

Jesus in History

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here • Questioning.

Christians.

1. *Phyllanthus*
pyramidalis

Πεντέ στα

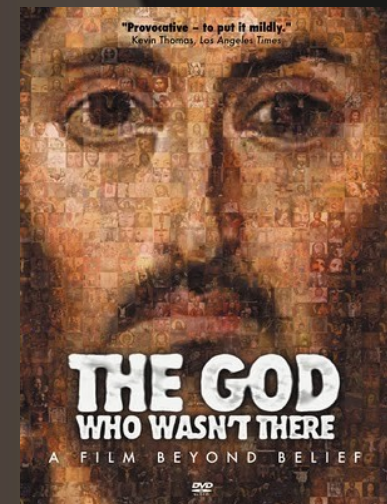
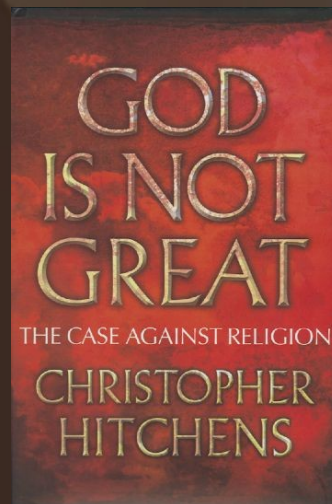
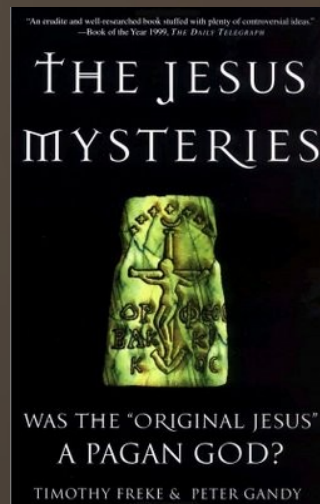
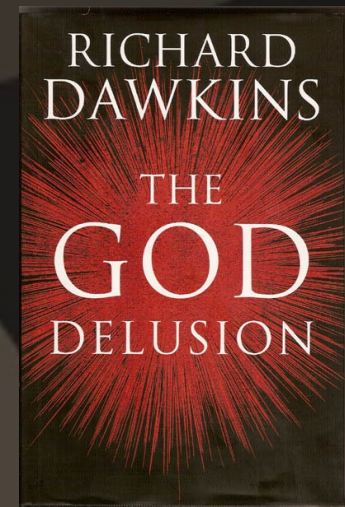
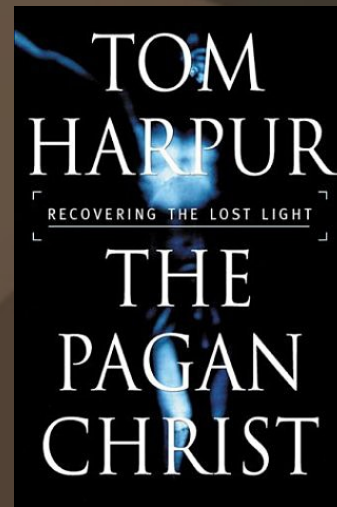
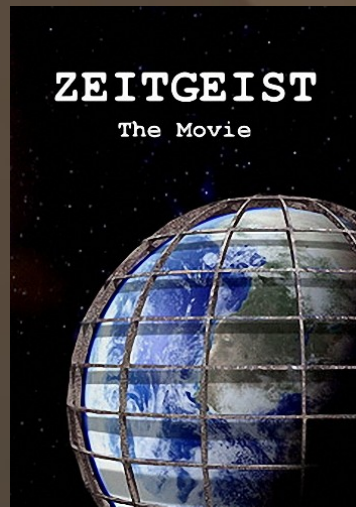
Jesus in History

- Why study historical references to Jesus and Christianity *outside* the Bible?



The Bible Only Bible Study

Jesus in History



Jesus in History

“During his research, Harpur discovered that the New Testament is wholly based on Egyptian mythology, that Jesus Christ never lived, and that – indeed – the text was always meant to be read allegorically. It was the founders of the Church who duped the world into taking a literal approach to the scriptures.”

“Doc Zone” on CBC's The Pagan Christ by Tom Harpur's

“The best argument I know for the highly questionable existence of Jesus is this. His illiterate living disciples left us no record and in any event could not have been "Christians", since they were never to read those later books in which Christians must affirm belief, and in any case had no idea that anyone would ever found a church on their master's announcements.”

