

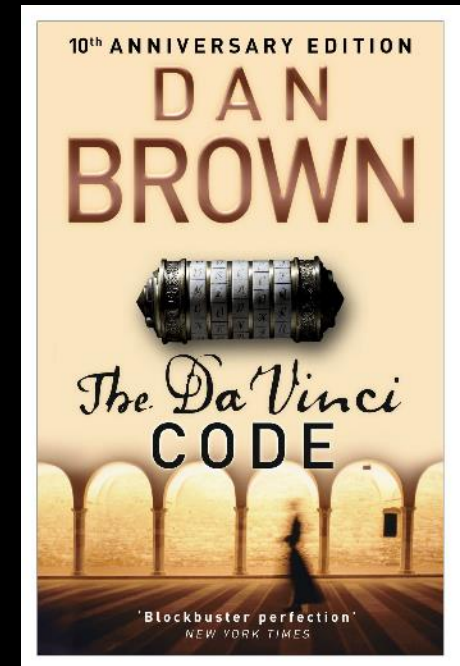
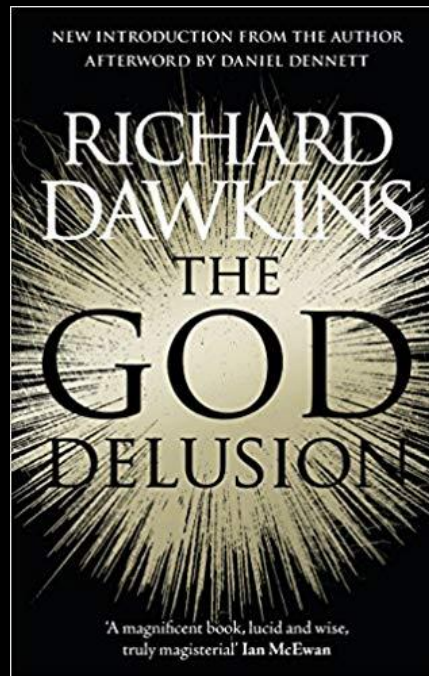
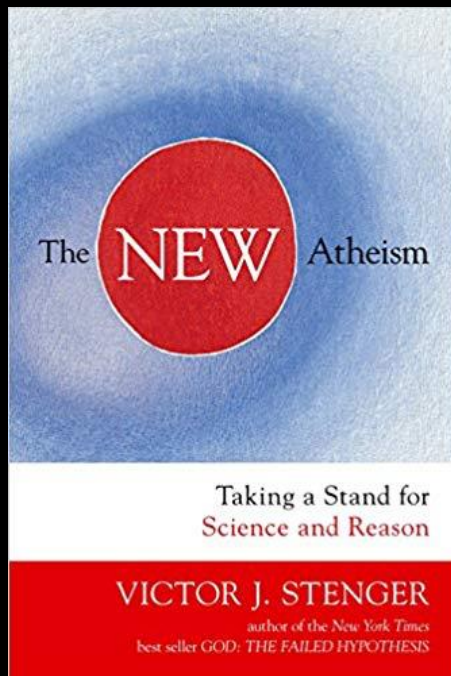
Archaeological Evidence and Jesus



Peter S. Williams – www.peterswilliams.com

Uninformed Claims About Jesus...

- Jesus probably didn't exist (e.g. Victor Stenger)
- The gospels are 'fiction' (e.g. Richard Dawkins)
- The idea of a divine Jesus was an innovation decided upon at the council of Nicea in 325 AD (e.g. Dan Brown)



Archaeology = the systematic study of the material remains of past human behavior

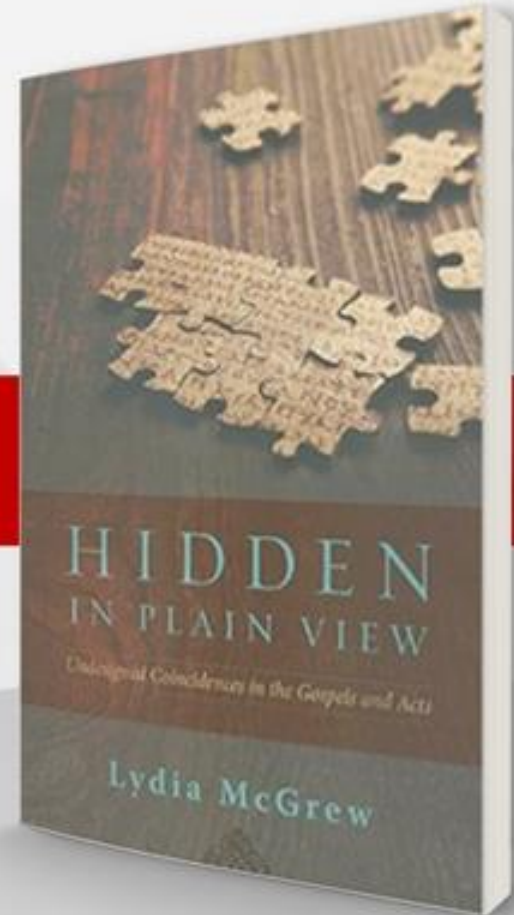


This talk will include texts on solid objects (e.g. inscriptions), but will ignore *written* evidence from books and letters!

Lydia McGrew:

‘If you sample a loaf of bread on both ends and at several points in the middle and find it good, it would be caviling to say that perhaps just the parts you haven’t tasted happen to be the moldy ones.’

- *Hidden In Plain View*, 225.



Archaeological Evidence for...

- ▶ **Historical Places** – Cities & Buildings
- ▶ **Historical People** – General & Specific Names, Titles & Relationships
- ▶ **Historical Culture** – Background & Beliefs

Archaeological Evidence for...

- ▶ **Historical Places** – Cities & Buildings
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Bethlehem

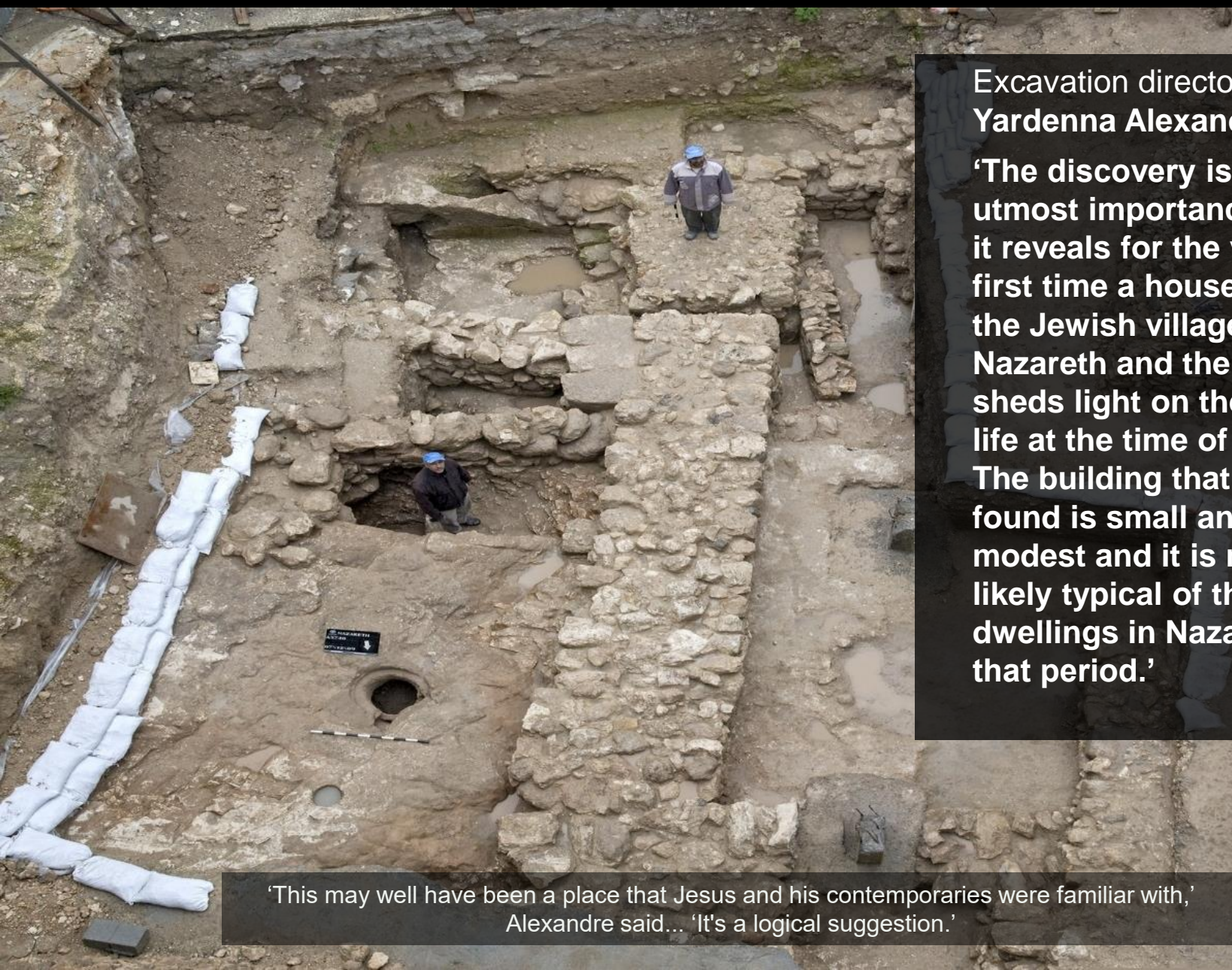
Seal
impression



Eli Shukron (2012): 'Here we can read [the word Bethlehem] in a clear Hebrew inscription from the First Temple period on a bulla found in Israel that arrived from Bethlehem to Jerusalem maybe to pay some tax. This is the Bethlehem next to Jerusalem referred to in the Bible.'

- 'Israeli archaeologists find seal that mentions Bethlehem' www.pcusa.org/news/2012/6/19/israeli-archaeologists-find-ancient-seal-mentions-/

Nazareth House (2010)



Excavation director,
Yardenna Alexander:

‘The discovery is of the utmost importance since it reveals for the very first time a house from the Jewish village of Nazareth and thereby sheds light on the way of life at the time of Jesus. The building that we found is small and modest and it is most likely typical of the dwellings in Nazareth in that period.’

**‘This may well have been a place that Jesus and his contemporaries were familiar with,’
Alexandre said... ‘It’s a logical suggestion.’**

There are sixteen references to **Capernaum** in the Gospels.

Jesus taught in the synagogue there according to Mark 1:21-22 & Luke 4:31-36.



