vita Caesarum</i>) | A.D. 69–140 | A.D. 800 | 900 YRS | 200+ |
| Herodotus (<i>History</i>) | 484–425 B.C. | A.D. 100 | 600 YRS | 75 |
| Sophocles | 496–406 B.C. | A.D. 1000 | 1,400 YRS | 193 |
| Catullus | 54 B.C. | A.D. 1550 | 1,600 YRS | 3 |
| Euripides | 480–406 B.C. | A.D. 1100 | 1,500 YRS | 9 |

Roman historians

Greek historians and philosophers

New Testament vs. Ancient Works



| Authors/Works | Recorded | Dates of Mss. | Time Span | Copies Survived |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Demosthenes | 383–322 B.C. | A.D. 1100 | 1,300 YRS | 200 |
| Aristotle | 384–322 B.C. | A.D. 1100 | 1,400 YRS | 40 |
| Aristophanes | 450–385 B.C. | A.D. 900 | 1,200 YRS | 10 |
| Homer | 900 B.C. | 400 B.C. | 500 YRS | 643 |
| New Testament | A.D. 35–100 | A.D. 100–150 | 5–30 YRS | 5,700 |

*New Testament copies include (1) fragments, (2) some incomplete copies of the NT, (3) the complete NT, which are all in Greek. Another 10,000+ manuscripts exist in Latin plus more than one million quotations from the church fathers.

99.3% similarity
between copies

صحة المصدر - Reliability of the Authors of the NT

- How do we assess the reliability of the authors?
 - Adoption by early church - استخدام الكنيسة الأولى
 - Quotations from church fathers - شهادة اباء الكنيسة الأولى

Papias of Hierapolis

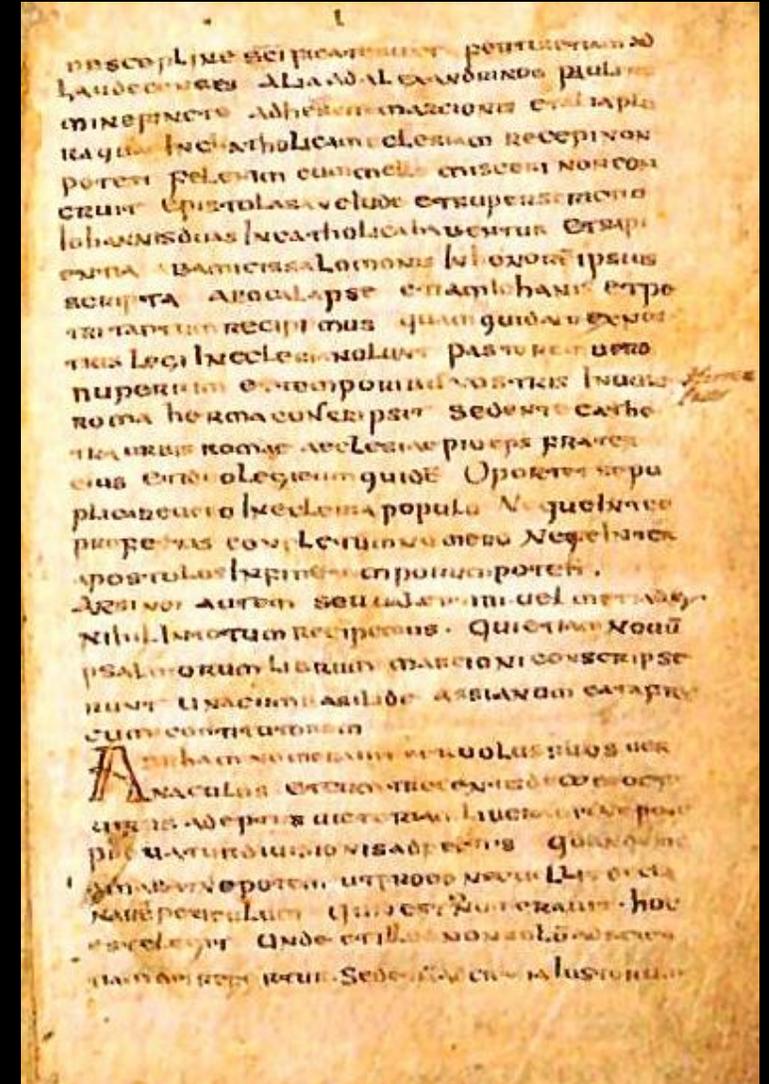
Bishop of Heirapolis in Asia Minor (70 – 163 AD)