God is Not Great by Christopher Hitchens

Jesus in History

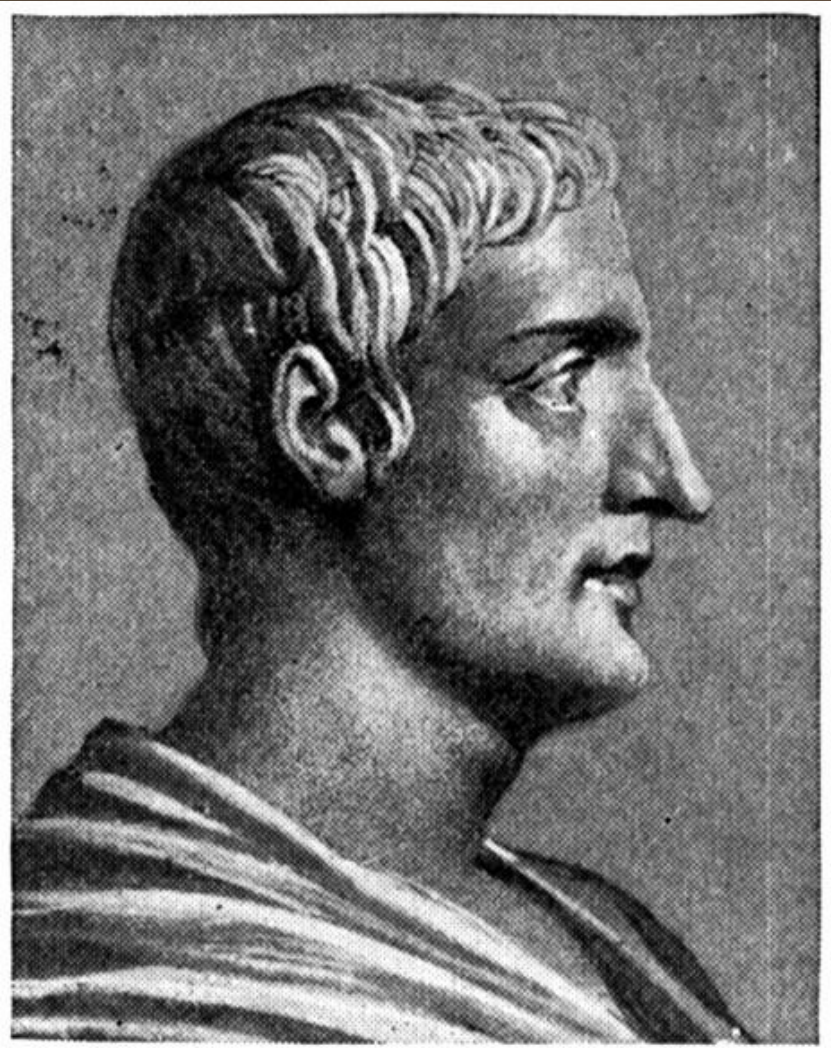
“From the perspective of serious historians, the Christ myth is precisely that [a crackpot view]. It is a ‘staggering mistake’ and ‘no small error’—equivalent to someone believing, despite the evidence, that the width of North America from one coast to the other is only three centimeters, and that the continent itself is made of burnt toffee.”

James Patrick Holding

Whatever else may be thought of the evidence from early Jewish and Gentile writers, as summarized in this chapter and the preceding one, it does at least establish, for those who refuse the witness of Christian writings, the historical character of Jesus Himself. Some writers may toy with the fancy of a 'Christ-myth,' but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the 'Christ-myth' theories.

The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable? By F.F. Bruce

Jesus in History



Tacitus

- a.k.a. Publius Gaius Cornelius Tacitus
- 56-117AD
- Senator/Historian of Roman Empire

Jesus in History



- Emperor Nero, in order to expand his Palace, had fires set to portions of Rome
- These fires blazed out of control and became known as "the Great Fire of Rome."
- He then blamed these fires on the Christians and sparked a wave of persecution throughout the Roman Empire

Jesus in History

"Consequently, to get rid of the report [that Nero ordered the fire] Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus (Christ), from whom the name had its origin, suffered extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center 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 for the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind."

"Annals" (116AD) by Tacitus

Jesus in History

"Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of charioteer or stood aloft on a cart. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed."

