

The NT is Historically Reliable

“The NT is historically reliable” is the fourth premise in our overall argument for the Bible being God’s Word (see Class 2 notes). We need to show that NT Scriptures are textually and historically trustworthy and accurately represent the original Scriptures. It is from this reliable text we understand and believe what Jesus claimed about himself, namely, His deity.

But first, a few words about our third premise “Miracles are Possible”.

1. If God exists, acts of God are possible.
2. The “laws of nature” do not make miracles impossible.
3. *Miracles* (supernatural) are distinguished from *providence* (nature).
4. Genuine miracles have: 1) theological/moral dimension, 2) purpose, and 3) fits context. They are supernatural, instantaneous, always successful, and no relapse.

The NT is confirmed to be historically reliable through three tests:

1. Bibliographical test (textual reliability, manuscripts and dates)
2. External Test (archaeology and extra biblical literature)
3. Internal Test (what the Bible testifies about itself, eyewitnesses, prophecy, counterproductive features)

Bibliographical Test

NT Biblical Manuscripts Compared to Selected Ancient Sources				
Author	Ancient Source	Date of Original	Earliest Manuscript	Gap from Manuscript Original Copies
Plato	<i>Dialogues/ Tetralogies</i>	4th cent. BC	3rd cent. BC	c. 150 years c. 210-240
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	9th cent. BC	c. 400– 415 BC	c. 450 years c. 1900+
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	5th cent. BC	2nd–1st cent. BC	c. 450 years c. 100+
Thucydides	<i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>	5th cent. BC	3rd cent BC	c. 200 years c. 185
Demosthenes	<i>Orations/ Speeches</i>	4th cent. BC	1st cent. BC	c. 300 years c. 440+
Aristophanes	Assorted works	448–385 BC	AD 900	c. 1,300 years c. 10+
Sophocles	<i>Plays</i>	5th cent. BC?	3rd cent. BC	c. 200 years c. 220+
Julius Caesar	<i>The Gallic Wars</i>	58–44 BC	9th cent. AD	c. 900 years c. 250
Tacitus	<i>Annals of Imperial Rome</i>	AD 58-120	9th–11th cent. AD	c. 800–1000 c. 33+ years
Suetonius	<i>The Twelve Caesars</i>	AD 118–120	9th cent. AD	c. 800 years c. 8+
Pliny, the Elder	<i>Natural History</i>	1st cent. AD	5th /14th– 15th cent. AD	c. 400–1500 c. 200 years
Greek New Testament Manuscripts		AD 45–100	AD 117–325	c. 30–300 yrs c. 5,856
Non-Greek NT manuscripts in other languages (translations)				c. 18,000+
Total New Testament manuscripts c. 24,000+				
Old Testament scrolls and codices (in various collections) c. 42,000				
Total biblical manuscripts c. 66,000+				

Source: Adapted and updated from H. Wayne House and Joseph M. Holden, *Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), Chart 43.

External Test

Tacitus (c. A.D. 56-120; *Annals of Imperial Rome*)

He is best known for his two works titled *Annals* and *Histories*. In the *Annals*, Tacitus records how Nero responded to Christians after the great fire in Rome with references that correspond with the gospel record when he writes,

“To Suppress this rumour, Nero fabricated scapegoats – and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called. Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius’ reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. But in spite this temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome. All degraded and shameful practices collect and flourish in Rome. First, Nero had self-acknowledged Christians arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers of others were condemned - not so much for incendiarism as for their anti-social tendencies. Their deaths were made farcical. Dressed in wild animals’ skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight. Nero provided his gardens for the spectacle, and exhibited displays in the circus, at which he mingled with the crowd - or stood in a chariot, dressed as a charioteer. Despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man’s brutality rather than to the national interest.”¹

Dr. Gary Habermas, has noted several factors concerning the above quote that remarkably corroborate with the gospel records.