3rd/4th Century Synagogue Wall

**1st Century Black Basalt
Foundation**

Peter's House

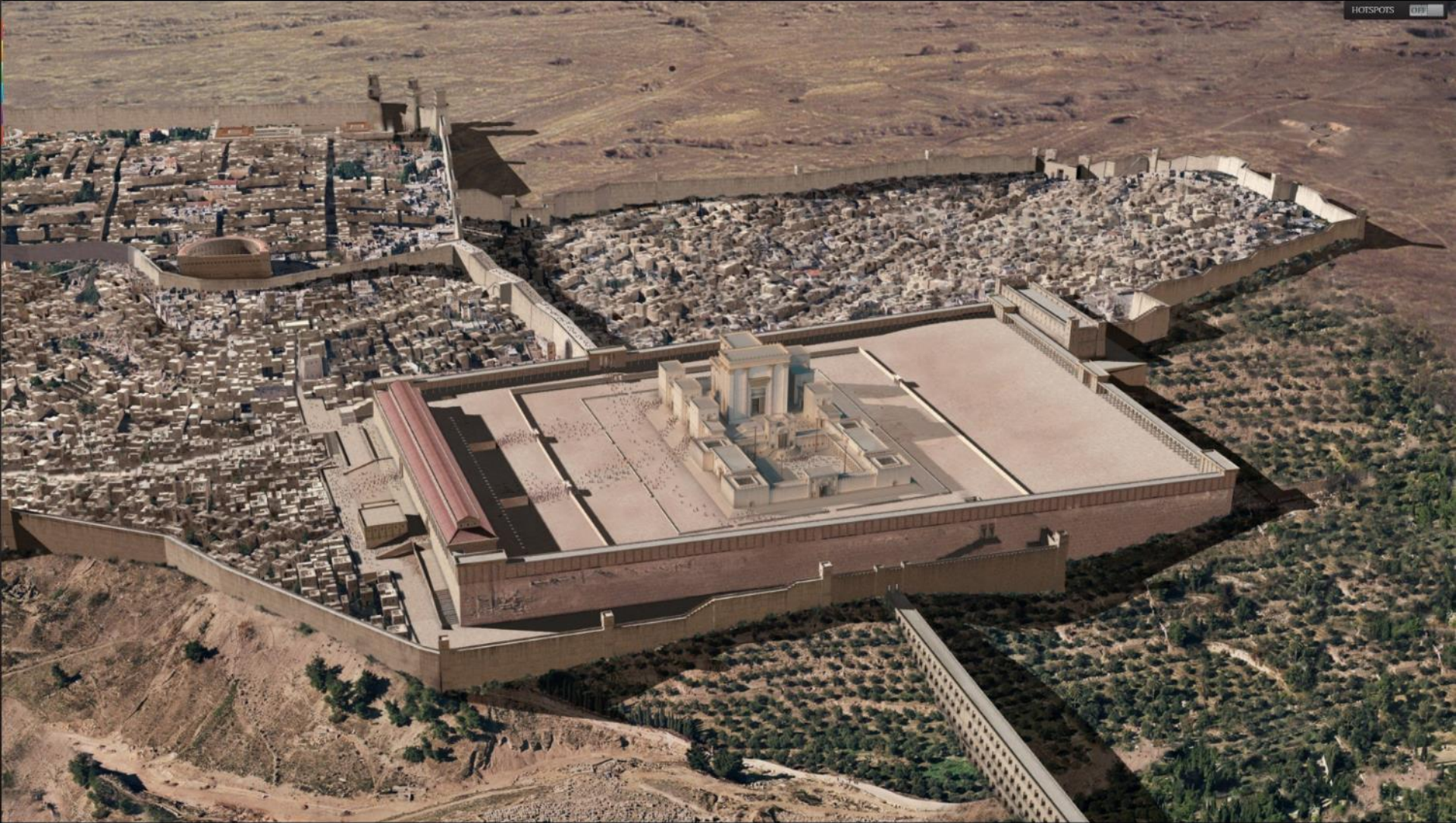


Capernaum - remains of an octagonal 5th century church.

In 1968, archaeologists discovered remains of 4th century church underneath. The 4th century church was built around a 1st century house used as a Christian meeting place since the second half of the 1st century.

Egeria, Constantine's mother (AD 380): 'In Capernaum the house of the prince of the apostles has been made into a church with its original walls still standing. It is where the Lord cured the paralytic.'

First century Jerusalem



INFO ▼

Jerusalem 1st Century

LauraZielke.com

2004, archaeologists stumbled upon the 1st century ritual Pool of Siloam (John 9:1-7) when engineers uncovered ancient steps during pipe maintenance near the mouth of Hezekiah's tunnel



Archaeological Evidence for...

- ▶ **Historical Places** – Cities & Buildings
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Luke 3:1-2

‘In the fifteenth year of the reign of [1] **Tiberius Caesar** – when [2] **Pontius Pilate** was governor of Judea, [3] **Herod** tetrarch [a governor of a quarter of a province] of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis [cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.106-108], and [4] **Lysanias** tetrarch of Abilene - during the high priesthood of Annas and [5] **Caiaphas**, the word of God came to [6] **John** son of Zechariah in the desert.’

[1] Tiberius Caesar



Tiberius, Denarius, 14-37 A.D.
Commonly referred to as the
'Tribute Penny' from the Bible.
The coin shows a portrait of
Tiberius Caesar.

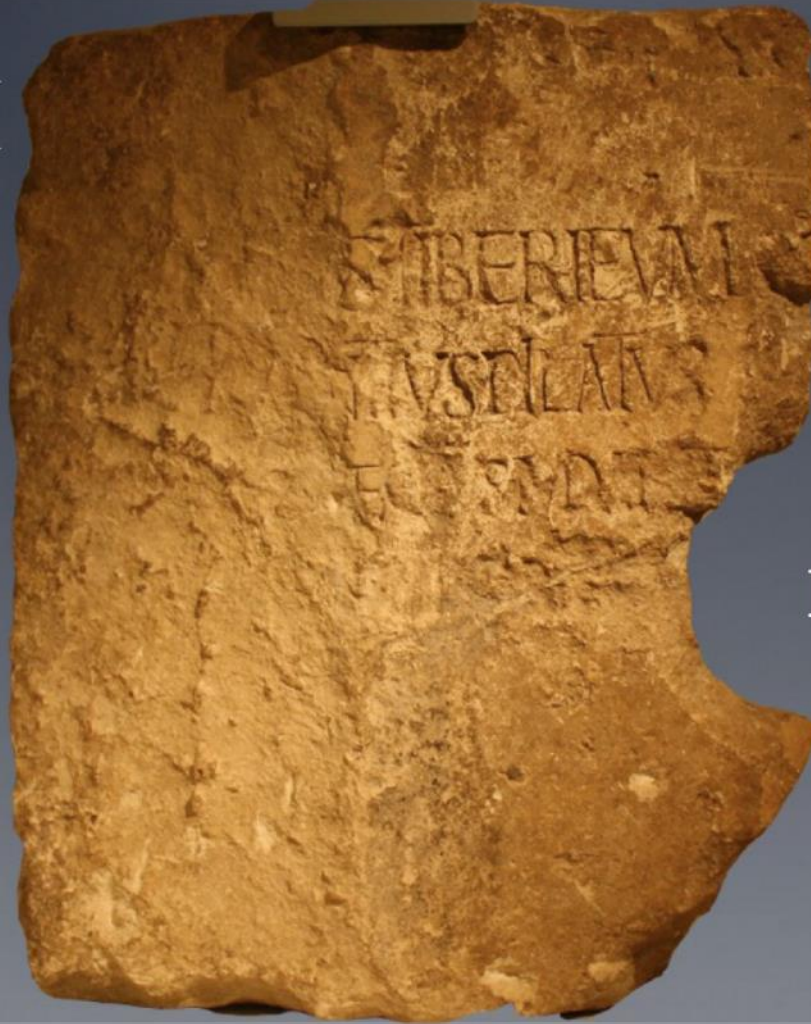


PONTIUS PILATE INSCRIPTION

“THE PILATE STONE”

*LATIN
INSCRIPTION
- 1ST CENT.
A.D.*

*....TIBERIEUM
[PON]TIUS
PILATUS
[PRAEF]ECTUS*



**Text mentions
“Pontius Pilate
Prefect of Judea”**

Discovered
in 1961
at
Caesarea
Maritima,
Israel

The Pilate Ring (2018)



- In 2018 scientists announced that a seal ring excavated in the late 1960s at Herodium carried the inscription 'of Pilates' in Greek letters set around a picture of a wine vessel.
- ΠΙΛΑΤΟ represents the dative form of the name, which would ordinarily be written in minuscule letters as Πιλατω.
- The inscription on the corroded copper alloy ring was finally read using advanced photographic techniques.
- The ring was probably not fancy enough to have been worn by Pilate himself, but was likely worn by someone authorized to act on Pilate's authority, who would use the seal to make official communications.

[3] Herod ('the great')



- **Thomas Paine (1737-1809):**
'There could be no such person as a King Herod because the Jews and their country were then under the dominion of the Roman Emperors who governed them by tetrarchs, or governors.'

[3] Herod ('the great')

Bronze coin of Herod the Great. On the obverse side (bottom) is a tripod and ceremonial bowl with the inscription "Herod king" and the year the coin was struck, "year 3" (of Herod's reign), 37 BC.



1996, Israeli Professor of Archaeology **Ehud Netzer** discovered some broken pottery in Masada bearing the Latin inscription:

Herod the Great King of the Jews/Judea.

This was the first find to mention the full Biblical title of King Herod.

This was part of an amphora used for transportation (probably wine), dated to c. 19 B.C.



[4] Lysanias

Scholars said Luke didn't know what he was talking about, since everybody knew that Lysanias wasn't a tetrarch but ruler of Chalcis, half a century earlier. But an inscription was later found from the time of Tiberius (AD 14 to 37) which names one **Lysanias** as tetrarch in **Abila** near Damascus.

There'd been *two* government officials named Lysanias!



[5] Caiaphas

In a tomb located to the south of Jerusalem were discovered several ossuaries, one of which many historians believe relates to the former high priest Caiaphas and his family.



On the side and back of the ossuary is inscribed Caiaphas' name: "Yosef bar [son of] Caifa".

[6] Bulgarian Bone-Box of John the Baptist (2011)





About.com: 'Popkonstantinov headed an archaeological team that uncovered the reliquary, or ancient container for relics, in which the eight bone pieces attributed to John the Baptist were found. The reliquary was found embedded in an altar in the ruins of a monastery on Sveti Ivan, a small island in Black Sea off Sozopol, Bulgaria. Professor Popkonstantinov told the media that he bases his support for the find's authenticity on a Greek inscription found on another box with the reliquary: "God, save your servant Thomas. To St John. June 24." The date is that of the religious feast of St. John the Baptist. The island's name and the monastery's dedication to St. John also are considered supporting evidence.'



