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The Historical Accuracy of Scripture



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg highlights the importance of establishing the historical accuracy of the Bible as it is the basis of both Judaism and Christianity. The Gospels are viewed as reliable historical sources with independent accounts that agree on key details, and archaeological discoveries have supported many of the Bible's historical claims. While controversies surrounding the accuracy of the Old Testament and New Testament have arisen, the Bible's overall historical verification makes its stories credible events.

Transcript

Well, some of you I know from other venues where I've spoken this weekend or on previous visits up here, and some of you are new faces to me. It's great. It's always great.

I love to speak to groups of any size. Home groups are especially nice. It's actually possible to feel like you can get to know everyone in the group in an afternoon when there's a small group like this.

I, yeah, I was asked if I'd speak on the historical accuracy of the Scripture, so that's what I'll be talking about today. Oh, someone gave me a card. They stuck it in my Bible.

A child. It's their gift to me, I guess. That's nice.

I have a lot of child fans. A lot of young, like, five-year-old type kids who, for some reason, think it's impressive to know me. When you're five years old, it doesn't take much, I suppose.

To clarify, are they adults? No, they're five-year-old kids. Yeah. All right.

So, on this matter of the historical accuracy of the Scripture, there's really not very many things more important for us to have established in our minds, but that when we read in the Bible that something happened, that there's a very good reason to believe that that's historically true. One reason for that is because the Bible is the only holy book of any

major religion that is primarily historical in narrative, and the religions of the Bible, Judaism and Christianity, are based on historical claims. That is, the claims that certain things historically happened.

The Jewish religion is based on the claim that there was an exodus, that God delivered Israel out of Egypt and brought them to Sinai and established them into a nation, made a covenant with them, and that was the beginning of the Jewish religion. Before that, their race began earlier with a man named Abraham and his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob and so forth. So, those are historical claims.

If those are myths, if those men never lived, if there never was an exodus, then nothing about Judaism is valid. No matter how much you might think, well, the Ten Commandments, those are a very great set of rules that's influenced Western civilization positively. I mean, you couldn't really come up with something better than that.

Well, maybe not, but it's, you know, the fact that they're great ideas would not make up for the fact that the whole thing is false. You know, anyone can come up with ideas. The Buddha had his ideas, and Hinduism has their ideas, and Islam has their ideas.

The question is, are they true ideas? Is there any reason to believe them? If the historical accuracy of the Old Testament can be trusted, then we have God's intervention in the lives of persons like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the nation of Israel to establish his kingdom among them. It's what he called it when he said, you'll be my kingdom. You'll be a kingdom of priests if you follow my laws, if you keep my covenant.

This we read in Exodus 19. So, Judaism as the religion of the Old Testament is valid only insofar as the stories are true stories. Now, the New Testament is even more dependent on historical, you know, events, because if Jesus did not live, and more than that, if he did not die and rise again the third day, then all the claims of Christianity are vapid.

I mean, Christianity is based on the claim that God historically intervened, especially by coming to earth, revealing himself in a man Jesus, and by demonstrating him who he was by not only his miracles, but his resurrection from the dead, and that he's now at the right hand of God, and he's the king of kings and lord of lords, and that's the basis for Christians to be able to say, hey, everyone should repent and follow him. He's all authority in heaven and earth belongs to him. But if there never was a man named Jesus, really, if he's a myth, or if there was a man, but the stories about him are legends, or unreliable, and especially if he never rose from the dead, then the fundamental claim of Christianity is false, and Christianity is false.

Now, you might say, but the sermon on the mount, that's such a wonderful, you know, lofty sermon. Maybe it is, but it doesn't matter. Christianity is false if the stories are not true.

So, now, this is not true of other religions. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, they don't depend on historical claims of any kind, certainly none that could be verified. I mean, private encounters that people might say they had with an angel like Muhammad in receiving the Quran, well, that can't be verified.

He doesn't even claim that anyone saw it happen. So, I mean, that would be, if it really happened, if the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad and gave him the Quran, then that's a historical thing, but it's 100% unverifiable. It's just, anyone could claim that.