- 1) Christians were named for their founder, “Christ.” (Acts 11:26; 26:28)
- 2) Christ was sentenced to death by under “Pontius Pilate.” (Lk 23:24-25)
- 3) Christ’s death was during the “Tiberius’ reign.” (Luke 3:1)
- 4) His death ended the “superstition” for a short time. (Jn 20:19)
- 5) The superstition “broke out afresh.” (Acts 1:8)
- 6) It broke out in Judea again “where the mischief had started.” (Acts 2:1)
- 7) His followers carried his doctrine to “Rome.” (Acts 28:16)
- 8) After the great fire in Rome, Nero placed blame on the Christians.
- 9) Christians were persecuted, being “nailed to crosses.” (Jn 15:20)²

¹ Michael Grant, *Tacitus: The Annals of Rome*, trans. by Michael Grant (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1989), 365-66.

² Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 189. Scripture verses added.

Historical references of Luke the Historian (in Luke and Acts)

1. A natural crossing between correctly named ports (Acts 13:4-5)
2. The proper river port, Perga, for a ship crossing from Cyprus (13:13)
3. The proper location of Lycaonia (14:6)
4. The unusual but t correct declension of the name *Lystra*, the correct language spoken in Lystra, and the correct names of the two gods associated with the city, Zeus and Hermes (14:12)
5. The proper port, Attalia, for returning travelers (14:25)
6. The correct route from the Cilician gates (16:1)
7. The proper form of the name Troas (16:8)
8. A conspicuous sailors' landmark at Samothrace (16:11)
9. The proper identification of Philippi as a Roman Colony and right location of the river Gangites near Philippi (16:13)
10. The association of Thyatira with cloth dyeing (16:14) and the correct designation of the titles for the colony magistrates (16:20, 35-36, 38)
11. The proper locations (Amphipolis and Apollonia) where travelers would spend successive nights on their journey (17:1)
12. The presence of a synagogue in Thessalonica and the proper title of *Politarch* for the magistrates (17:6)
13. The correct explanation that sea travel is the most convenient way to reach Athens in summer due to favoring east winds (17:14)
14. The well attested cult of Artemis of the Ephesians (19:24, 27) and that the Ephesian theater was the city meeting place (19:29)
15. The correct identification of Ananias as high priest (23:2) and Felix as governor
16. Luke agreed with Josephus of the name *Porcius Festus* (24:27)
17. Correct identification of the best shipping lanes of that time period (27:4)
18. Correct description of the severe liability on guards who permitted a prisoner to escape (27:42)
19. Accurate descriptions of the local people and superstitions (28:4-6)
20. Common practice of custody with a Roman soldier (28:16) and conditions of imprisonment as one's own expense (28:30-31) (see Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*)