‘Oxford University archaeologists undertook carbon dating tests... The research team dated the right-handed knuckle bone to the [middle of the] first century AD, when John is believed to have lived until his beheading ordered by king Herod.’ – The Telegraph, June 15th 2012.

Three additional names...





Jesus

brother of

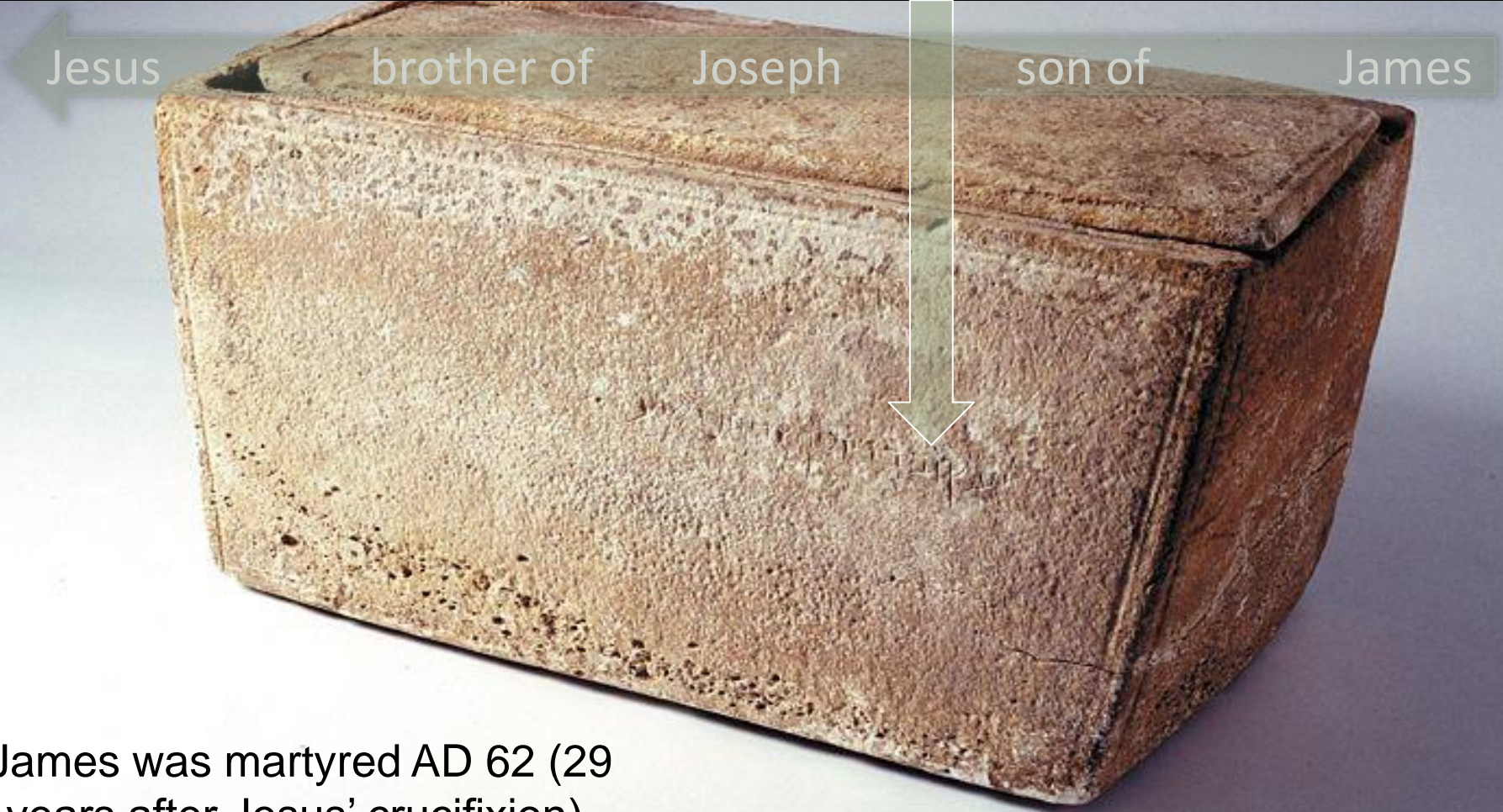
Joseph

son of

James



Mid 1st Century AD chalk ossuary noticed in 2002.



James was martyred AD 62 (29 years after Jesus' crucifixion), which would date this ossuary to AD 63.



- A 2014 peer reviewed paper in the *Open Journal of Geology* supported the authenticity of the James ossuary.
- Patina on the ossuary surface matched that in the engravings, and microfossils in the inscription were naturally deposited.

The Authenticity of the James Ossuary

Amnon Rosenfeld¹, Howard R. Feldman^{2,3*}, Wolfgang E. Krumbein⁴

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³Division of Paleontology, Invertebrates, American Museum of Natural History, New York, USA

⁴Geomicrobiology, ICBM, Carl von Ossietzky Universitaet, Oldenburg, Germany

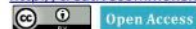
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Abstract

An archaeometric analysis of the James Ossuary inscription “James Son of Joseph Brother of Jesus” strengthens the contention that the ossuary and its engravings are authentic. The beige patina can be observed on the surface of the ossuary, continuing gradationally into the engraved inscription. Fine long striations made by the friction of falling roof rocks continuously crosscut the letters. Many dissolution pits are superimposed on several of the letters of the inscription. In addition to calcite and quartz, the patina contains the following minerals: apatite, whewellite and weddellite (calcium oxalate). These minerals result from the biogenic activity of microorganisms that require a long period of time to form a bio-patina. Moreover, the heterogeneous existence of wind-blown microfossils (nanofossils and foraminifers) and quartz within the patina of the ossuary, including the lettering zone, reinforces the authenticity of the inscription.

Keywords

James Ossuary; Archaeometric; Patina; Cretaceous; Nari; Geo-Microbiogenic; Microfossils

1. Introduction

An ossuary made of chalk and covered by beige to gray patina (Figure 1) was brought to the Geological Survey of Israel in August, 2002 in order to study its archaeometry. Lemaire [1] [2] noted that the following Aramaic inscription appears on one of the long outer walls of the ossuary:

יְעֻקֵּב בֶּן יוֹסֵף אֲחִי יֵשׁוּעַ = *Ya'akov Son of Yoseph Brother of Yeshua (James Son of Joseph Brother of Jesus)*

Rosenfeld and Ilani [3] studied the archaeometry of the James Ossuary. They concluded that the patina indi-

*Corresponding author.

tamination. Moreover, patina growth on archaeological artifacts is completely different from natural speleothem growth of stalagmites with a constant water supply and stable temperature year round in a close cave [16] [18]. The formation of a patina on archaeological artifacts is produced in a few sporadic events in kinetic processes.

In addition, the compositions of oxygen isotopes were measured in patinas on 56 artifacts from officially sanctioned excavations and exhibit a wide range of values [19]. Thus, the patina on archaeological artifacts is not comparable to continuous growth of stalagmite rings. Therefore, the oxygen isotope measurements in patinas are not a reliable method for authentication of any archaeological artifact [16].

4. Conclusions

The results of our archaeometric analysis are as follows: 1) The natural beige patina can be found inside the letters of the James Ossuary accreting gradationally into the inscription; 2) Ancient patinated striations, likely caused by falling roof rocks in the cave, crosscut the surface of the ossuary and the letters of the inscription in the same direction; 3) Massive pitting, developed under atmospheric conditions after the engraving of the inscription on the ossuary, is also superimposed on several letters; 4) The presence of MCF forming circular pitted embedded structures and significant phosphate that is incorporated into the patina indicates slow growth over many years; 5) The patina does not contain any traces of modern tools and adheres firmly to the stone; 6) The cretaceous to tertiary microfossils found within the patina are similar in age to the marine carbonate rocks that are widely exposed over most of Israel and transported by dust storms; 7) Heterogeneous wind-blown microfossils and quartz are found within the patina of the ossuary, including the lettering zone.

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Hershel Shanks (editor in chief of the
Biblical Archaeological Review):



‘this box is more likely the ossuary of
James, the brother of Jesus of Nazareth,
than not. In my opinion... it is likely that this
inscription does mention the James and
Joseph and Jesus of the New Testament.’

Historian **Paul L. Maier**:

‘there is strong (though not absolutely conclusive) evidence that, yes, the ossuary and its inscription are not only authentic, but that the inscribed names are the New Testament personalities.’

Archaeological Evidence for...

- ▶ **Historical Places** – Cities & Buildings
- ▶ **Historical People** – General & Specific Names, Titles & Relationships
- ▶ **Historical Culture** – Background & Beliefs

1st Century Fishing Boat

- In 1986, Israel suffered a drought, which caused the waters of the Sea of Galilee to recede. Two local fishermen, who were also amateur archaeologists, discovered a boat buried in the mud. It turned out to be a well-preserved fishing boat from the time of Jesus.
- The vessel – which measured over 27 feet in length – was typical of fishing boats used during the time of Jesus in the eastern Mediterranean.
- Archaeologists raced against time to recover the boat from the mud before the waters returned.
- Pots and lamps found beside the boat helped date it to the first century. This was confirmed by radiocarbon dating.
- In the back of the boat was a raised section, like that under which Jesus was sleeping on the ballast sandbag in the story of calming the storm (Mark 4:38). The boat could accommodate 15 people, so there would have been room for Jesus and his twelve disciples.



According to Jesus Mythicist **Robert M. Price**:

- *'A major collision between the gospel tradition and archaeology concerns the existence of synagogues and Pharisees in pre 70 CE Galilee. Historical logic implies that there would not have been any since Pharisees fled to Galilee only after the fall of Jerusalem.'* - *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man* (2003), 14.



December 2021: '[The] University of Haifa announced the discovery of a first-century C.E. synagogue in Magdala, Israel... Although this is one of only a handful of synagogues from the first century ever excavated in the Galilee, it is remarkably not the first uncovered in the ancient city of Magdala. Another synagogue was discovered in the city in 2009... This new synagogue helps scholars understand the deeply Jewish nature of Magdala and the Galilee as a whole in the first century, a subject that has been widely discussed and debated. - www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/new-first-century-synagogue/

Smithsonian Magazine describing events of Summer 2009:

‘The Gospels say that Jesus taught... in synagogues “throughout all Galilee.” But despite decades of digging in the towns Jesus visited, no early first-century synagogue had ever been found... Some scholars argued that the “synagogues” in the New Testament were nothing more than anachronisms... But as [Israeli Antiquities Authority official Dina] Avshalom-Gorni stood at the edge of the [archaeological dig] pit, studying the arrangement of benches along the walls, she could no longer deny it: They’d found a synagogue from the time of Jesus, in the hometown of Mary Magdalene...’

