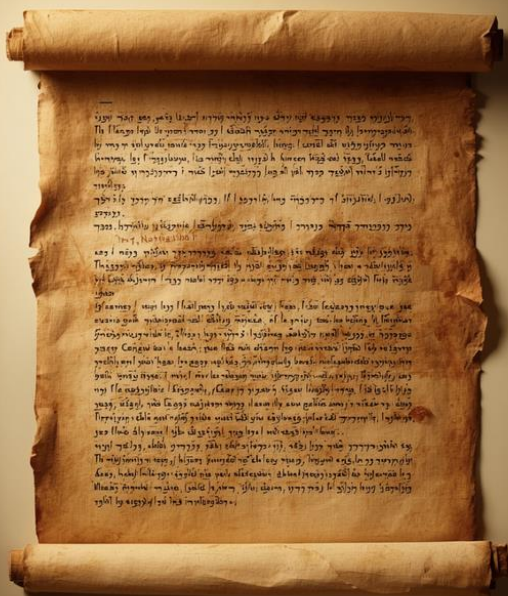


* "What would you say if someone told you the Bible has been corrupted?"

Can We Trust *the* Bible?



A quick timeline + key evidence for preservation

15.07.2025

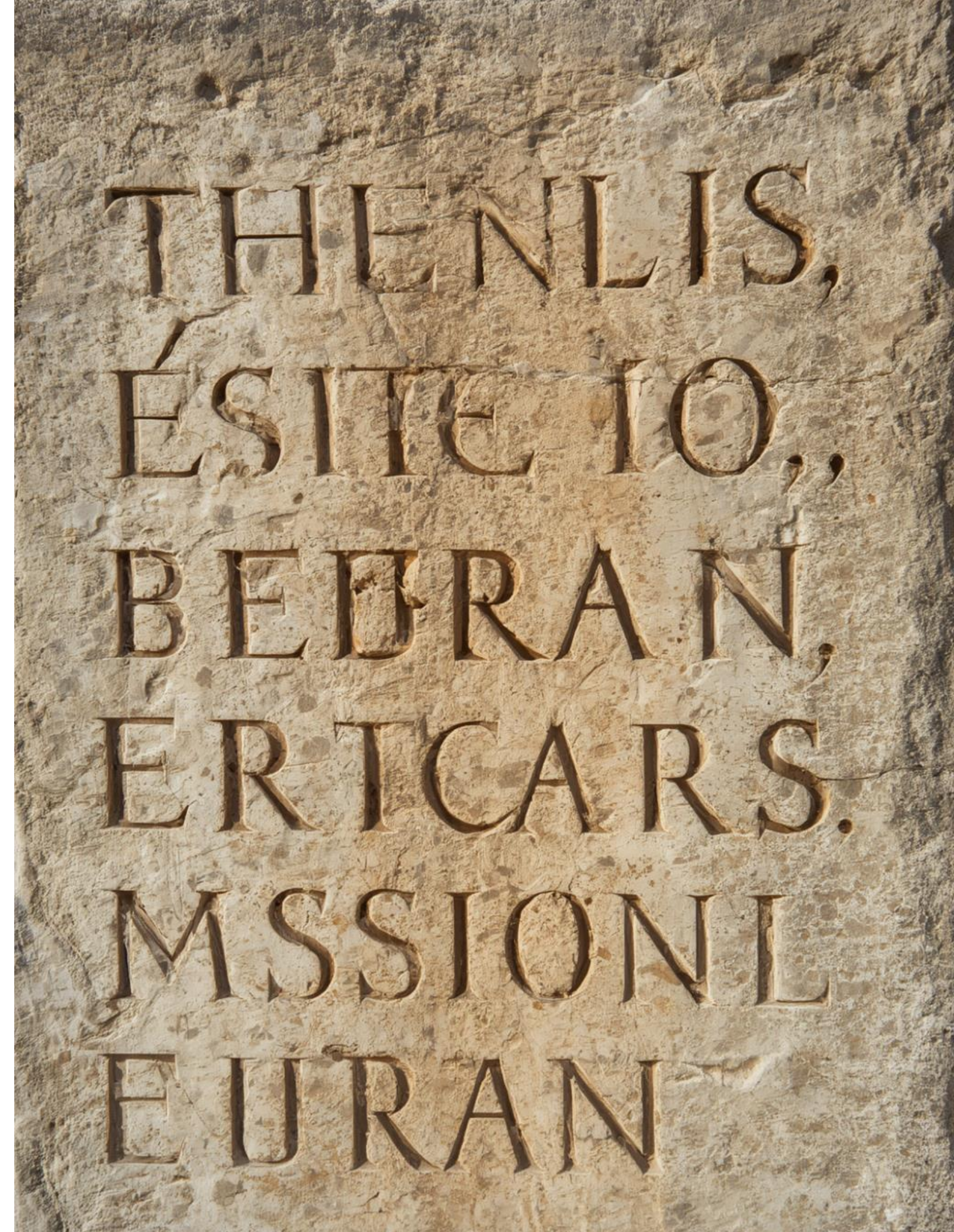
Dating Terms

Mini-Quiz

What does “AD” mean,
and what language is it?

*Think before answering —
discuss with a neighbor!*

These terms shape how we date ancient texts and events. Understanding them helps us place biblical writings in their historical context.



"What do we already
know about how
Scripture came into
fruition?"

Bible

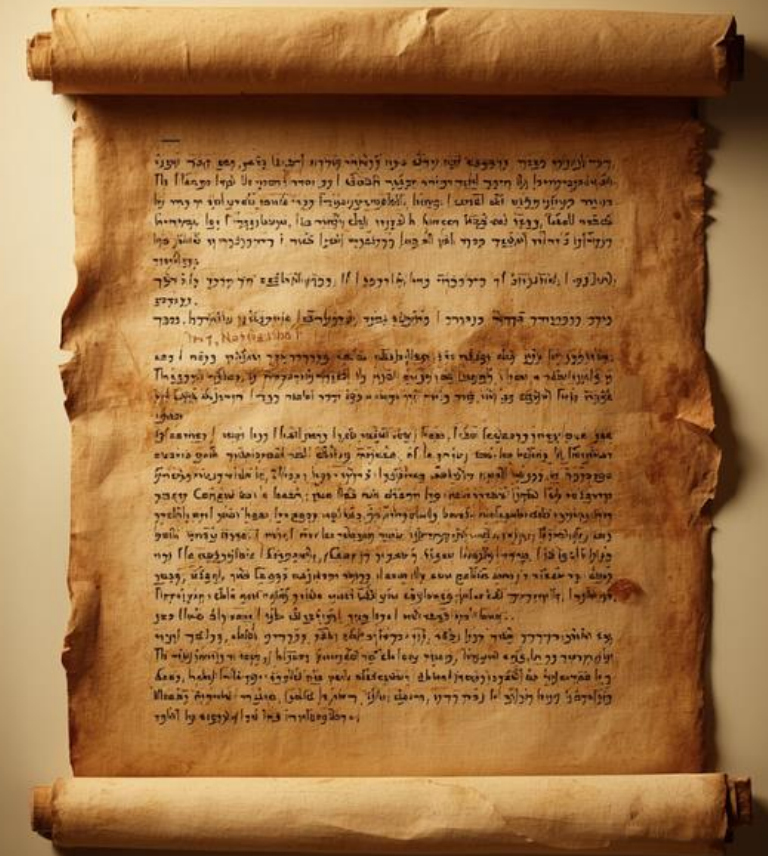
✳ Can We Trust the Bible?

Writing Timeline

Written over ~1,500–1,600 years of human history

~1445–1400 BC
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Job
~1000–900 BC
Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon
~700–500 BC
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
~450–400 BC
Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi (end of OT)

~50–60 AD
Paul's Letters, earliest NT writings
~60–90 AD
Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
~90–96 AD
Revelation — final book written





"Written across many generations — one consistent message, faithfully preserved."

*What the *Bible Is*



Old Testament

Torah, History, Poetry, Prophets

New Testament

*Gospels, Acts, Letters,
Epistles*

Apocalyptic

Revelation

Each genre serves a distinct purpose in the unified story of Scripture.



Old Testament *Authors*

*~40 voices across
centuries*

The Old Testament was written by approximately 40 different authors spanning over a thousand years. Despite the vast differences in time, culture, and background, their writings form a unified and consistent message — a remarkable testament to preservation and divine continuity.