Archaeology and the New Testament	
Discovery	Description
Lithostrotos	Located under the modern streets of Jerusalem near the Temple Mount, the <i>Gabbatha</i> (that is, place or seat of judgment) mentioned in John 19:13 and Matthew 27:27 is the location of Christ's judgment by Pontius Pilate. It was found at the Roman military headquarters known as the Tower of Antonia.
The Galilee Boat	In 1986, a drought season revealed a 2,000-year-old boat (dated between the first century BC and the first century AD) in the sediment of the Sea of Galilee, offering an example of the kind of boats that sailed the sea during Jesus' time (Mark 4:37-41). It could accommodate over a dozen men, being over 26 feet long and more than 7 feet wide. An assortment of chemicals and foam were used to raise the fragile boat and transport it by sea to the Yigal Allon Museum (in Ginosar) on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.
Tyrannus Inscription	That the name <i>Tyrannus</i> was engraved on a stone pillar in Ephesus shows that the same name mentioned in Acts 19:9 (Tyrannus) was used in Ephesus during the first century AD; this find thus shows consistency with Luke's mentioning of the name when Paul visited Ephesus.
Luke's vocabulary in the Gospel and Acts	<p>Luke, the writer of the Gospel of Luke and Acts, has in the past been faulted by some modern critics for alleged historical errors in his records. However, this view has been replaced by a much more favorable view of his accuracy in light of recent discoveries about the customs and language of Luke's time. In many cases, modern historians have had to revise their former opinions. Following are some of the points on which Luke's history in the book of Acts has been vindicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lycaonian as the correct language spoken at Lystra (14:11) • The proper form of the city name Troas (16:8) • Use of "politarchs" as proper designation of magistrates in Thessalonica (17:6) • Correct Athenian slang word for Paul as <i>spermologos</i> (17:18) • Uses <i>areopagite</i> as the proper title for a member of the Athenian court (17:34) • Proper title of <i>grammateus</i> for the chief executive magistrate ("clerk") in Ephesus (19:35) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses correct Roman authorized title of honor, <i>neokoros</i> (19:35) • Uses the plural <i>anthupatoi</i>, which could be referring to two men functioning as proconsuls at this time (19:38) • Uses precise term <i>bolisantes</i> for taking soundings and records the correct depth of the water near Malta (27:28) • Applies correct title "<i>first man of the Island</i>" (<i>protos tes nesou</i>) to Malta's leader (28:7) <p>The precision of these historical details and others has led Roman historian A.N. Sherwin-White to remark, "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming.... But any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted."</p>
Mamertine Prison (Rome)	The Mamertine Prison is traditionally recognized as the place where Peter and Paul were incarcerated before being executed in Rome. Originally part of the ancient Roman Forum, today it is the location of two churches, San Giuseppe dei Falegnami and San Pietro in Carcere.
Bema Seat	A foundation platform of a "bema seat" was discovered in the early twentieth century in the ruins of ancient Corinth. It served as the place from which the city officials spoke to the citizens; there the apostle Paul was brought before the proconsul Gallio in Acts 18:12-17. It also may have been used to award competing athletes of the Isthmian games. In addition, Paul uses the Greek term <i>bema</i> to describe the "judgment seat" of Christ, where Christians will receive their heavenly rewards (2 Corinthians 5:10).
Capernaum Synagogue	Excavations at the ancient city of Capernaum have revealed a fourth or fifth-century AD synagogue that was most likely built over the black basalt foundation of an earlier first-century synagogue. The discovery of thousands of coins beneath the floors helped to securely date the later synagogue, while pottery remains and coins discovered under the black basalt foundation confirmed the date of the first-century structure. The earlier synagogue is most likely the same