- www.smithsonianmag.com/history/unearthing-world-jesus-180957515/



These finds mark 'the first case of the existence of two synagogues in any locality from the Second Temple period, a period when the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing.'

- www.sci-news.com/archaeology/magdala-synagogue-10374.html

'the first time two synagogues dated to the Second Temple period - roughly 516 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. - have been unearthed in a single town' - www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/2000-year-old-synagogue-found-in-mary-magdalenes-supposed-hometown-180979208/



In addition to six columns, the synagogue contained several *mikva'ot* (Jewish ritual baths) and beautifully colored frescoes. Most stunning of all was a large stone that sat in the middle of the room and possibly functioned as a table for reading Torah scrolls. This has come to be known as the Magdala Stone. Etched into the stone are numerous images, including one of the earliest depictions of a menorah...

- www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/new-first-century-synagogue/

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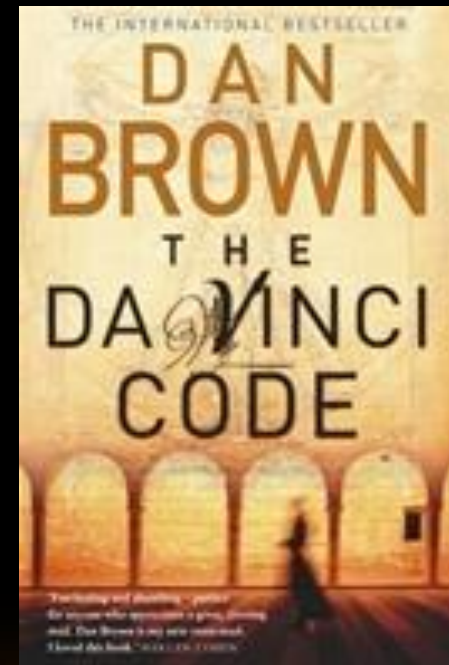


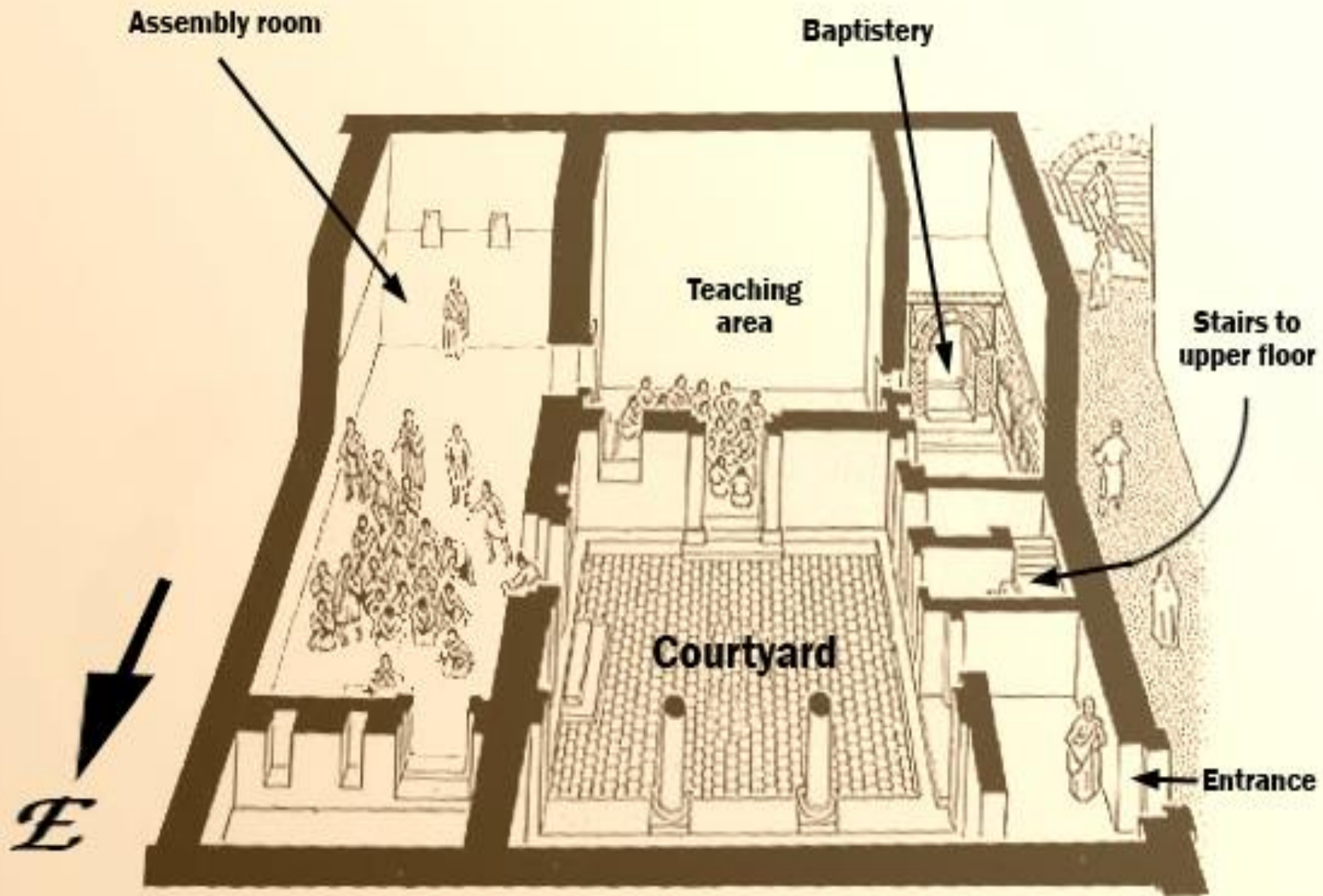
‘Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a man nevertheless...’

‘Not the Son of God?’

‘Right,’ Teabing said. ‘Jesus’ establishment as the Son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea.’

(i.e. 325 AD)





3rd-C. CHURCH AT DURA-EUROPOS





‘Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

– Mark 2:3-12

Wall painting from a house-church baptistery in Dura-Europos (modern Syria), c. 232 AD.



'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep' – John 10:11

'The LORD is my shepherd' – Psalm 23

Mid-3rd Century 'Good Shepherd' Ring

- 'A gold ring with its gemstone showing an image of young Jesus holding a lamb on his back, a scene known as the 'Good Shepherd' in Christianity, is one of several stunning artifacts found off the coast of Israel. The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced it had recovered treasures from two shipwrecks, dating back 1,700 and 600 years, which were found in the ancient port of Caesarea. The ring, which is 1,700 years old, was found among a trove of third-century Roman coins...' - [dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-10336363/Stunning-Good-Shepard-ring-depicts-young-Jesus-holding-Roman-era-shipwrecks.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-10336363/Stunning-Good-Shepard-ring-depicts-young-Jesus-holding-Roman-era-shipwrecks.html)



Christian 'prayer hall' mosaic (discovered 2005) near Megiddo, c. 230 AD.





The fish – ΙΧΘΥΣ (Ichthys) - was an early Christian symbol due to the acrostic:

Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ

(Iēsous Christos Theou Yios Sōtēr)

i.e. 'Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour'

Greek inscription:

‘The God-loving
Akeptous has
offered the table
to God Jesus
Christ as a
memorial’





מִן הַיָּם וְעַד הַיָּם
וְעַד הַיָּם וְעַד הַיָּם
וְעַד הַיָּם וְעַד הַיָּם
וְעַד הַיָּם וְעַד הַיָּם
וְעַד הַיָּם וְעַד הַיָּם

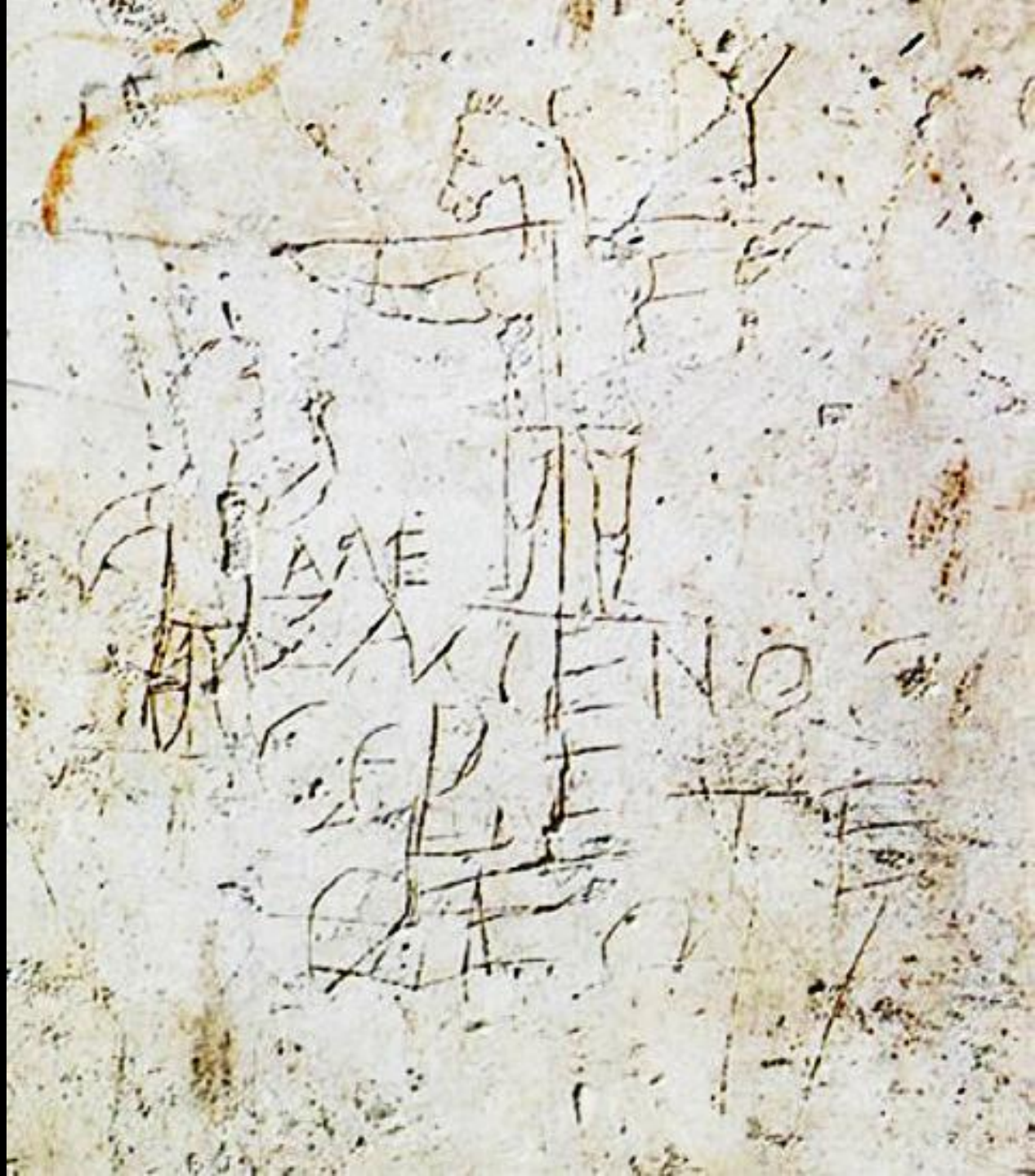
The 'Alexamenos' graffito:

Wall graffiti near
the Palatine hill,
Rome, dated to

'c. AD 200' - Richard

Bauckham, *Jesus: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford,
2011, p. 96.

