


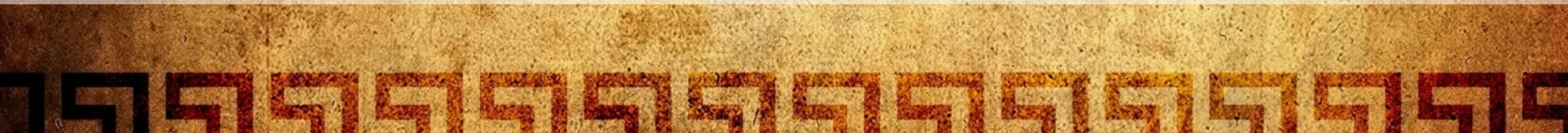
Are the Gospels Reliable?


**Examining the Trustworthiness
of the Earliest Biographies of Jesus**



**The Gospels claim to
be the records of
eyewitnesses (John
19:35; 21:24; cf. 1 John
1:1–4; Luke 1:1–4).**

**We can trust the witnesses because they were
contemporary, converted, persecuted, and invested.**





**The Gospels intend to
preserve an accurate
history of the ministry of
Jesus (Luke 1:1–4; cf.
2 Pet 1:16–18).**

**The Gospels pass important historical tests:
early testimony, divergent details, embarrassing facts.**



**Have the Gospels been
reliably preserved for
us? Yes! Christians
copied the Gospels
early and well.**

Of the 659 copies of the NT before AD 1000, 356 (54%) are Gospels, and the earliest copy (P52, AD 100–200) is of John.

**Nonbiblical historical
and archeological
data corroborate the
key elements of the
record in the Gospels.**

**We will consider the testimony of Josephus (AD 37–100),
Tacitus (AD 56–120), and Pliny (AD 61–113).**

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man [...]. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks [...]. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him.

(Josephus, *Antiquities*, AD 93)

Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, [...].

(Tacitus, *Annals*, AD 115)

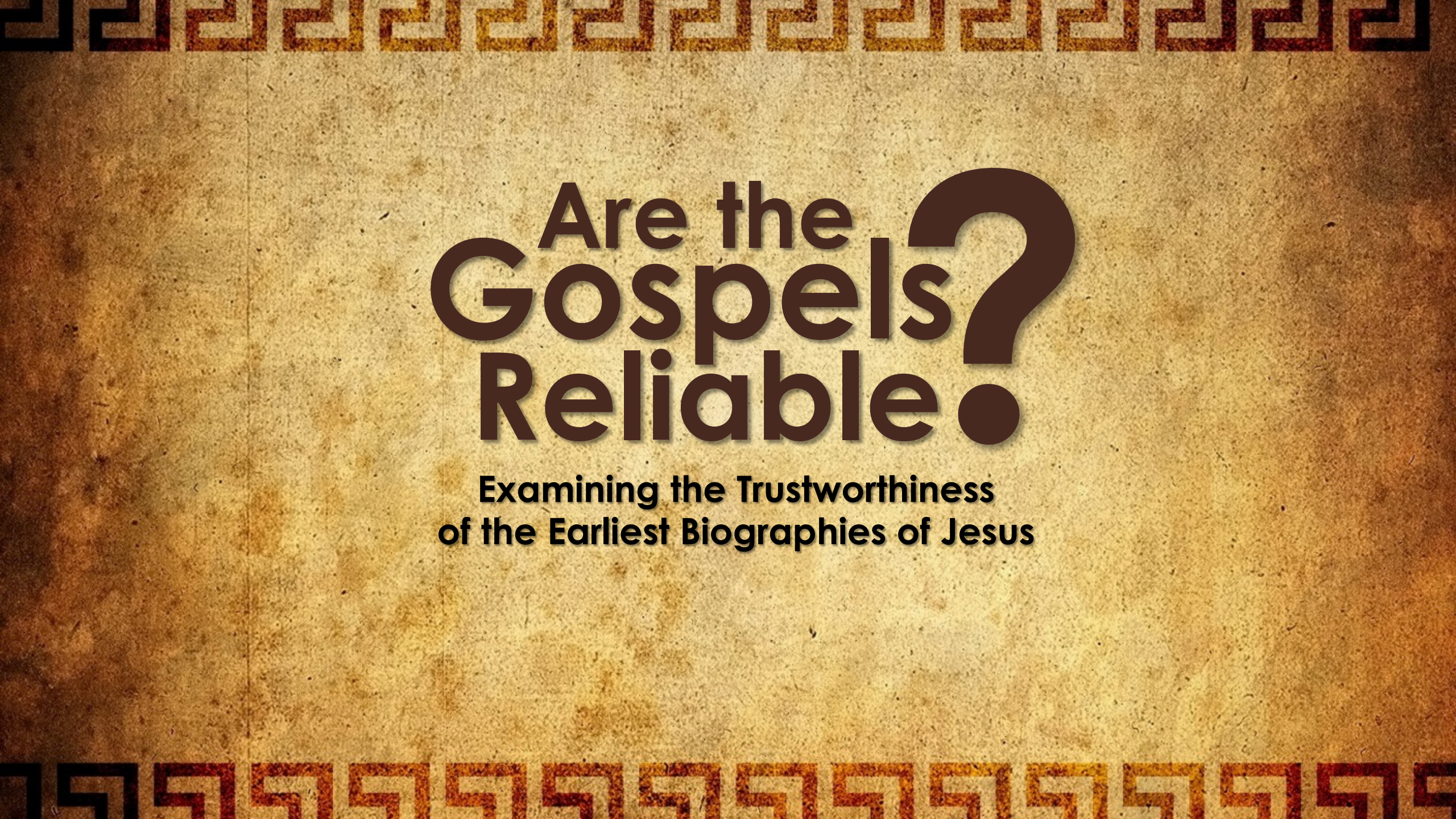
I have asked them if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution; for, whatever the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished [...]. They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant ...

... verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery [...]. This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women [...]. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths [...].

(Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, AD 111)

**The hope of Christianity
is established on the
convincing proofs of the
Gospels (Acts 1:1–3;
John 20:30–31; cf. 21:25).**

**The Gospels are reliable biographies about Jesus.
Will you entrust yourself to him as Lord and God?**



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