	structure that John refers to (John 6:59) in which Jesus gave His lengthy sermon and said, “I am the bread of life” (Luke 4:33,38; John 6:35, 48, 59).
Peter’s House	From 1968 to 1998 archaeologists excavated an octagonal structure located in the ancient city of Capernaum near the shores of the Sea of Galilee, which they believe to be the house of Peter (Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:29; Luke 4:38). Early inscriptions venerating Christ as Lord, Most High, and God in various languages (Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Syriac) scratched on the plaster walls of the dwelling may indicate that early Christians believed this was Peter’s house. In the fifth century, Christians built an octagonal church over the first-century house. In 1990 the Roman Catholic Church honored the site by building the hexagonal Franciscan Chapel over the ruins of this same house church.
Zeus and Hermes in the account of Paul and Barnabas	In 1909, archaeologists unearthed several inscriptions and a temple near the ancient city of Lystra that identified Zeus and Hermes as the two most important gods, since they were believed to have visited the earth there. These gods were expected to return in the future, which helps scholars understand the reaction of the people when they acclaimed Barnabas and Paul as Zeus and Hermes (Acts 14:6-13).
Nazareth Inscription	An inscription was discovered in Nazareth in 1878 forbidding the robbing of tombs, originating between the time of Augustus Caesar and Claudius Caesar. Since Nazareth was such a small village, scholars have conjectured that the edict may have been issued in response to the rumor passed on by authorities in Israel regarding the robbing of the grave of Jesus, but there is no certainty that the inscription is attached to the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.
Pool of Siloam	In 2005, city workers excavating in the vicinity of the Gihon Spring accidentally unearthed the steps to the Pool of Siloam. Archaeologists have revealed that its shape is a trapezoid pool (corners greater than 90 degrees), surrounded by three descending sets of five stairs each. Ancient coins and masonry found at the site confirm this location as the first-century Pool of Siloam mentioned in John 9:7 as the place where Jesus healed the man born blind.
Pool of Bethesda	John 5:2-3 tells of a pool located by the Sheep Gate which had five porches where the sick and lame would wait for the stirring of the waters so they might be healed. The passage tells of Jesus healing a lame man who had been afflicted for 38 years. Excavations in the late 1800s uncovered such a pool, with remains that indicate it had several porches (porticoes), twin pool areas, and was fed by an underground water and lock (gate) system, which would result in the waters being disturbed on occasion. Eusebius mentions the Sheep Pool in the fourth century; this most likely refers to the Pool of Bethesda. Today, the pool may be visited at the site of the Church of Saint Anne, about 300 feet inside the Old City from Stephen’s or the Lion’s Gate (the ancient “Sheep Gate”)
Absalom’s Tomb Inscription	In 2003, on the east bank of the Kidron Valley, Emile Puech and Joe Zias found the oldest New Testament passage yet discovered, carved in stone on Absalom’s Tomb. The passage contains Luke 2:25 and tells of Simeon, who in his old age finally saw the baby Jesus. It reads, “Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him” (ESV).
Coins of the Bible	Throughout the New Testament various coins are mentioned in association with basic transactions and teaching illustrations. These include the widow’s mite, the Tyre shekel, and the denarius, among others. Some coins contain inscriptions of rulers such as Herod Antipas and Herod Agrippa, King Aretas IV, and Emperor Claudius.
Megiddo Mosaic Inscription	In 2005, inmates at the maximum-security prison located at Megiddo, Israel, accidentally unearthed an ancient church-floor mosaic measuring 16 x 32 feet. Its inscription describes a table offered to Christ by a female worshipper named “Akeptous.” The ornate Greek inscription, laid out in small mosaic tiles, makes reference “to the God Jesus Christ” and that the table was offered to Jesus “as a memorial.” The phrase “God Jesus Christ” has been overlined (instead of the traditional underlining) for emphasis, and confirms the notion that early Christians affirmed the deity of Christ. This find has also attested to the spread and acceptance of Christianity within the borders of Israel and the surrounding Mediterranean regions. Astonishingly, the mosaic floor with its inscription has been dated to the third century AD, making it part of what many believe to be the oldest church yet discovered in the Holy Land.
The Alexamenos Graffito	A <i>graffito</i> carving depicting the manner in which early Romans viewed Christianity and its Jewish savior, Jesus, was found in 1857 on Palatine Hill in Rome. This <i>graffito</i> , which is now located in the Kircherian Museum in Rome, depicts an early Christian named Alexamenos worshipping at the feet of a man on a cross who has the head of a donkey. There is what appears to be the Greek letter Y (upsilon). At the left of the drawing is a young man who apparently is Alexamenos; his name is scrawled on the plaster. His hand is raised in an act of worship, it is assumed. This <i>graffito</i> is an important attestation to the

	fact that early Christians worshipped Jesus as God, were the targets of slander and ridicule, and used the crucifix in their worship, at least by the third century.
The Yehohanan Ossuary	That Christ died by crucifixion, and that the Romans practiced this form of capital punishment in the first century AD during the life of Christ, is now well-attested. A limestone ossuary (an 18-inch-long stone box for the storing of bones of the deceased) was discovered in Jerusalem in 1968 that contained the bones of a first-century AD crucifixion victim named Yehohanan ben Hagkol. Upon examination, the right heel and wrist bone still contained the Roman seven-inch spikes intact, thus attesting the Roman practice during the first century when Christ was reported to have been crucified (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19; see also Psalm 22).
The James Ossuary	One of the earliest and most important discoveries relating to the historicity of Jesus and members of his family is the limestone bone box (called an <i>ossuary</i>), used to store the bones of the deceased, made known to the public in October 2002. Ossuaries were used in Israel from about the second century BC until the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Over 10,000 such ossuaries have been discovered, but only about 100 contain inscriptions. Of these, only two have an identification similar to the one etched in the now famous and somewhat controversial "James Ossuary." The entire Aramaic inscription reads, "Jacob (James), son of Joseph, brother of Jesus" (<i>Ya'akov bar Yosef akhui di Yeshua</i>).
Pontius Pilate Inscription	Though we have literary evidence for Pontius Pilate, no physical evidence existed until 1961, when archaeologist Antonio Frova and a team of other archaeologists discovered an inscription on a stone dated to the period from AD 26 to 37. It was in secondary use as part of a stairway in the theater at Caesarea Maritima on the coast of Israel, though "undoubtedly, the stone was first used as part of some important building called a Tiberium, possibly a temple, which was dedicated in honor of the emperor Tiberius." Even though the stone is in poor condition, three of the four lines of the text may be partially reconstructed. The inscription read as follows: Tiberieum Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea
The Caiaphas Ossuary	In November of 1990, while a work crew was building a road south of Abu Tor in southeast Jerusalem in what is called the Peace Forest, but on a hill traditionally called the Mount of Evil Counsel, the family tomb of Caiaphas was uncovered. In the tomb archaeologists found an ornate ossuary with the inscription "Joseph, son of Caiaphas" in Aramaic. A few scholars question whether the inscription truly refers to Caiaphas the high priest, who condemned Jesus, especially since it does not mention his title, yet the ornate nature of the ossuary would indicate that the bones of the person placed inside are those of someone of considerable rank and wealth. One cannot argue with 100% certainty that the ossuary is that of the Caiaphas mentioned in the Gospels, but we know of no other Joseph, son of Caiaphas, in the first century who would be so identified and buried in an ossuary such as this.