“Annals” (116AD) by Tacitus

Jesus in History

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"Annals" (116AD) by Tacitus

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Christians were hated by the community at large
- Christians received their name from Christ (*Christus* in Latin)
- Christ was a historical figure
- Christ died during the reign of Emperor Tiberius (14-37AD)
- Christ was executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate (26-36AD)
- Christ's death ended the spread of Christianity for a short time
- Christianity originated in the land of Judea
- Christianity spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire beginning in Judea and spreading even to Rome.

Jesus in History



Suetonius

- a.k.a. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus
- 70-130AD
- Equestrian/Historian of Roman Empire

Jesus in History

"As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome."

“Life of Claudius” (120AD) by Suetonius

[took place in 49AD]

“During his reign many abuses were severely punished and put down, and no fewer new laws were made...Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition...”

“Life of Nero” (120AD) by Suetonius

[took place in 64AD]

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Jews were expelled from Rome during the reign of Claudius
- Christ was the reason for the Jewish riot
- Christians were severely persecuted during the reign of Nero
- Christian faith was considered to be a new 'superstition'
- *After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. [Acts 11:1-3]*

Jesus in History



Pliny the Younger

- a.k.a. Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus
- 61-112AD
- Governor of Pontus and Bithynia in Asia Minor (now north west Turkey)
- Needed advise on what do about about Christians

Jesus in History

‘They asserted that this was the sum and substance of their fault or their error; namely that they were in the habit of meeting before dawn on a stated day and singing alternately a hymn to Christ as to a god, and that they bound themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wicked deed, but that they would abstain from theft and robbery and adultery, that they would not break their word, and that they would not withhold a deposit when reclaimed. This done, it was their practice, so they said, to separate, and then to meet together again for a meal, which however was of the ordinary kind and quite harmless’

Letter to Emperor Trajan (112AD) by Pliny the Younger

Jesus in History

“Meanwhile, this is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist I sentence them to death...All who denied that they were or had been Christians I considered should be discharged, because they called upon the gods at my dictation and did reverence. . .and especially because they cursed Christ, a thing which it is said, genuine Christians cannot be induced to do.”

Letter to Emperor Trajan (112AD) by Pliny the Younger

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Christians were tested by being asked to curse Christ
- Many were executed when they refused to do so
- Christians met together on a regular basis and did the following:
 - Sang hymns during their gatherings
 - Worshipped Jesus as God
 - Committed themselves to a high moral code
- Christians met together on separate occasions to eat a meal together

Jesus in History

Thallus the Samaritan

- 1st century
- Roman historian
- All his works are lost!
- Quoted by Julius Africanus (221AD)

Phlegon of Tralles

- 2nd century
- Greek historian and freedman of the Roman Emperor Hadrian
- All his works are lost!
- Quoted by Julius Africanus

Jesus in History

"A most terrible darkness fell over all the world, the rocks were torn apart by an earthquake, and many places both in Judaea and the rest of the world were thrown down. In the third book of his Histories Thallus dismisses this darkness as a solar eclipse, unreasonably, as it seems to me. For the Hebrews celebrate the Passover on Luna 14, and what happened to the Saviour occurred one day before the Passover. But an eclipse of the sun takes place when the moon passes under the sun. The only time when this can happen is in the interval between the first day of the new moon and the last day of the old moon, when they are in conjunction. How then could one believe an eclipse took place when the moon was almost in opposition to the sun? So be it. Let what had happened beguile the masses, and let this wonderful sign to the world be considered a solar eclipse through an optical [illusion]."

Thallus quoted by Julius Africanus (52AD)

Jesus in History

"Phlegon records that during the reign of Tiberius Caesar there was a complete solar eclipse at full moon from the sixth to the ninth hour; it is clear that this is the one. But what have eclipses to do with an earthquake, rocks breaking apart, resurrection of the dead, and a universal disturbance of this nature"