- *“He was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp”* Irenaeus (180 AD)
- Mentions both the gospels of Matthew and Mark
- *“The Elder used to say: Mark, in his capacity as Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately as many things as he recalled from memory”*
- *“Therefore Matthew put the logia (oracles) in an ordered arrangement in the Hebrew language”*

**Mark’s relationship to Peter: Acts 12:12-14, 1 Peter 5:13

The Muratorian fragment

- Oldest known list of 'accepted' NT writings (**170 AD**)
- Refers to Pius I bishop of Rome (mid-2nd century)
- Mentions 4 gospels (names of first 2 missing, but mentions Luke and John)
- *"... The **third** book of the Gospel is that according to **Luke**. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. The **fourth** of the Gospels is that of **John**, [one] of the disciples..."*
- Also mentions 13 epistles of Paul, the epistles of John and the epistle of Jude

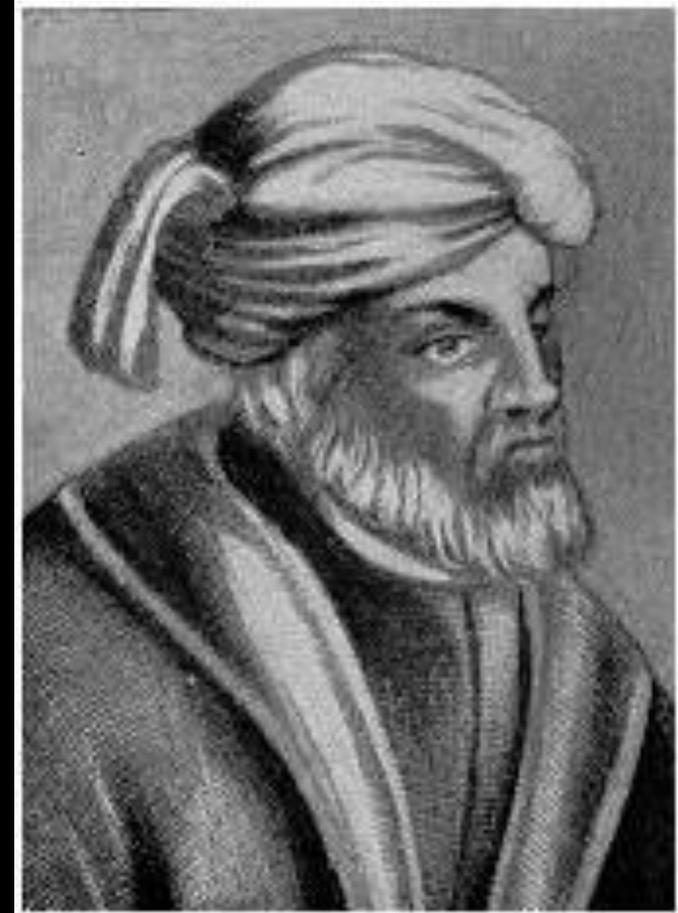


Irenaeus of Lyon

- Bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, which is in modern day France (~180 - 202 AD)
- He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John
- Mentioned that the 4 gospels were the authority
- *“Matthew also published a gospel in writing among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter & Paul were preaching the gospel and founding the church in Rome. But after their death, Mark, the disciple & interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing what Peter used to preach. And Luke, Paul's associate, also set down in a book the gospel that Paul used to preach. Later, John, the Lord's disciple --- the one who lay on his lap --- also set out the gospel while living at Ephesus in Asia Minor.” (Against Heresies 3.1.1 by Irenaeus)*