**'Alexamenos
worships his
god'**



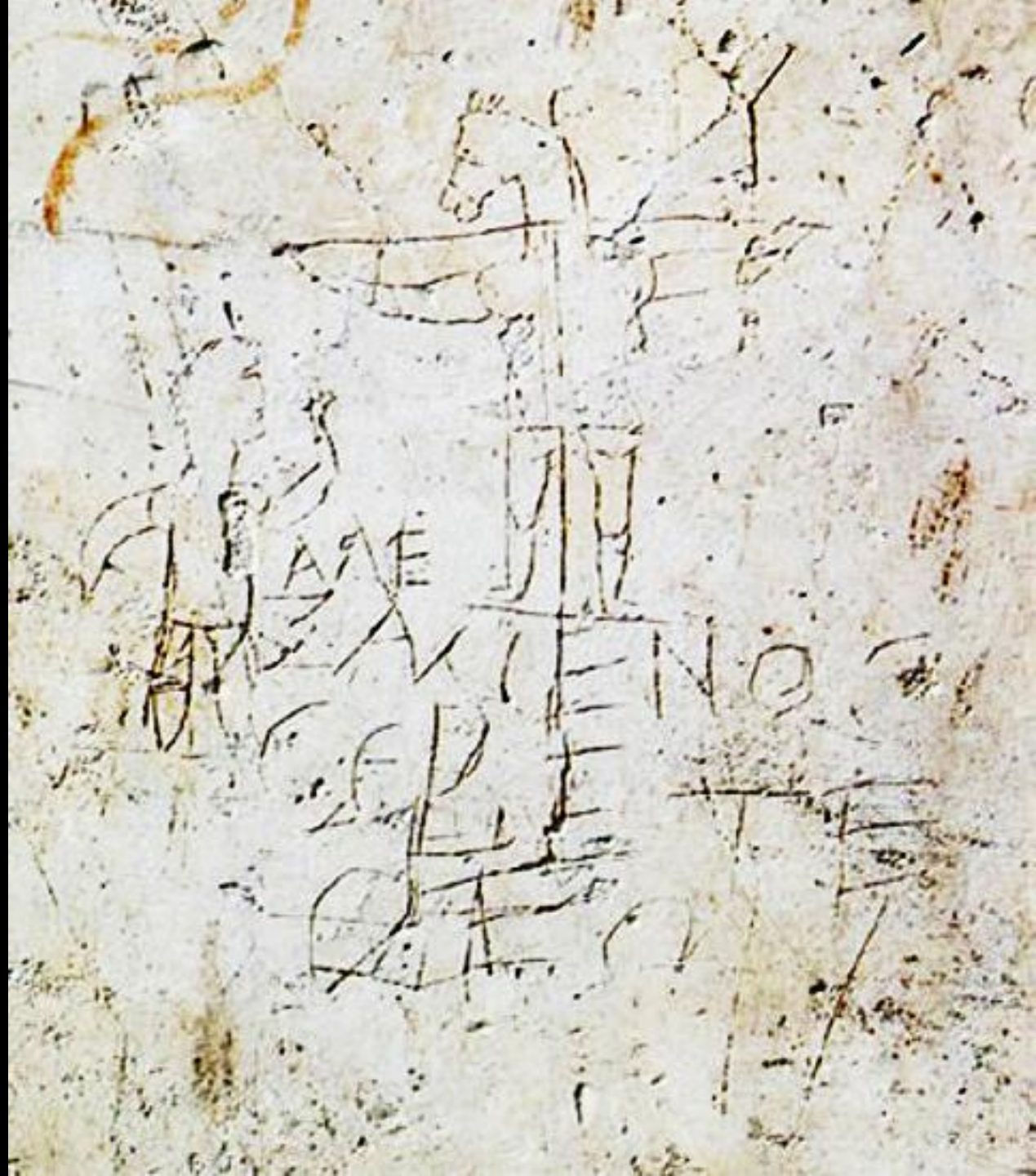
Tom Holland:

‘To Greek scholars, the question of what might be found within this “Holy of Holies” was a tantalising one. Posidonius, never knowingly without a theory, claimed that it contained a golden ass’s head. Others believed it held ‘the stone image of a man with a long beard sitting on a donkey.’ [Diodorus Siculus

The 'Alexamenos' graffito:

**'Alexamenos
worships his
god'**

**The donkey
imagery
suggests the
'god' being
worshipped
here is
supposed to
be *the Jewish
God.***



(Livescience.com – Sept 2011): Researchers identify what is believed to be the world's earliest surviving Christian inscription...

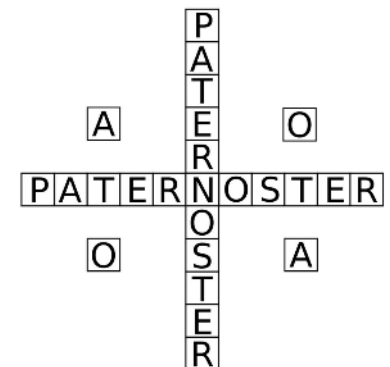
Called NCE 156, the inscription is written in Greek and is ***dated to the latter half of the second century***... NCE 156... alludes to Christian beliefs. "If it is in fact a second-century inscription, as I think it probably is, it is about the earliest Christian material object that we possess," study researcher Gregory Snyder, of Davidson College in North Carolina, told LiveScience. Snyder, who detailed the finding in the most recent issue of the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, believes it to be a funeral epigram, incorporating both Christian and pagan elements...

The inscription reads:

To my bath, the brothers of the bridal chamber carry the torches, [here] in our halls, they hunger for the [true] banquets, even while **praising the Father and glorifying the Son**. There [with the Father and the Son] is the only spring and source of truth.

Pompeii Rotas/Sator Square, c. 79 AD

- This Rotas Square is found in ancient Roman places including Cirencester and **Pompeii** (dating back to 79 AD)
- It's a Latin palindrome, written horizontally and vertically
- It has a backward spelling: 'rotas opera tenet arepo sator', translated: 'Farmer Arepo works the plough'
- One may arrange the letters into a cross, with the single **N** (for the divine 'Name'?) as the center (as in the square), the words '**Our Father**' (the opening of the Lord's prayer) and the letters **Alpha & Omega** at the end horizontally and vertically
- According to **Revelation 1:8** Jesus says: '**I am the Alpha and Omega... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.**'
- The letters may be arranged into a prayer: 'Oro te, Pater; oro te, Pater; sanas' ('I pray to you, Father; I pray to you, Father; you heal')
- The symbolism is Jewish (Ezekiel 1:16-17 & 9:4, Isaiah 46:10) and/or Christian (<https://mysteriouswritings.com/the-sator-square/>)