Diverse backgrounds

Kings (David, Solomon) · Shepherds (Amos) · Fishermen · Priests (Ezra, Zechariah) · Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah) · Military leaders (Joshua) · Cupbearers (Nehemiah)

Why the variety matters

No single human institution controlled the writing of Scripture. Authors came from palaces and pastures, from periods of peace and exile — yet the message remained consistent across generations and centuries.

Scribes — *Guardians of Scripture*



Who were the *Sopherim* (*Scribes*)?

Official record-keepers and
Scripture guardians

"Ezra was a skilled scribe, well-versed in the Law of
Moses." — Ezra 7:6

The Babylonian Exile: A Turning Point (586 BC)

When Jerusalem fell in 586 BC and the people were exiled to Babylon, the scribal tradition became more critical than ever. Without a Temple, the Scriptures themselves became the anchor of Jewish identity and faith.

Scribes like Ezra emerged as leaders — not just copyists, but teachers and guardians who devoted their lives to understanding and transmitting Scripture accurately.

Preservation Pipeline



Stage 1
Second Temple Scribes

Stage 2
Talmudic Scribes (AD 100–500)

Stage 3
Masoretes (AD 500 – 900)

Masoretes (~500 AD+): Developed precise vowel notation and verification systems, ensuring faithful transmission of the Hebrew text across generations.



The *Masorete*

- *Extreme* **S** *copying*
safeguards that protected
Scripture:

- Letter-by-letter copying
- Counting letters and words

Example: After copying, scribes counted every letter and word in each book. The middle letter and middle word of each book were identified and verified. Any scroll with a single error was destroyed — not corrected.



Ketef Hinnom

Silver Scrolls

Archaeological
Evidence,

*Jerusalem, c. 600
BC*

Earliest known biblical text
fragments (~600 BC)

The Priestly Blessing

Two tiny silver amulets discovered in Jerusalem bear the Priestly Blessing from Numbers 6:24–26 — "The Lord bless you and keep you..." Inscribed before the Babylonian exile, these scrolls predate the Dead Sea Scrolls by over 400 years, confirming the biblical text was faithfully recorded and preserved from a remarkably early date.