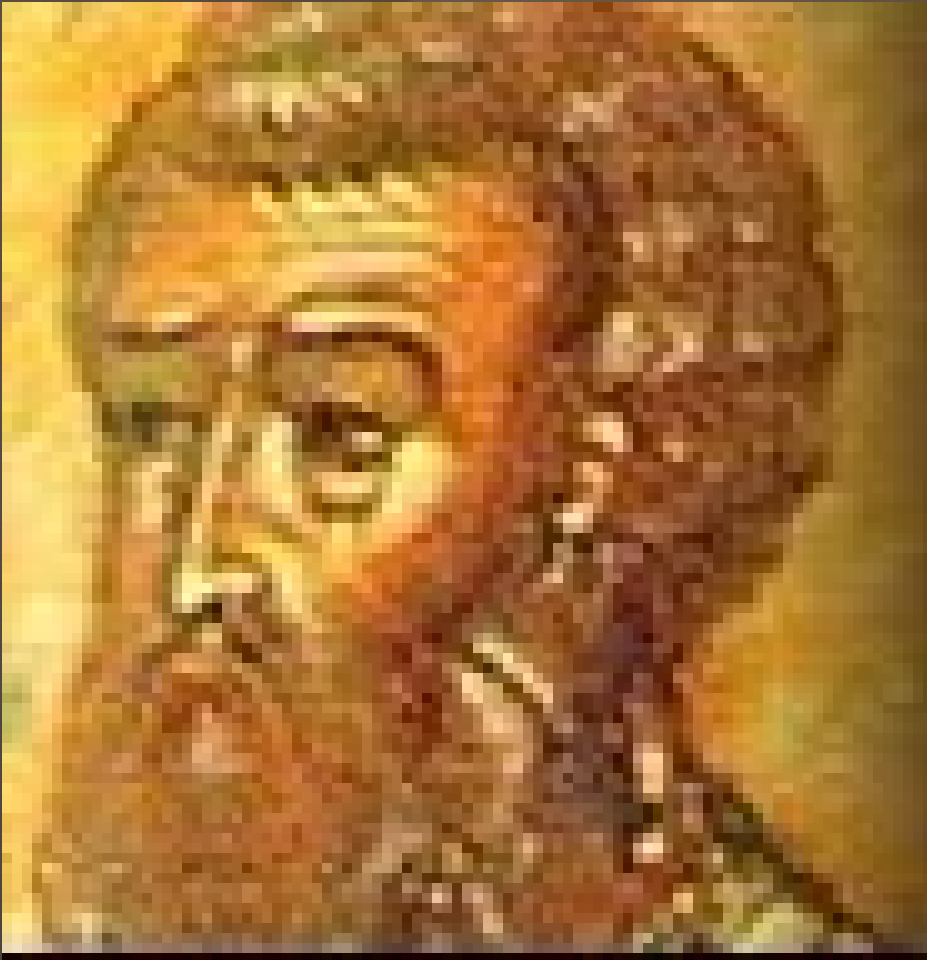
Phlegon quoted by Julius Africanus

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- An unusual darkness occurred during Jesus's crucifixion
- Non-supernatural reasons were used to explain this darkness i.e. solar eclipse (but this is impossible!)
- Jesus's crucifixion occurred during reign of Tiberius Caesar (14-37AD)

Jesus in History



Mara bar Serapion

- Stoic philosopher from ancient Syria
- 73-200AD?
- Wrote to his son from prison sometime after the fall of Jerusalem

Jesus in History

"What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given"

Letter to Son (>73AD) by Mara bar Serapion

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Jesus was a historical figure
- Jesus was considered by many to be a wise and virtuous man
- Jesus was considered by non-Israelites to be *King of the Jews*
- Jesus was known to have been executed by his own people
- The perception was that Israel was destroyed because of this (70-73AD)
- Jesus's teachings were followed and spread by His followers

Jesus in History



Josephus

- a.k.a. Titus Flavius Josephus or Josephus ben Matthias
- 37-97AD
- Jewish historian
- Born Sadducee and aristocrat

Jesus in History

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

“Jewish Antiquities” by Josephus

Jesus in History

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, [if it be lawful to call him a man]; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. [He was [the] Christ.] And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; [for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him]. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

"Jewish Antiquities" by Josephus

Jesus in History

"Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done."

“Jewish Antiquities” by Josephus

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Jesus was a historical figure
- Jesus was known for the wonderful things he had done
- Jesus was a great teacher
- Jesus had many disciples from the Jews and the Gentiles
- Pontius Pilate was responsible for Jesus's execution
- Jesus's disciples kept their faith and commitment
- Christians received their name from Jesus (Christ)
- Jesus had been given the title 'Christ'
- Jesus had a brother named James, who was stoned

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- *Jesus's disciples believed He had appeared to them resurrected*
- *Jesus was believed by many to be the Messiah*

Jesus in History



Lucian of Samosata

- 125-180AD
- Greek satirist
- Born in Samosata (now south east Turkey)
- Wrote “The Passing Peregrinus”
- Poked fun of Christianity

Jesus in History

"The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day, the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods, alike, regarding them merely as common property."