Crucifixion, 33 AD

100 AD

200 AD

300 AD

Council of Nicea,
325 AD

Pompeii
Rotas
Square

NCE 156

The
'Alexamenos'
graffito

'Good
Shepherd'
Ring

Megiddo
Church

Dura
Europos
Church



Crucifixion, 33 AD

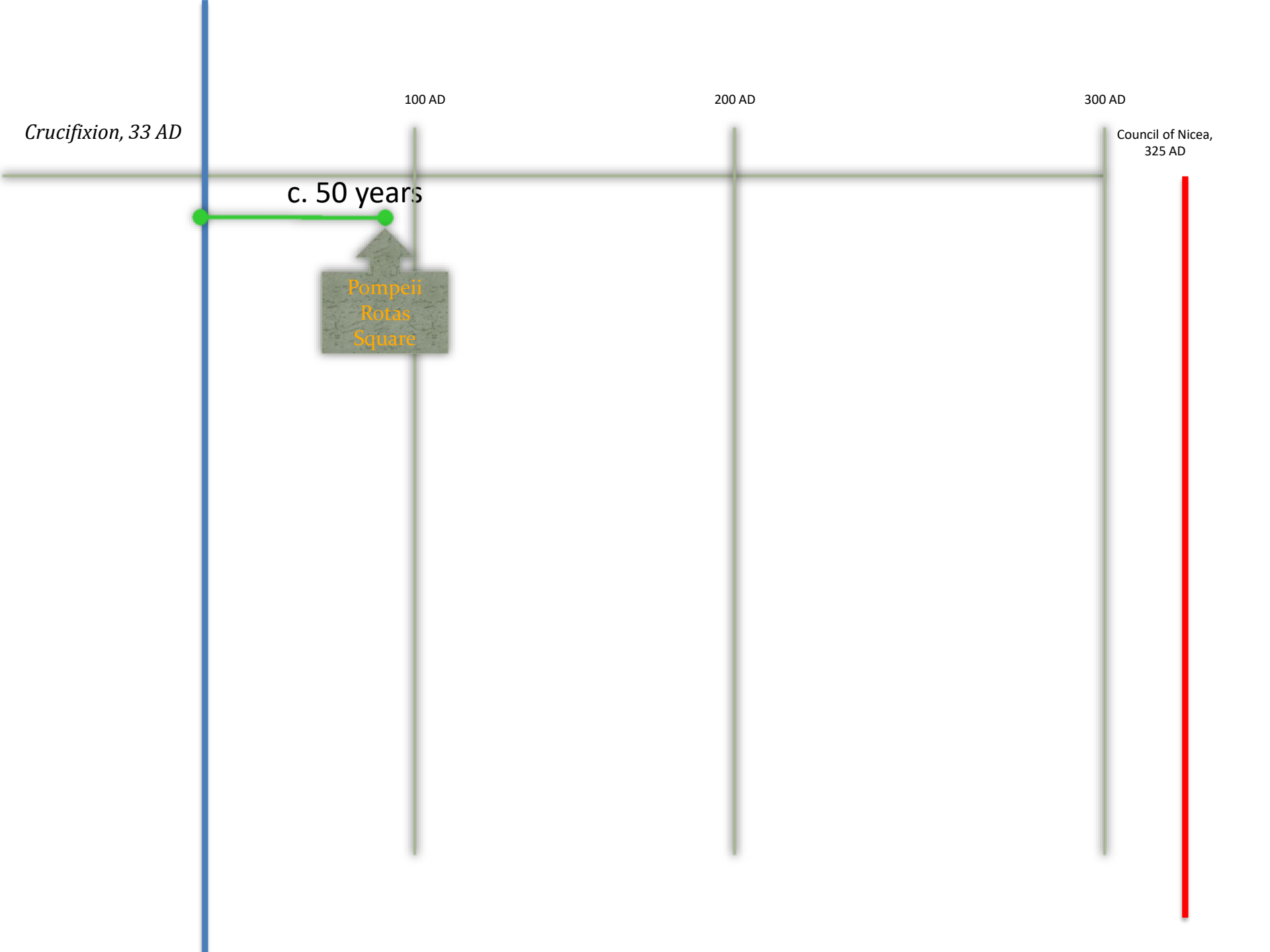
100 AD

200 AD

300 AD

Council of Nicea,
325 AD

c. 50 years



Crucifixion, 33 AD

100 AD

200 AD

300 AD

Council of Nicea,
325 AD

c. 150-200 years



Pompeii
Rotas
Square



NCE 156



Crucifixion, 33 AD

100 AD

200 AD

300 AD

c. 200-230 years

Council of Nicea,
325 AD

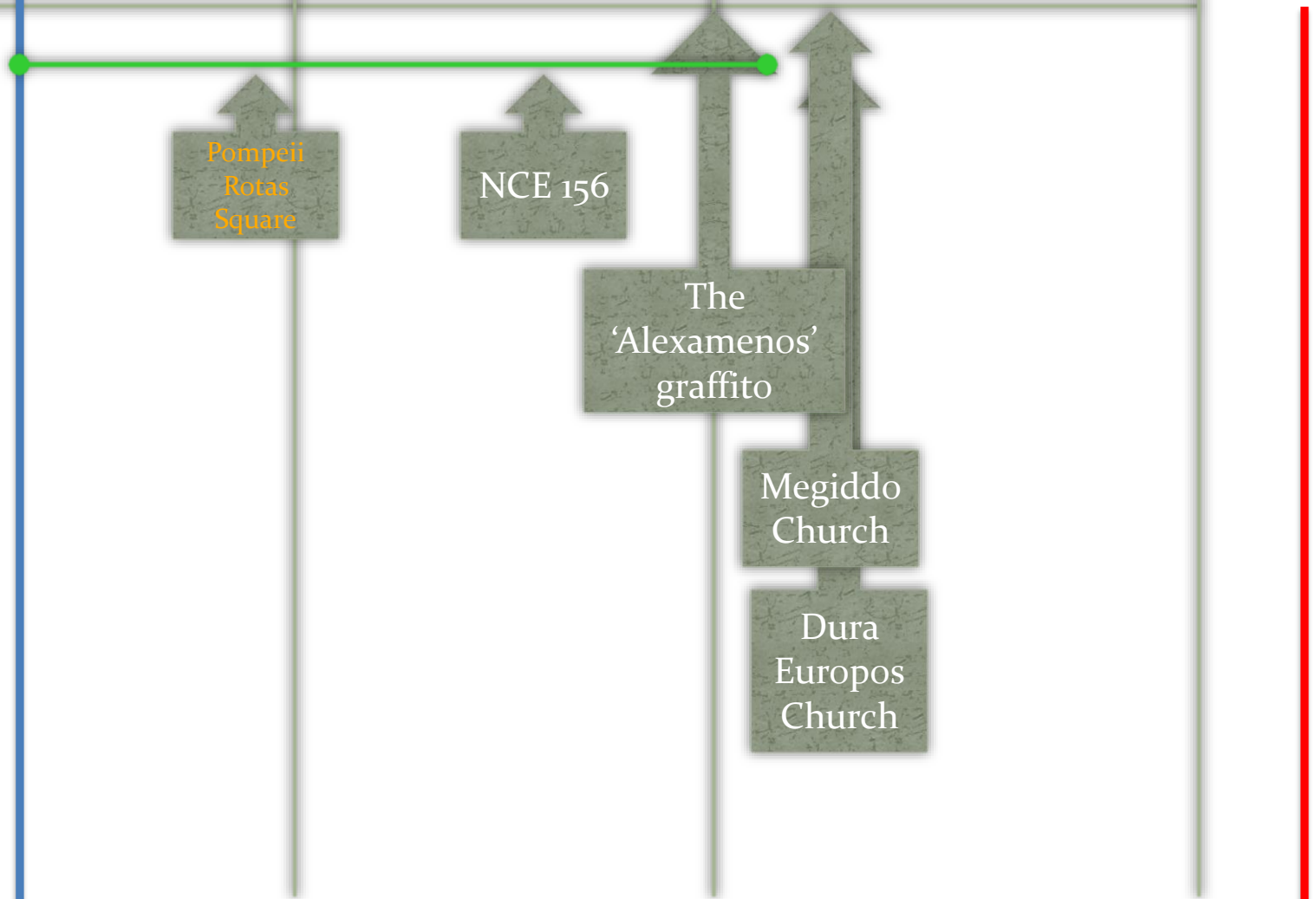
Pompeii
Rotas
Square

NCE 156

The
'Alexamenos'
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Megiddo
Church

Dura
Europos
Church



Crucifixion, 33 AD

100 AD

200 AD

300 AD

c. 200-230 years

Council of Nicea,
325 AD

Pompeii
Rotas
Square

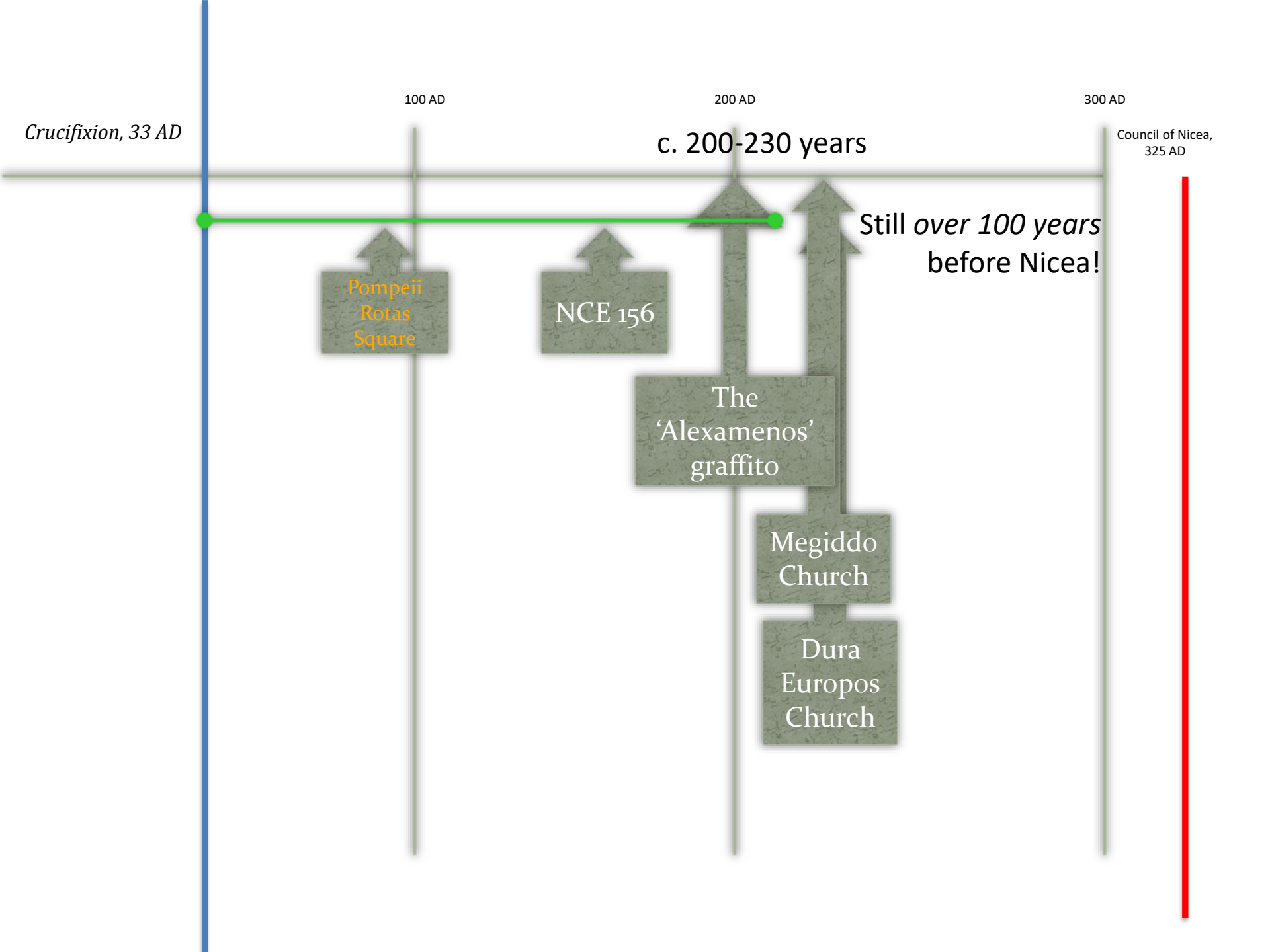
NCE 156

The
'Alexamenos'
graffito

Megiddo
Church

Dura
Europos
Church

Still over 100 years
before Nicea!