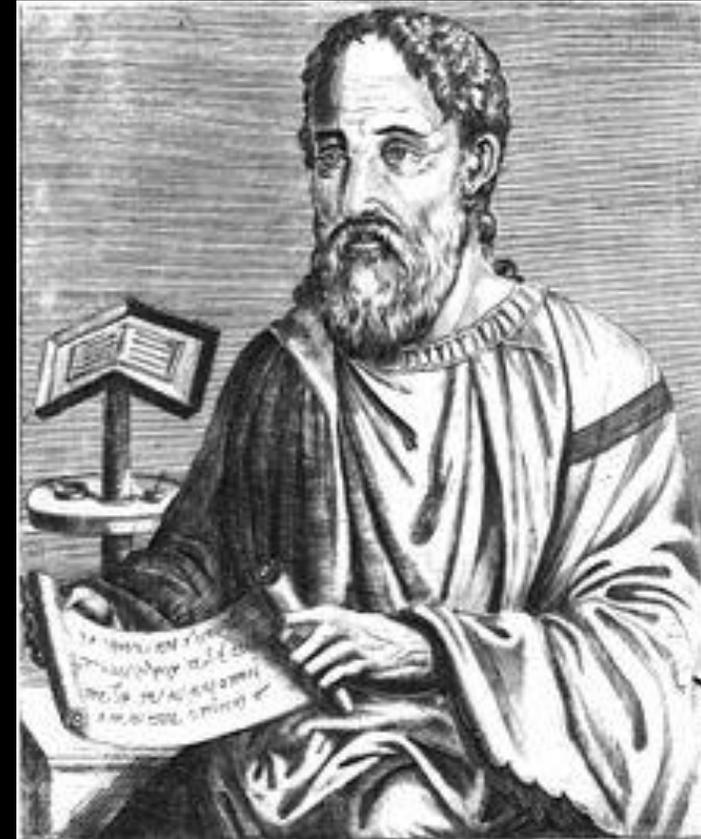
Tertullian

- Christian writer from Carthage, which is in modern day Algeria (**155-240 AD**)
- Confirms the canonicity of the four gospels in response to Marcion
- *“The same authority of the apostolic churches will afford evidence to the other Gospels also, which we possess equally through their means, and according to their usage--I mean the Gospels of **John** and **Matthew**--whilst that which **Mark** published may be affirmed to be Peter's whose interpreter Mark was. For even **Luke**'s form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul.”*