"The Passing Peregrinus" (165AD) by Lucian

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Jesus was a historical figure
- Christians worshipped Jesus
- Jesus was the origin of a new faith
- Jesus was crucified for starting this new movement
- Christians believed in Eternal Life
- Christians believed themselves to be brothers and sisters
- Christians completely rejected their old pagan practices
- Christians turned away from materialistic mindsets and shared what they owned

Jesus in History



Celsus

- 2nd century
- Greek philosopher
- Opponent of Christianity
- Wrote "*The True Word*"
- All his works are lost!
- Refuted by Origen

Jesus in History

“Now if the Christians worshipped only one God they might have reason on their side. But as a matter of fact they worship a man who appeared only recently. They do not consider what they are doing a breach of monotheism; rather they think it perfectly consistent to worship the great God and to worship his servant as God. And their worship of this Jesus is the more outrageous because they refuse to listen to any talk about God, the father of all, unless it includes some reference to Jesus: Tell them that Jesus, the author of the Christian insurrection, was not his son, and they will not listen to you. And when they call him Son of God, they are not really paying homage to God, rather they are attempting to exalt Jesus to the heights.”

“The True Word” by Celsus (178AD) quoted by Origen

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Jesus was a historical figure
- Christians were monotheists -- polytheism was rejected
- Christians worshipped Jesus as God
- Christians held very strongly to the belief in the deity of Christ

Jesus in History

Babylonian Talmud

- Central text of mainstream Judaism
- Initially transmitted orally
- Compiled in 5th century



Jesus in History

'On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [the Nazarene] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place a herald went forth and cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come and plead on his behalf." And since nothing was brought forward in his favor, he was hanged on the eve of Passover.'

Babylonian Talmud

Jesus in History

What does this tell us of Jesus and Christianity?

- Jesus (Yeshua) was hanged (crucified) on the eve of Passover
- Jesus exhibited supernatural powers
- Jesus upset the established religious establishment

Jesus in History

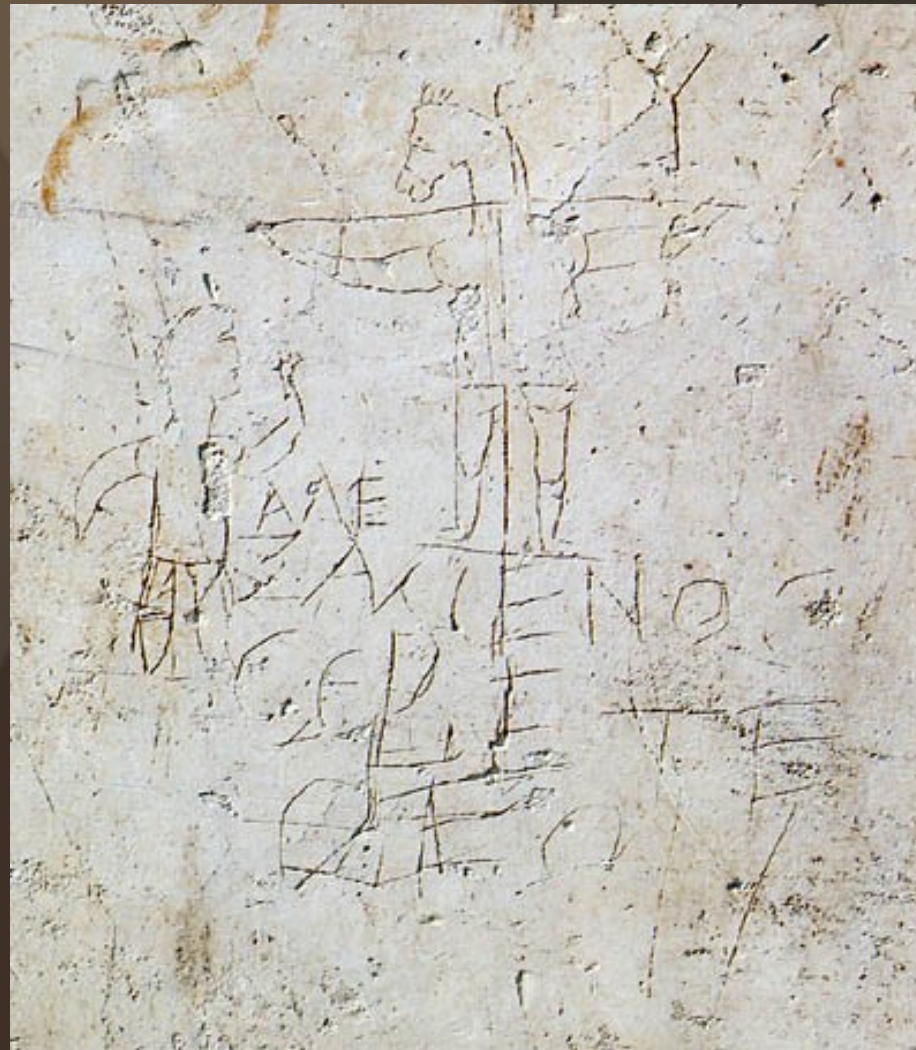
- Bonus materials:
 - Celsus on 'Pantera'
 - Roman graffiti