Crucifixion, 33 AD

100 AD

200 AD

300 AD

c. 250 years

Council of Nicea,
325 AD

Pompeii
Rotas
Square

NCE 156

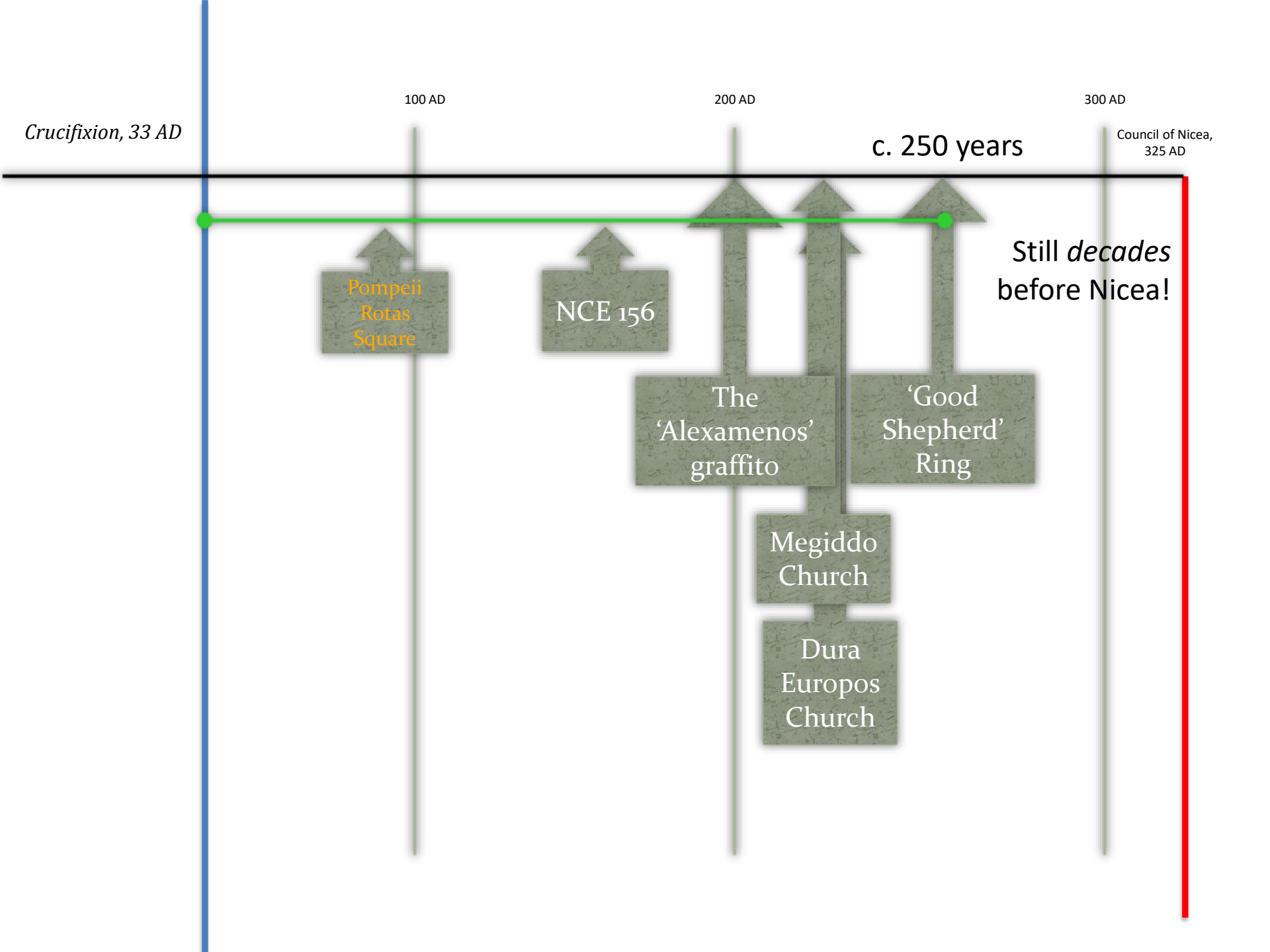
The
'Alexamenos'
graffito

'Good
Shepherd'
Ring

Megiddo
Church

Dura
Europos
Church

Still *decades*
before Nicea!



Yohanan

In 1968 an ancient burial site was uncovered containing about 35 bodies. One named Yohanan Ben Ha'galgol had a 7 inch nail driven thru both feet.

He'd been **crucified and given an honourable burial in the first century AD** (critics sometimes deny this would happen to a crucified man)



- In December 2021 it was announced that the skeleton of a crucified man had been excavated from a grave at Fenstanton in Cambridgeshire, England.
- The remains had a nail driven through the back of the right foot.
- ‘Radiocarbon-dating tests suggest that the victim, ... was executed in the third or early fourth century AD, probably in about 250.’

- [www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/17-december/news/uk/rare-crucifixion-victim-](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/17-december/news/uk/rare-crucifixion-victim-found-in-cambridgeshire#.YcBdR6KEJDs.twitter)

[found-in-cambridgeshire#.YcBdR6KEJDs.twitter](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/17-december/news/uk/rare-crucifixion-victim-found-in-cambridgeshire#.YcBdR6KEJDs.twitter)

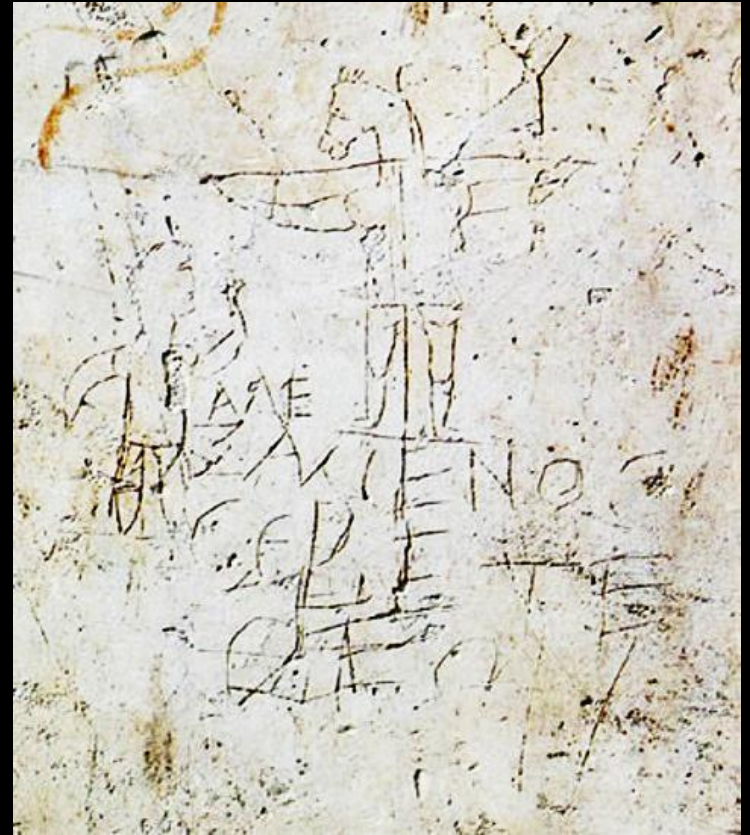


Crucifixion is Embarrassing!

The Alexamenos Graffito, believed to date from c. 200 AD, is possibly the earliest surviving depiction of Jesus.

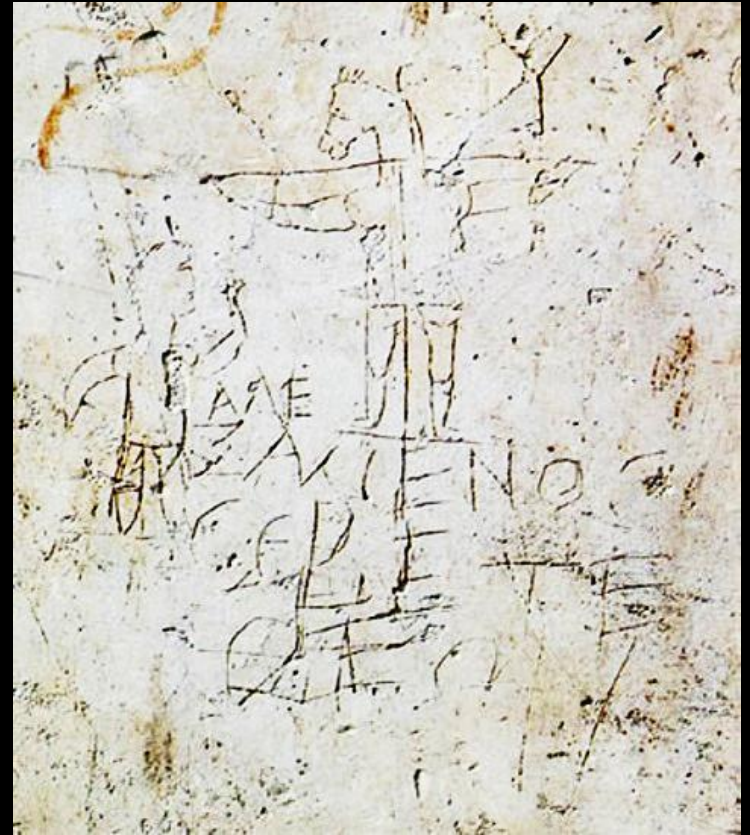
- **Bart Erhman:** 'it is highly improbable that the earliest Palestinian Jewish followers of Jesus would have made up the claim that the messiah was crucified.'

- *Did Jesus Exist?*, p. 188.



Explaining the Data...

Rob Bowman: 'it would never have occurred to anyone in the first century to invent a story about a crucified man as the divine Savior and King of the world. Something extreme and dramatic must have happened to lead people to accept such an idea...'



Jesus' Empty Tomb

(yes its a place, but it makes sense to consider it at this juncture!)