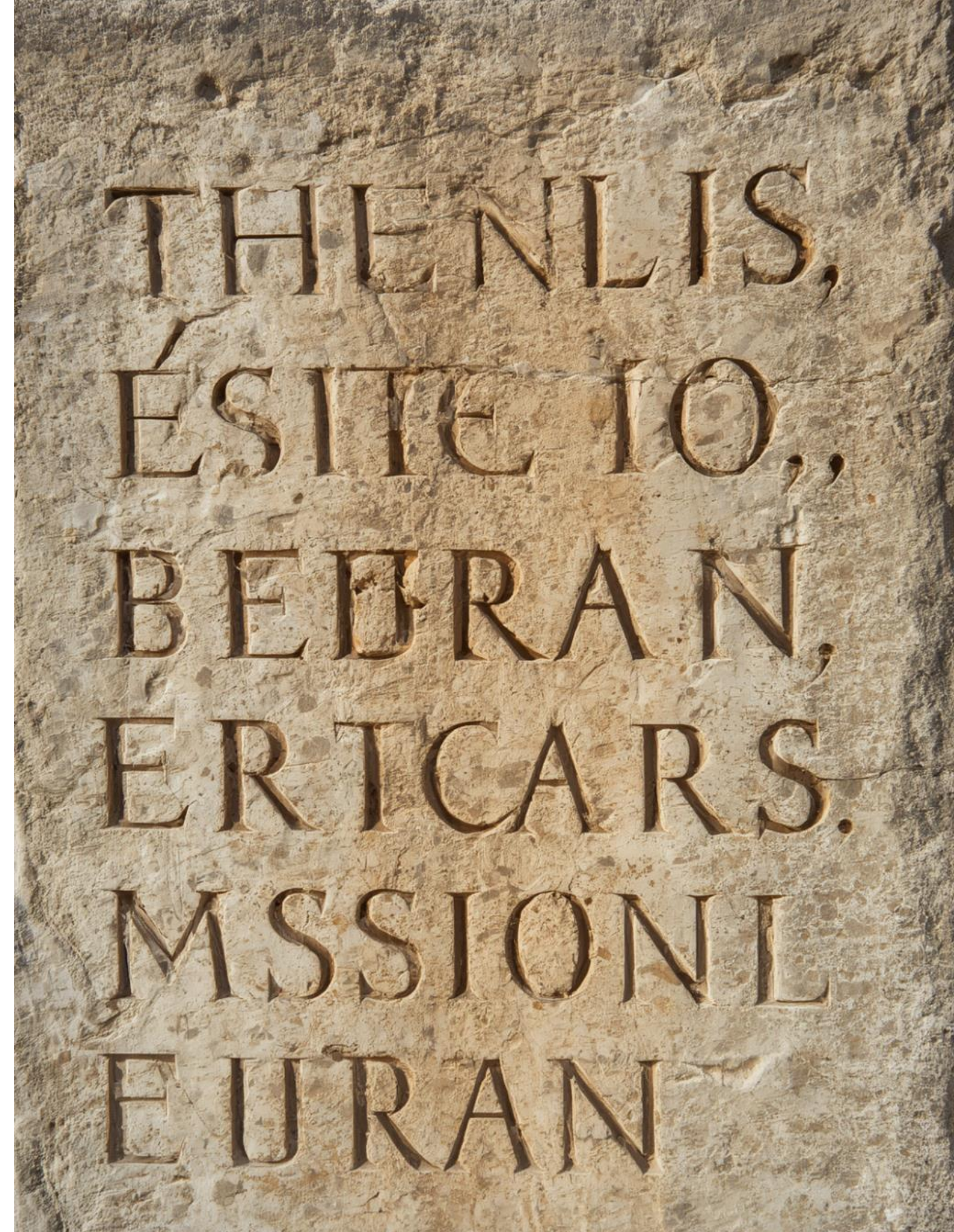
Dating Terms

Mini-Quiz

What are the secular
terms for BC/AD,
and what do they
mean?

*Think before answering —
discuss with a neighbor!*

These terms shape how we date ancient texts and events. Understanding them helps us place biblical writings in their historical context.





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Dead Sea *Scrolls*

Discovered at Qumran
(~125 BC)

Archaeological
significance,

*~1,000 Years
Older Than
Known Copies*

Oldest biblical
manuscripts ever
found

Found in caves near the Dead Sea, these scrolls include nearly every book of the Old Testament. They date to approximately 125 BC — making them roughly 1,000 years older than any previously known Hebrew manuscript copies. Their discovery in 1947 transformed our understanding of biblical transmission and preservation.

"When compared to later
Hebrew texts: ~95%
identical."
(Differences are mostly
spelling variations.)

The Septuagint:

Greek Old Testament



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Also known as *The LXX (~250–150 BC)*

as Greek as the common language of the ancient world

After Alexander the Great's conquests (336–323 BC), Greek became the dominant language across the Mediterranean world. Jewish communities living outside of Israel — the Diaspora — needed Scripture in a language they could read and understand. The result was the Septuagint: a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, produced in Alexandria, Egypt.

"Septuagint" means "seventy" — named after the ~70 scholars said to have translated it.