Jesus in History

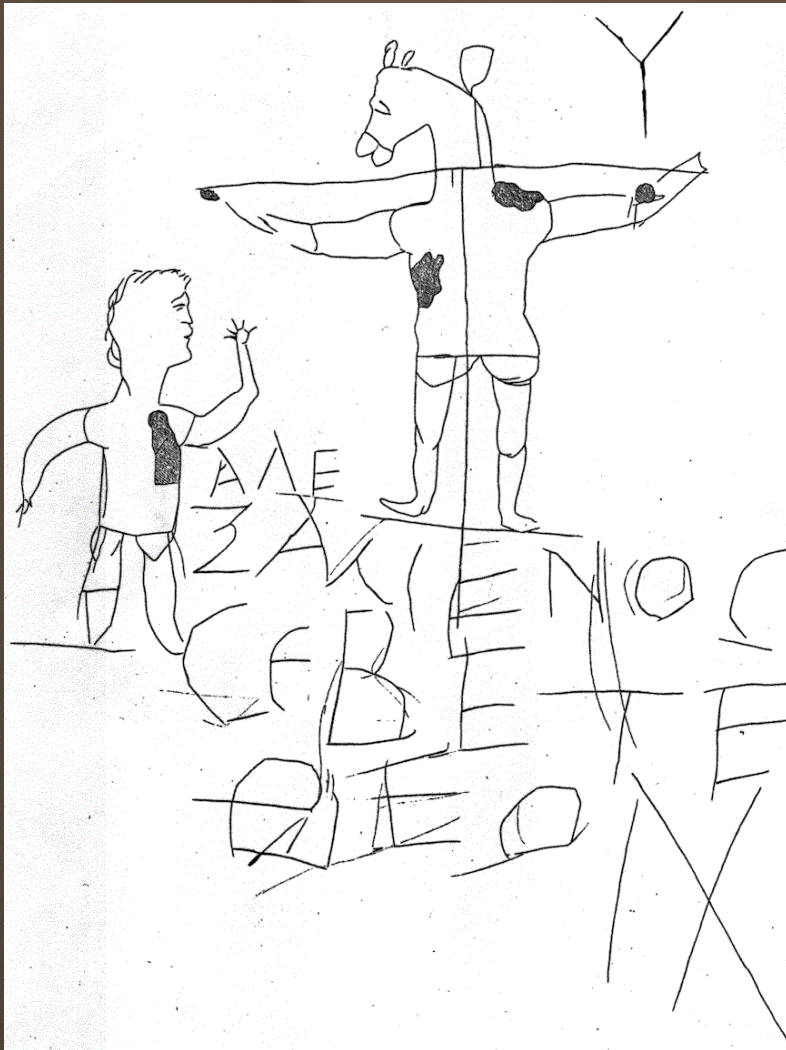
"Jesus had come from a village in Judea, and was the son of a poor Jewess who gained her living by the work of her own hands. His mother had been turned out of doors by her husband, who was a carpenter by trade, on being convicted of adultery [with a soldier named Panthera]. Being thus driven away by her husband, and wandering about in disgrace, she gave birth to Jesus, a bastard. Jesus, on account of his poverty, was hired out to go to Egypt. While there he acquired certain (magical) powers which Egyptians pride themselves on possessing. He returned home highly elated at possessing these powers, and on the strength of them gave himself out to be a god."

Celsus (178AD) quoted by Origen

Jesus in History



Jesus in History



- Scratched on a stone in a guard room on Palatine Hill near the Circus Maximus
- 1st to 3rd century
- “ALEXAMENOS SEBETE THEON” = "Alexamenos worships his god"
- Mocks Christianity

Jesus in History

Thankyou for your participation!