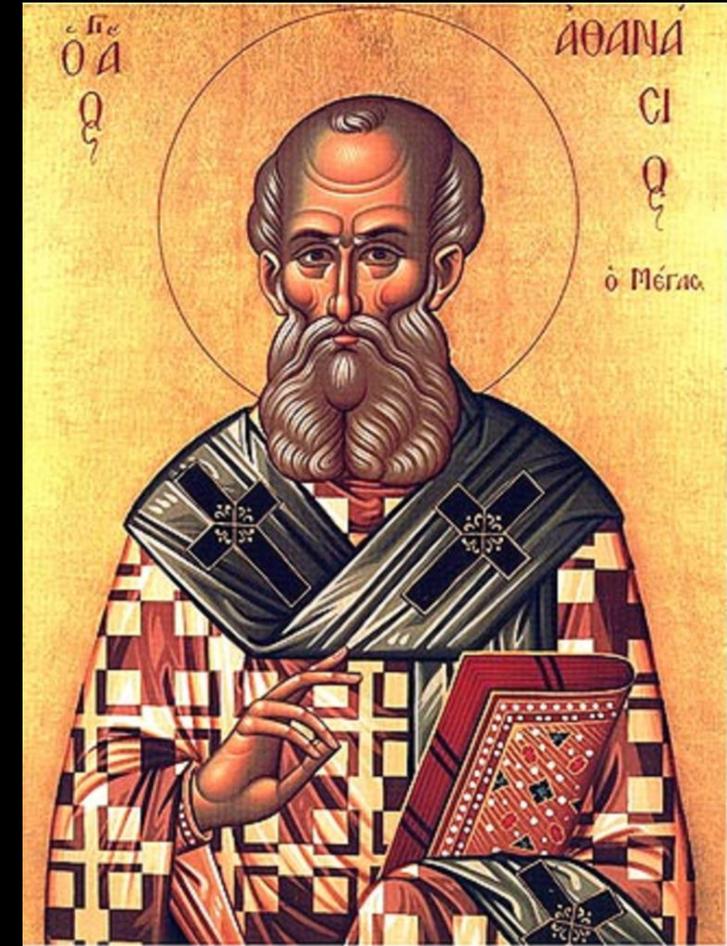
Eusebius

- Bishop of Caesarea Maritima, which is modern day Syria (260 – 339 AD)
- *“As learned by tradition about the four gospels, which alone are undisputed in the church of God under heaven, that first written was **Matthew**, once publican but later apostle of Jesus Christ, who published it for the believers from Judaism (composed in Hebrew letters); but second **Mark**, who composed as Peter led him, whom he avowed as a son in the catholic epistle, saying as follows: ‘She who is in Babylon, chosen together, sends you greetings and so does my son Mark’; and third **Luke**, who has composed for those from the gentiles the gospel praised by Paul; after all of them **John**.”*



Athanasius

- Bishop of Alexandria (296 – 373 AD)
- *“Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.”* 39th Letter of St. Athanasius (367AD)



Consistency in the NT canon



Quotations from Church Fathers

- Sources quoting from the 4 gospels and the epistles:
 - Polycarp's epistle to the Phillipians (110 – 140 AD)
- Metzger notes the amazing fact that **"if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, [the patristic quotations] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament."**

Chapter 1. Praise of the Philippians

I have greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because you have followed the example of true love [as displayed by God], and have accompanied, as became you, those who were bound in chains, the fitting ornaments of saints, and which are indeed the diadems of the true elect of God and our Lord; and because the strong root of your faith, spoken of in days Philippians 1:5 long gone by, endures even until now, and brings forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, [but] "whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave." "In whom, though now you see Him not, you believe, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" 1 Peter 1:8 into which joy many desire to enter, knowing that "by grace you are saved, not of works," Ephesians 2:8-9 but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2. An exhortation to virtue

"Wherefore, girding up your loins," 1 Peter 1:13; Ephesians 6:14 "serve the Lord in fear" and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and "believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory," 1 Peter 1:21 and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things 1 Peter 3:22; Philippians 2:10 in heaven and on earth are subject. Him every spirit serves. He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead. Acts 17:31 His blood will God require of those who do not believe in Him. But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing," 1 Peter 3:9 or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching: "Judge not, that you be not judged; Matthew 7:1 forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that you may obtain mercy; Luke 6:36 with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again;" Matthew 7:2; Luke 6:38 and once more, "Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God."

Chapter 3. Expressions of personal unworthiness

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because you have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom 2 Peter 3:15 of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of

Early use of the Gospels and Acts

| | Ig | Po | M | Va | JM | Ir | C | T | MC | O | E | CS | A | D | P | V |
|-------------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|---|---|----|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|
| Matthew | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Mark | - | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Luke | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| John | ✓ | - | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Acts | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gospel of Thomas | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✗ | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gospel of Truth | - | - | - | ✓ | - | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gospel of the Twelve | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gospel of Peter | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ? | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gospel of Basilides | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✗ | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gospel of the Egyptians | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✓ | - | - | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gospel of the Hebrews | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✓ | - | - | ? | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gospel of Matthias | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | ✗ | ✗ | - | - | - | - | - |