Used by Jesus and the Apostles

New Testament *Preservation*

Overview: A Different Path Than the Old Testament

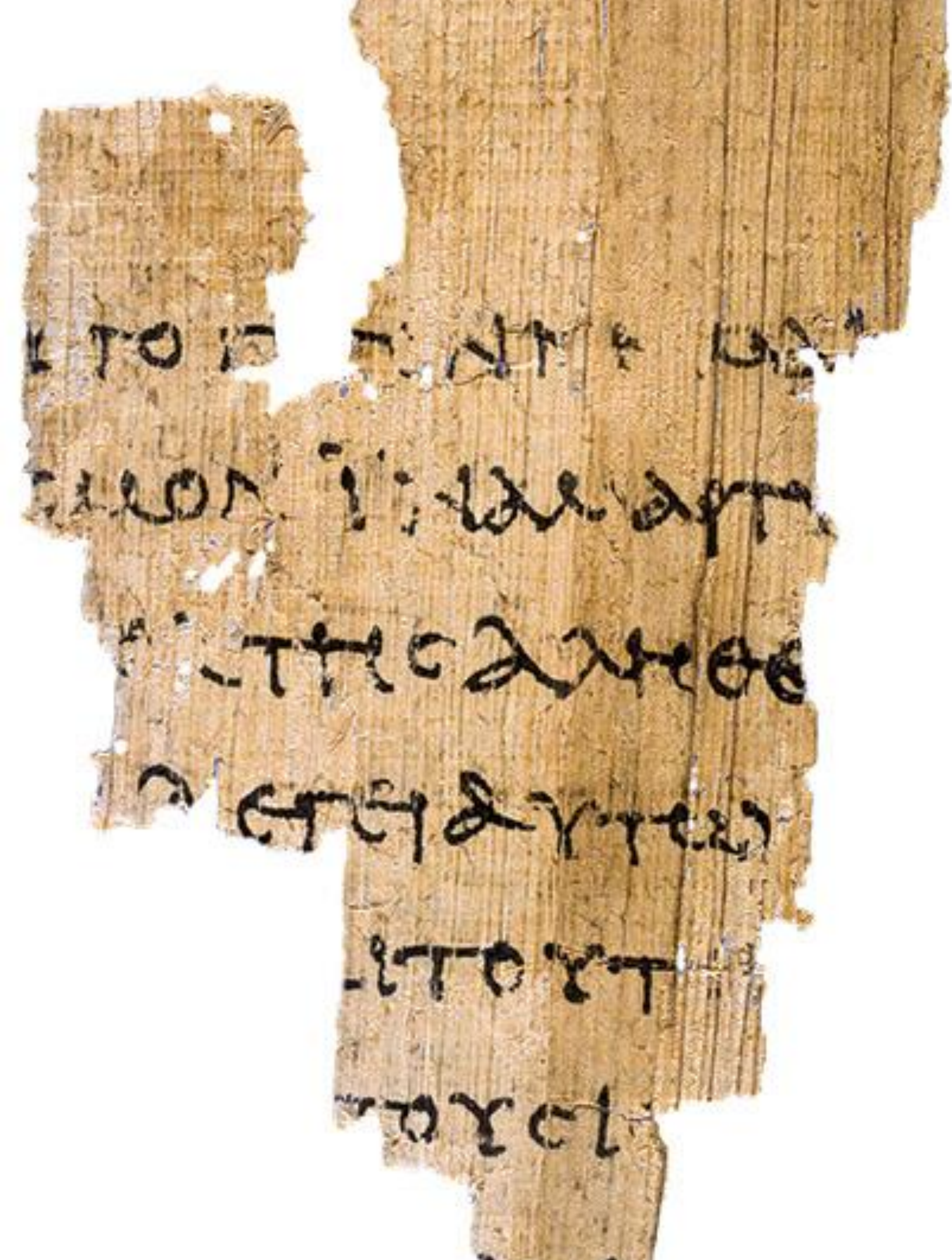
Unlike the OT's formal scribal system, the NT was preserved under very different — and far more dangerous — conditions. Early Christians operated as an illegal movement under Roman law, making systematic, institutional copying nearly impossible in the first centuries.

Manuscripts were copied privately, passed between communities, and hidden from authorities — yet the message survived and spread.



Why fewer early manuscripts exist

Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire until 313 AD. Possessing Christian texts was dangerous. Manuscripts were destroyed in persecutions (e.g., Diocletian, 303 AD). No centralized scribal institution existed. Copying was grassroots — done by believers, not professional scribes. Despite this, thousands of manuscripts eventually emerged.



Early New *Testamen t*

Manuscripts & earliest known fragments

Featured Example:

p52 — John 18
Early 2nd
Century

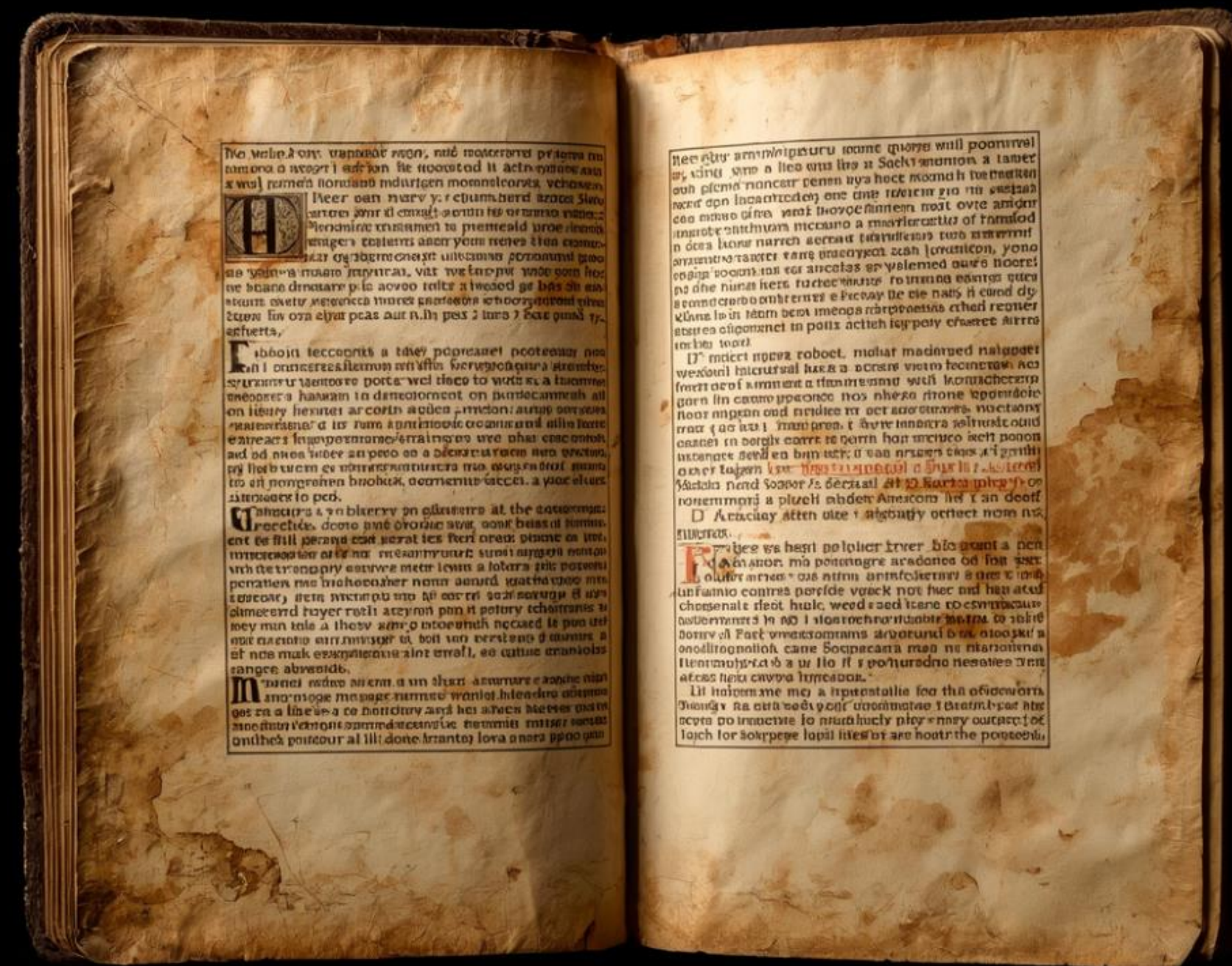
Why p52 Matters

Earliest New Testament
Manuscript discovered- Dating
within 50 years of the Lifetime
of the Apostle John.



Manuscript *Explosion*

Constantine legalizes
Christianity (313 AD) Systematic copying
begins in 4th–5th
centuries





~5,800+
Greek NT
manuscripts.
~23,000+ total
across all languages.

* The Bible's manuscript base is vastly larger and earlier than any other ancient work in history.

Quick *Comparison*



Caesar's Gallic Wars

Earliest copies ~900 AD; 10–20 copies

Tacitus' Annals

Earliest copies ~1100 AD; ~20 copies

Plato's Dialogues

Earliest copies ~900 AD; 7–15 copies.



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What's Next *& Beyond*

Coming up in
our next sessions

****Divine Inspiration****
****Translation History****
****Canon Formation****

A question to carry with
you

"If the Bible has been preserved with such remarkable accuracy across thousands of years — what does that mean for how we should engage with it today?"

Next session, we will talk more about scripture today, how it came to us from the Middle Ages.

