

The Historical Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Are they reliable?

Adapted from a 2006 Class Presentation by Anna Lee for
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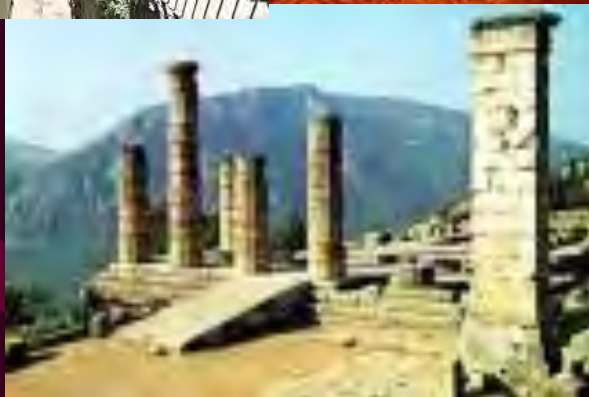
Areas of Concern Regarding the Gospels

- Textual criticism
- Authorship and date
- Questions of intention and genre
- Criteria of authenticity

Addressed in This Presentation

- Archaeology
- Non-Christian Writers
- Post-New Testament Christian Writers
- The Rest of the New Testament
- Conclusion

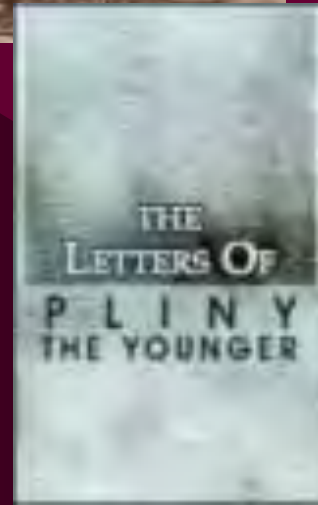
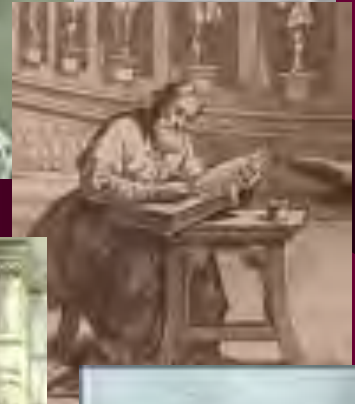
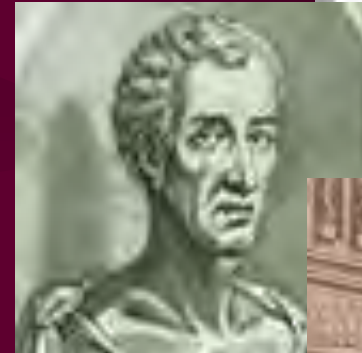
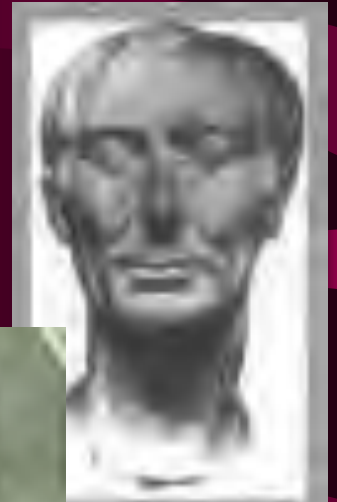
Archaeology



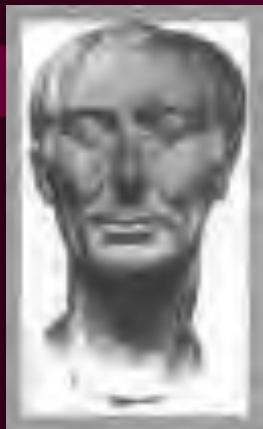
Non-Christian Writers

Greco-Roman Sources

- Julius Africanus
- Pliny the Younger
- Suetonius
- Tacitus
- Lucian of Samosata



Julius Africanus—



Thallus attributed the darkness that occurred during the crucifixion to an eclipse of the sun.