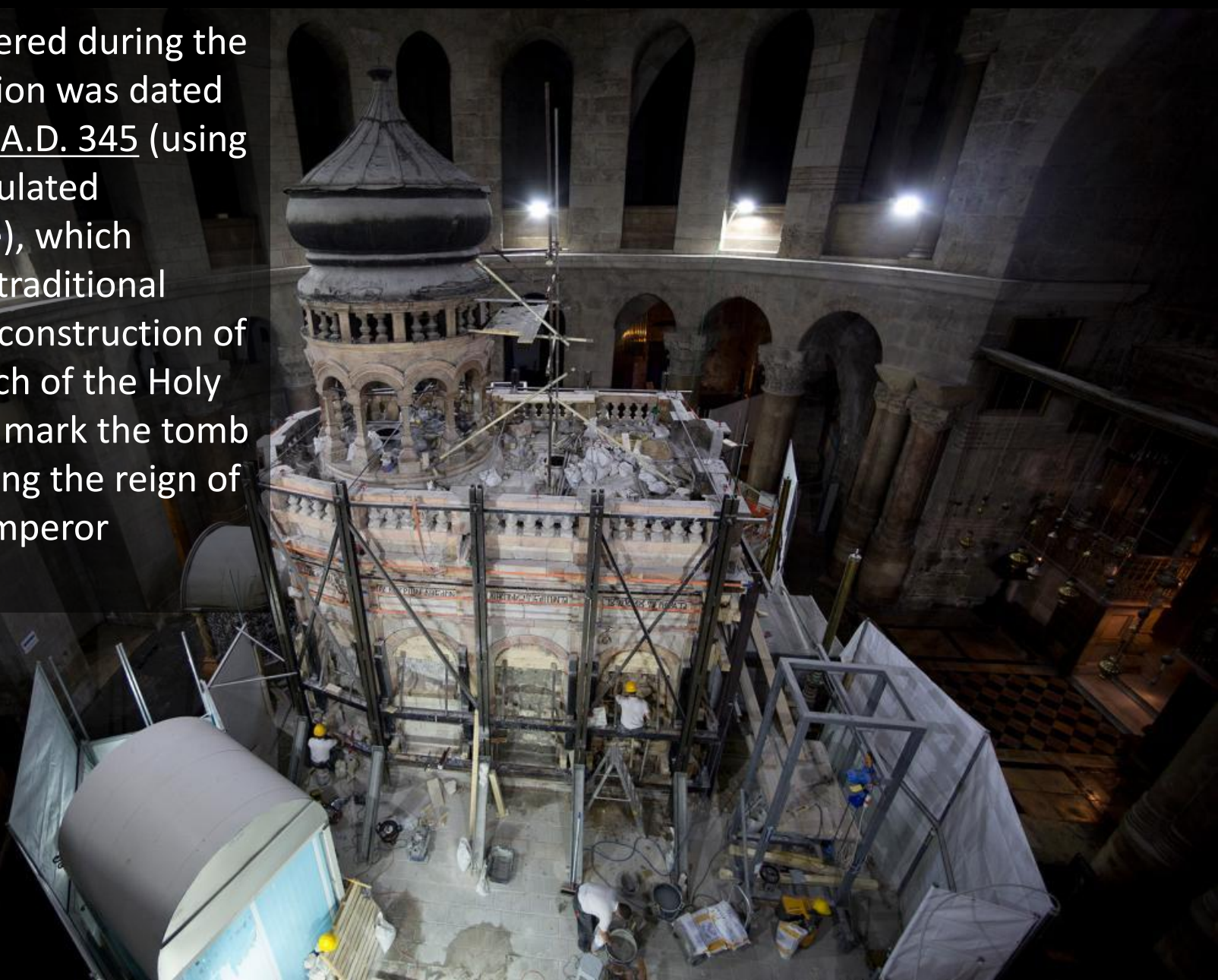
Dan Bahat, former city archaeologist of Jerusalem: 'We may not be absolutely certain that the site of the Holy Sepulcher Church is the site of Jesus' burial, but we certainly have no other site that can lay a claim nearly as weighty, and we really have no reason to reject the authenticity of the site.'

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/10/jesus-christ-tomb-burial-church-holy-sepulchre/>



Jesus' Empty Tomb

Mortar recovered during the 2016 renovation was dated to as early as A.D. 345 (using optically stimulated luminescence), which supports the traditional dating of the construction of the first Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to mark the tomb of Christ, during the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine.

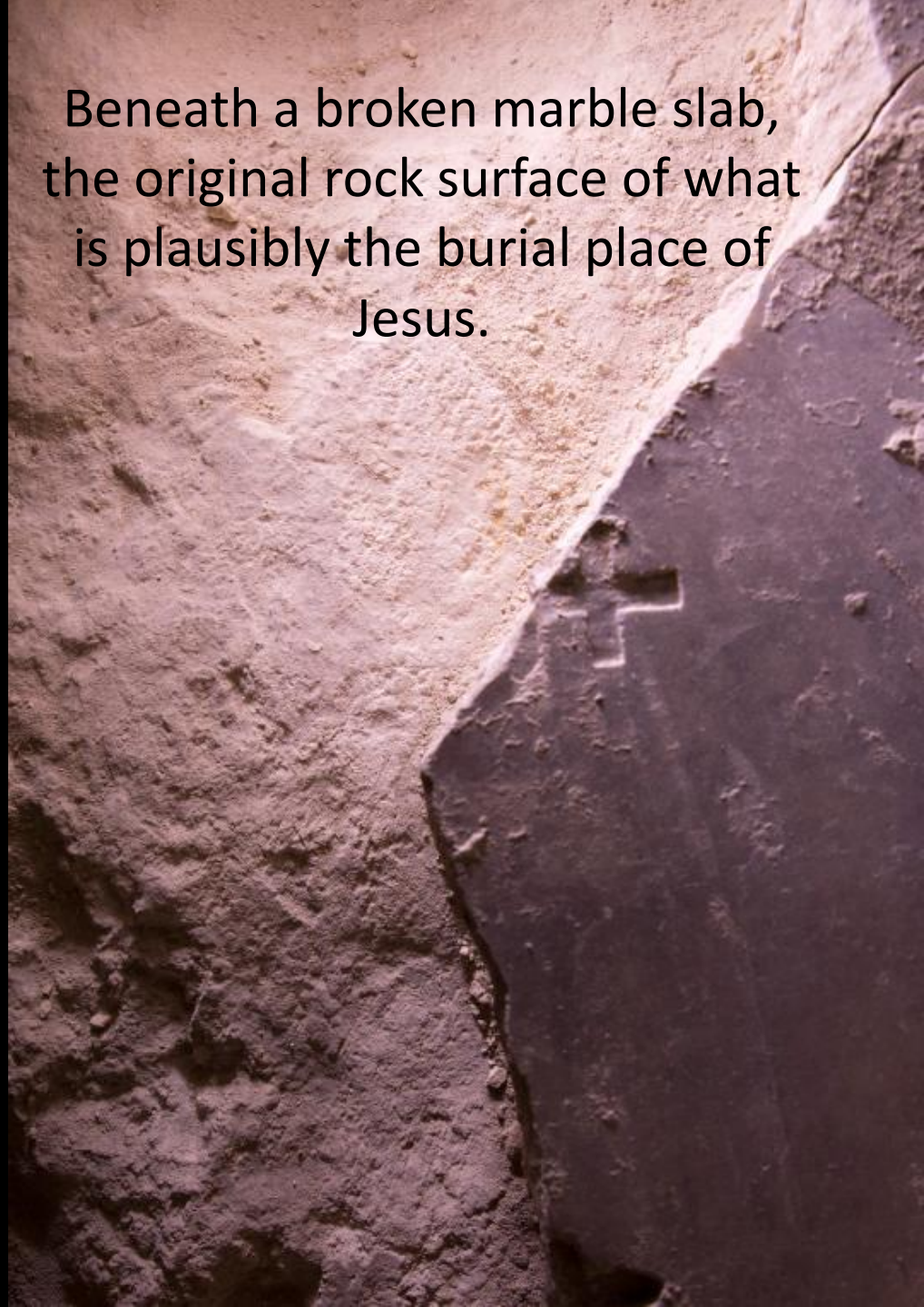


Jesus' Empty Tomb

Fredrik Hiebert, National Geographic's archaeologist-in-residence:

'it appears to be visible proof that the location of the tomb has not shifted through time, something that scientists and historians have wondered for decades.'

Beneath a broken marble slab, the original rock surface of what is plausibly the burial place of Jesus.



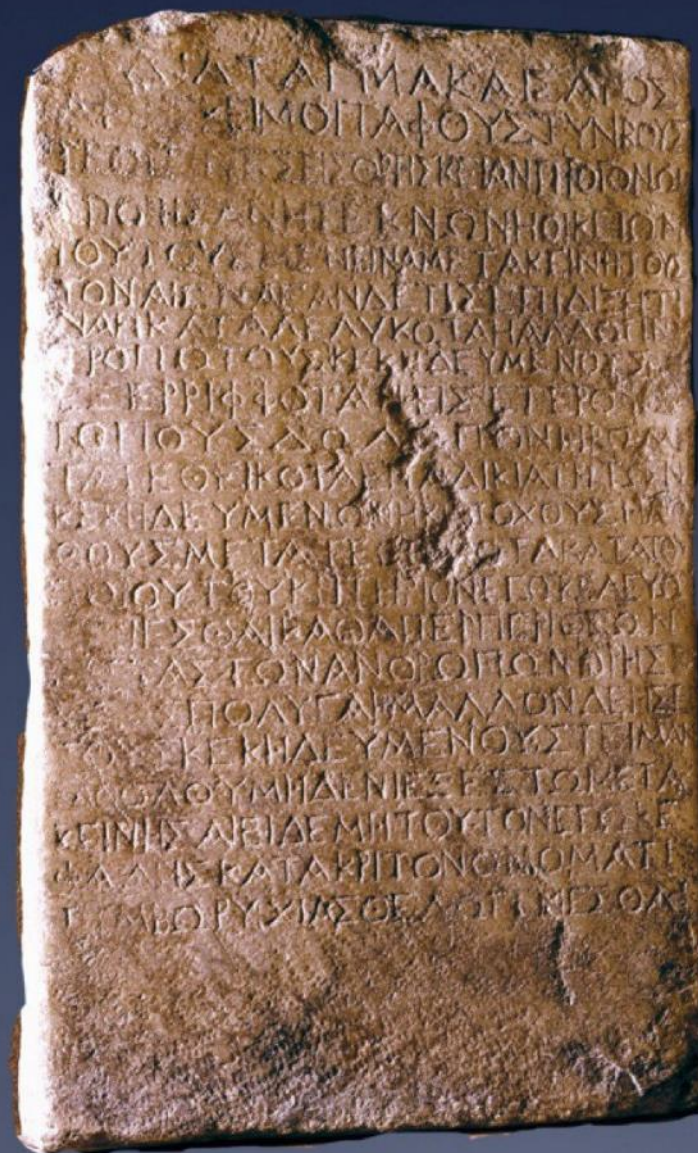
THE NAZARETH INSCRIPTION

Greek
Inscription

Very likely
written
during
the reign
of Claudius
(AD 41-54)

1ST CENTURY
A.D.

Non-Provenanced



Forbids under penalty of death the robbing of bodies from tombs

This makes sense in light of the Jewish argument that Jesus' body had been stolen (Mat. 28:11-15)

Acquired in 1878 in Nazareth

Archaeological evidence *indicates*:

- *Jesus, son of Joseph and brother of James* (who was buried in Jerusalem in the middle of the 1st century), *existed* in the early-middle 1st century
- Jesus was *crucified* (which probably killed him)
- A crucifixion victim *could* be buried
- Jesus was *buried* (and thus probably dead) in a *now empty* Jerusalem tomb, just outside the first century city walls
- Grave robbery was an offence that may have been particularly associated with Nazareth (where the NT says Jesus lived) mid 1st century
- Despite his crucifixion, *Jesus was considered divine* by some within c. 50-200 years of his execution
- In the early 3rd century (c. 200-230 AD), Jesus was held to be divine *in the Judeo-Christian sense* (over a century before the Council of Nicea!)
- The 1st century biographies of Jesus in the NT have been *repeatedly verified* by archaeological discoveries relating to places, people, culture & beliefs, which encourages us to trust them on matters we can't independently verify in this way

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