New Testament Persons Cited in Ancient Non-Christian Sources		
Person	Scripture	Source
Herod Agrippa I and II	Acts 12; 23:35 Acts 25:13-26; 26	Philo, Josephus Coin inscriptions Nabatean Inscription Beirut Museum inscription
Ananias (High Priest)	Acts 23:2; 24:1	Josephus
Annas (High Priest)	Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6; John 18:13, 24	Josephus
Herod Antipas	Matthew 14:1-6 Mark 6:14-22 Luke 3:1 Acts 4:27; 13:1	Josephus Coin inscriptions that read "Herod the Tetrarch"

Herod Archelaus	Matthew 2:22	Josephus
King Aretas IV (Damascus)	2 Corinthians 11:32	Josephus Madaba Map Inscription Coins with Aretas bust
Caesar Augustus (Octavius)	Luke 2:2	Priene Inscription announcing birthday; Coin Inscriptions Funerary Inscription (<i>Res Gestae Divi Augusti</i>)
Bernice	Acts 25:13-15	Josephus Suetonius Beirut Museum Inscription
Caiaphas (High Priest)		Josephus Ossuary Inscription
Emperor Claudius	Acts 11:28; 18:2	Josephus Suetonius Tacitus Coin Inscriptions
Drusilla	Acts 24:24	Josephus Suetonius
Erastus	Romans 16:13-23; 2 Timothy 4:20	Erastus Inscription at Corinth
Marcus Antonius Felix	Acts 23:24-26; 24; 25:14; 26	Josephus Suetonius Tacitus
Porcius Festus	Acts 24:27; 25; 26:24, 32	Josephus
Gallio	Acts 18:12-17	Gallio Inscription at Delphi Pliny the Younger Suetonius
Gamaliel	Acts 5:34; 22:3	Josephus Jewish Mishna Talmud
King Herod (Judea)	Matthew 2:1-22; Luke 1:5	Josephus Tacitus Coin Inscriptions Herod's tomb at the Herodium Latin wine jug inscription Herodian architecture (i.e. Temple Mount, Masada, Macherus, Herodium, etc)
Herodias	Matthew 14:3; Mark 6:17	Josephus
James (son of Mary)	Acts 15; Epistle of James	James Ossuary
James (son of Zebedee)	Matthew 4:21; 10:2; Mark 5:37	Josephus
Jesus (of Nazareth)	Gospels	Josephus Tacitus Sutonium Pliny the Younger Lucian Babylonian Talmud