Lucian of Samosata



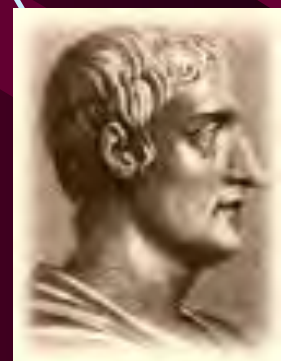
Christians met regularly and sang hymns.

Peregrinus worshiped the man who was crucified at Palestine...

Christians received their name from “Christ who had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius.”



Pliny the Younger



Tacitus

Jewish Sources

- OT Apocrypha
- Rabbinic Literature
 - Rabbinic commentaries
 - Rabbinic traditions
- Josephus



Josephus



- 1st Century Pharisee and defeated freedom-fighter-turned-historian
- “there lived Jesus, a wise man” (*Antiquities* 18.3.3)
- Described the martyrdom of James “the brother of Jesus – the one called Christ” (*Antiquities* 20.9.1)

Post-NT Christian Writers

- Unorthodox Sources
 - Coptic Gospel of Thomas
 - Apocryphon of James
 - Gospel of Philip
 - Gospel of Truth
- Other Apocrypha
 - Gospel of Peter
 - The Unknown Gospel
 - Infancy Gospel of Thomas

Post-NT Christian Writers

- Jewish-Christian Gospels
 - Ebionite Gospel
 - Gospel of Nazoreans
 - Egyptian Gospel of the Hebrews
- Later Legends
 - Gospel of Barnabas
- The Apostolic Fathers
 - Polycarp
 - Ignatius
 - Clement
 - Didachē
- Authentic Agrapha
 - “Unwritten things”

The Rest of the New Testament

Acts

- Not much is said about the life of Jesus
- However, in Acts 10:36-41 Peter sums up Jesus' life in his words to Cornelius

Paul

- Paul wrote his letters while the Gospels were also being written
- Noted about Jesus:
 - Descended from Abraham and David (Gal 3:16; Rom 1:3)
 - Upbringing in Jewish law (Gal 4:4)
 - Gathered disciples together (Gal 1:19; 2:9)

Paul (continued)

- Noted about Jesus (continued):
 - Impeccable character and exemplary life (Phil 2:6-8; 2 Cor 8:9; Rom 15:3, 8)
 - Last supper and betrayal (1 Cor 11:23-25)
 - Details of death and resurrection (Gal 3:1; 1 Thess. 2:15; 1 Cor 15:4-8)

General Epistles

- James
 - Numerous allusions
 - Sermon on the Mount parallels
- 1 Peter
 - Born anew alludes to John 3:5
 - Readers love Jesus without seeing Him
 - Called out of darkness into light

Early Christian Creeds

- Various passages in Epistles that have been identified as poetic, hymnic in structure and form
- Filled with Christological teaching in a style reminiscent of later Christian creeds

Conclusion

Conclusion

- All of these evidences (within and outside the Gospels) can't prove total trustworthiness
- They support but do not show inspiration or inerrancy
- Those who believed deduced from other convictions about the nature of God and His revelation

Conclusion (cont'd)

- Based on sheer historical grounds...
- There is substantial reason to believe in the general trustworthiness of the Gospels

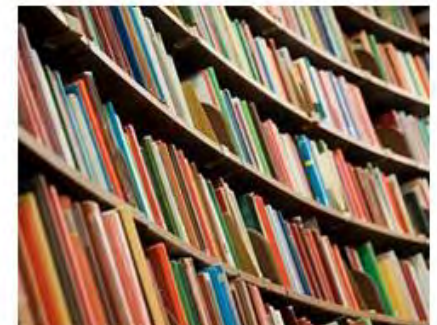
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