صحة الأحداث - Authenticity of Biblical History

- How do we verify whether what was mentioned in the bible really happened?
 - Comparison with external sources - مقارنة بمصادر خارجية
 - Archeological evidence - دلائل من الحفريات

External Sources Mentioning Biblical Figures

- **Flavius Josephus** (37 – 101 AD) was a Jewish historian
- Wrote a history of the Jews (The Antiquities) in 93 AD
- Mentioned many biblical characters including Jesus:
- *“Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and was a very just punishment for what he did against **John called the Baptist** [the dipper]. For Herod had him killed, although he was a good man and had urged the Jews to exert themselves to virtue, both as to justice toward one another and reverence towards God, and having done so join together in washing.” 18.5.2*

Josephus continued...

- *“About this time there lived **Jesus**, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, **Pilate** had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.” 18.3.3*
- *“Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them **the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James**, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned” 20.9.1*

Cornelius Tacitus

- Roman historian who wrote about 1st century roman history
- Mentions Christians and Jesus when talking about the six day great fire of Rome during the time of Nero in 64 AD
- “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 Judæa, 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” **15.44**

Pliny the Younger

- Roman governor of Bithynia-Pontus (Turkey) in 112 AD wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan to ask about how to deal with “Christians”
- Earliest pagan account referring to Christians, their practices and how the roman administration dealt with them
- “They meet on a certain day before light where they gather and sing hymns to **Christ as to a god**. They all bind themselves by oath, not to some crimes; rather, they pledge not to commit any crimes such as fraud, theft, or adultery, and subsequently **share a meal of ordinary and innocent food.**”
- One of the earliest pagan sources confirming that the early church believed Jesus was God

أدلة من علم الآثار - Archeological Evidence supporting NT

- Profound evidence has been surfacing for the past century that support the biblical narratives
- For example:
 - The Pilate Stone
 - Ossuary of Caiaphas

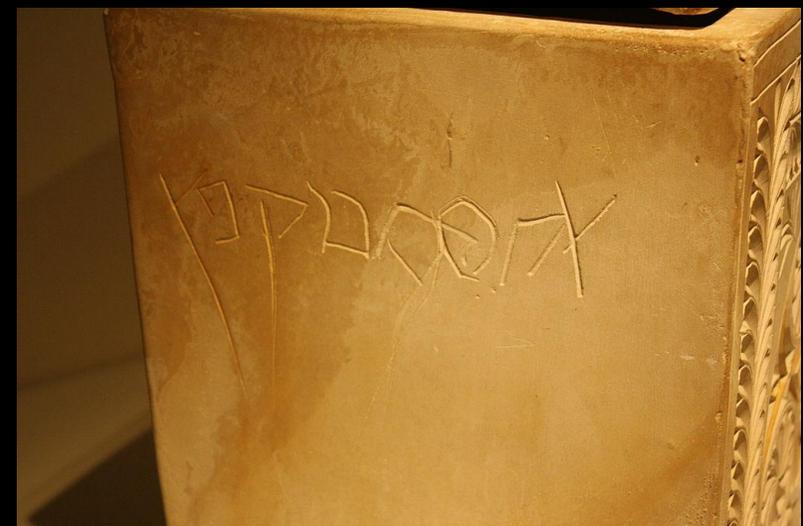
The Pilate Stone

- A limestone with Latin engravings on it that dates back to **26 – 36 AD** was discovered in 1961
- Reads as follows: “**To the divine Augusti Tiberieum, Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea** has dedicated this...”
- The earliest reference to Pontius Pilate who is rarely mentioned in roman history



The Ossuary of Caiaphas

- An ossuary was a box where they kept the bones of dead people
- Discovered in south Jerusalem in 1990 as they were building a water park
- 12 Ossuaries were discovered, but only one looked bigger and with many decorations
- It had the inscription “Caiaphas”, and the bones were found to be of a 60 year old man who lived in the first century



Questions?