		Mara Bar Serapion Teledoth Jesu James Ossuary Inscription Megiddo Mosaic Floor inscription Alexamenos Graffito (picture)
John the Baptist	Matthew 3:1-13; Luke 1:7-39	Josephus Baptismal site (and steps) in Jordan at Jordan River John the Baptist Cave (TBD)
Joseph (adoptive father of Jesus)	Matthew 1:20	James Ossuary
Judas the Galilean	Acts 5:37	Josephus
Lysanias	Luke 3:1	Josephus Stone Inscription at Abila (northern Morocco)
Herod Philip I (of Iturea)	Luke 3:1	Josephus
Herod Philip II (of Galilee)	Matthew 14:3; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19	Josephus Coin Inscriptions
Pontius Pilate	Luke 23:7, 22; John 18:31	Josephus Tacitus Philo Coins minted during his reign Pilate Dedication stone inscription
Quirinius (Publius Sulpicius)	Luke 2:2	Josephus Tacitus Res Gestae Inscription at Antioch Pisidia
Salome ("daughter of Herodias")	Matthew 14:6	Josephus
Sergius Paulus	Acts 13:7	Two stone inscriptions (Cyprus and Rome) L. Sergius Paulus inscription (Pisidian Antioch, Turkey)
Theudas	Acts 5:36	Josephus
Caesar Tiberius	Luke 3:1	Josephus Tacitus Suetonius Marcus Velleius Paterculus Coin Inscriptions Mentioned on Pilate dedication stone (Caesarea)

© Joseph M. Holden, 2013, 2020, adapted from Joseph M. Holden and Norman L. Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible: Discoveries That Confirm the Reliability of the Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 303-305.

Expert Witness/Opinions Regarding the Authenticity of the James Ossuary³		
Person	Expertise	Comments
Andre Lemaire	Epigrapher, ancient Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions.	Has no doubt that the entire inscription was ancient and inscribed in a single event. No reason to believe the contrary.
Ada Yardeni	Paleographer, researcher, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.	Examined the inscription in 2002 and concluded that the entire inscription is of ancient origin, and inscribed by a single individual. She also stated, "If this is a forgery, I quit."
Hagai Misgav	Member of the IAA Committee, expert in Hebrew and Aramaic ossuary inscriptions.	Found no indication of forgery in the inscription.
Shmuel Ahituv	Member of the 2003 IAA Writing Committee to examine the authenticity of the inscription and expert on Hebrew inscriptions.	Found no indication that the inscription is a forgery or is modern. The text and paleography make it difficult to rule out the authenticity of the inscription.
Yosef Naveh	Professor, prosecution witness	No indication the inscription is a forgery.
Y.L. Rahmani	Archaeologist, has published the corpus of IAA ossuary inscriptions in IAA's possession.	After examining the inscription, found no indication that the inscription (or any part of it) was a forgery.
Dr. Esther Eshel	Prosecution witness	She cannot rule out the possibility that the entire inscription may be ancient
Roni Reich	Jerusalem professor, archaeologist, and researcher	Ossuary inscription is ancient, no reason to doubt its authenticity, and most likely comes from the late second temple period.
Gabriel Barkay	Jerusalem archaeologist and professor	Ossuary is ancient and found no scientific evidence to doubt its authenticity.
Gideon Avni	IAA "Writing Committee" appointed to examine the paleography and inscription in 2003.	Never testified against the authenticity of the inscription.
Orna Cohen	Senior antiquities conservator for the IAA and Israeli museums, archaeologist, chemist, and specialist in the conservation of ancient stone items.	Based on her careful analysis of the patina within the letter grooves under various light conditions, she concluded with certainty the phrase "brother of Jesus" had been engraved in ancient times.

³ Chart is based on the summary of court proceedings offered by Oded Golan, "The Authenticity of the James Ossuary," (March, 2011), 1-15. See Joseph M. Holden and Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible* (Harvest House, 2013).

Wolfgang Krumbein	One of the world's leading experts (Oldenburg University, Germany) on the patination process, stone patina, geology, and bio-geology.	Analyzed samples of patina taken from the ossuary letter grooves, and concluded that this patina would require 50-100 years to develop, and most likely reflect a development process of thousands of years. The patina in the letter grooves was consistent with the patina on the surface of the ossuary, whose antiquity has not been contested.
Shimon Ilani Amnon Rosenfeld	Experts in Archaeometry (scientific testing of archaeological artifacts) at the Geological Survey of Israel in Jerusalem	After examination of the inscription in 2002, they identified natural bio-patina in all the letter grooves, thus demonstrating the inscription occurred prior to the scratches and patina forming. They have no doubt about the ancient origin of the entire inscription.
James Harrell	University of Toledo (OH), Expert in geology and stone of the ancient world	Found no indication that any part of the inscription was forged.
Dan Rahimi	Royal Ontario Museum of Toronto	Museum researchers tested the patina and found natural patina in the letter grooves under a granular substance that is consistent with detergent used by the IAA to formerly clean the ossuary.
Yuval Goren	Expert in petrography of potsherds and clay/silt, former member of IAA, and prosecution witness	Though Goren initially had submitted an opinion on the ossuary at the IAA's request in 2003 in which he denied any presence of natural patina in the letter grooves, he later contradicted this by reversing his finds. Later in 2007, after a reexamination of the inscription, he admitted to finding natural patina in the second half of the inscription.
Avnor Ayalon	Geo-chemist of the Geological Survey of Israel in Jerusalem and prosecution witness	He proposed to examine isotopic composition of the oxygen and carbon in carbonate patina, and compare it to the same found in stalactite caves in Jerusalem. Similar isotopic values would prove the carbonate patina on the ossuary may be natural, but a dissimilar value would demonstrate it is not natural and most likely a forgery. However, Ayalon's model has been demonstrated by others to be based on false assumptions and deemed inappropriate for examining ancient artifacts.

Elisabetta Boaretto	Expert in Carbon 14 dating, prosecution witness	Found no evidence to support that the inscription is forged or new. Only signed the IAA petition against Golan because Goren (who later reversed his opinion) and Ayalon (whose model was subsequently shown to be mistaken) had previously asserted that they had found no patina, not due to her own analysis of the inscription.
Jacques Neguer	Chemist for the IAA and prosecution witness	Asserted the inscription had been cleaned (with detergent) in the past, but cannot determine whether it was a forgery.
Israel Police Forensic Department (Mazap)	Forensics	Letters in the first half of the inscription (which are not contested), were engraved by the same individual who engraved the second half of the inscription.
Gerald B. Richards	Adjunct professor of forensic science at George Washington University, and senior consultant to the FBI	Conducted scientific tests of Oded Golan's photos (including infra-red and ultra-violet tests) of the ossuary, proving that the inscription had been engraved prior to 2002 since the photography (Kodak) paper used was discontinued in the 1980s. The indictment against Golan had claimed Golan had forged the inscription around 2002. This claim is now impossible to sustain.
Dan Bahat	State prosecutor in the case	Announced that the State would most likely dismiss the charges involving the ossuary and retract its claim that the ossuary inscription was a forgery had the bill of indictment not involved other charges.

Internal Test

Marks of historicity contained in the Gospels.

The *counterproductive features* present in the Gospels point towards historicity because of their apparent conflict with the *purposes* for which the book was written.⁴

- a. Testimony of women
- b. Death of Christ on the cross
- c. Religious leader's authority and apparent triumph
- d. Fearful disciples; they fled and denied Christ

The evidence of prophecy

- a. Born of a virgin (Isa 7:14 cf. Mt 1:8, 24, 25)
- b. House of David (Jer 23:5 cf. Lk 3:23, 31)
- c. Born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2 cf. Mt 2:1)
- d. Entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech 9:9 cf. Lk 19:35, 36, 37)
- e. Sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech 11:12 cf. Mt 26:15)
- f. He would be pierced (Zech 12:10 cf. Jn 19:34)
- g. Wounded and bruised (Isa 53:5 cf. Mt 27:26)
- h. Smitten and spat on (Isa 50:6 cf. Mt 26:67)
- i. Resurrection (Ps 16:10 cf. Acts 2:31)

A historian's perspective. Roman historian **A.N. Sherwin-White** asserts, "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming,...any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted"⁵

***Based on the above kinds of evidence (not exhaustive), there is very good reason the NT is historically and textually reliable. An easy way to remember the argument for reliability is through the acronym M-A-P-S.**

⁴ Moreland, J.P., *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987), 144-46.

⁵ Sherwin-White, A.N., *Roman Law and Roman Society in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1963), 189.