I could claim that an angel came to me last night and gave me some revelations, I'm going to start a new religion. You'd have no reason to believe it because there's nothing historically verifiable at the foundation of what I'm saying. Same thing with the Buddha.

He sat under a tree till he got enlightened. And so, once you get the enlightenment, you can hear what the Buddha has to say and say, well, that makes sense to me, so I want to be a Buddhist. Okay, but it's entirely subjective.

It might not make very much sense to me, and therefore, I won't be a Buddhist, and who can choose between them because there's no historical event to judge it by. The fact that, the Gautama Buddha sat under a tree, no doubt, is historically true. The fact that he came awake and considered himself enlightened at a certain point, probably that's true also, but whether his enlightenment was just a delusion or whether it was some true enlightenment from some supernatural realm, well, you can't test that kind of thing, and anyone could sit under a tree.

So, the fact that the man sat under a tree and then claimed to be enlightened, there's no verifiable thing there. You can accept the doctrines of those religions if they appeal to you, but most of us, I would hope, are not interested in looking for a religion that just appeals to us. We're looking for something that's true.

At least, Christians are concerned about that. Honestly, I think a fewer and fewer people today in our society are concerned about what's true, and they are more interested in something that appeals to them. I have a book at home written by a humorist who said, I've abandoned my search for truth, and I'm looking for a good fantasy.

He certainly meant that as a joke, but no doubt, that does express where a lot of people are at. I'm not interested in the truth anymore. I'm just looking for something that I can believe that makes me feel good.

Well, if that's where people are at, then what I have to say won't be of any value because what I'm here to demonstrate is that the historical claims of the Bible are true, that the things that are recorded as historical are, in fact, things that happened in history. Now, this has certainly been challenged, and if you go to almost any university today and take Bible courses, the professors, who are themselves usually unbelievers,

are going to say, you know, none of this has really happened. Moses didn't write the first five books.

Daniel didn't really live in the time, and Daniel wasn't written by Daniel, you know, you can't trust any of these claims. Jesus was, I mean, depending on who you listen to, Jesus was a myth that never even existed. This is the view of the Zeitgeist video on YouTube that has been viewed by hundreds of millions of people who have been deceived by it.

I'll tell you more about it later. There are those who say, well, Jesus, yeah, he existed probably, but he probably wasn't. I mean, there's no reason to believe he did miracles, certainly no reason to believe he rose from the dead.

I mean, people who are skeptics have to address the biblical claims of historical fact, and generally speaking, if they're skeptics, their approach is to deny them and to look for support to deny them. Now, this has not gone well for skeptics, and therefore, I think skeptics very seldom can appeal to evidence anymore. They used to be able to do so more so, they thought, because there was a time when many of the claims of Scripture could not be verified from comparison with other ancient histories.

For example, the history of Herodotus, a Greek historian who wrote 400 years before Christ. He wrote about some of the same events and some of the same period of time as you find the Old Testament talking about, the fall of Babylon, for example, and other things like that. And there are things the Bible says about those things which Herodotus did not say, and no ancient historian said.

And so, skeptics could say, well, look, if this really happened, why didn't these guys mention it? Probably didn't. The Bible must be making it up. There were a lot of groups of people, the Hittites, for example, and the Horites that the Bible makes frequent reference to, that for the longest time, until about a century ago, scholars couldn't find any independent verification that these people existed.

And therefore, their judgment by default was the Bible must be wrong. I mean, we don't have any other verification that the Hittites existed. So, the Bible saying they did, we can't trust it.

I mean, it's like, for some reason, the Bible isn't treated as a historical source. And yet, that's exactly what it claims to be. And the question we need to know is, is it? And while many people think of the Bible as a group of religious writings, more than anything, the Bible is a group of historical writings.

More than half of the Old Testament is historical narrative, from Genesis up through Esther. After that, you get the books of Psalms and Proverbs and the Prophets, but they make up a much smaller portion of the Old Testament than the historical narrative. These narratives are either true or they're false.

If they're false, then the vast majority of the Bible cannot be trusted, and probably the other portion shouldn't be either. In the New Testament, more than half is historical narrative, too. You're aware, probably, there's a lot more books of another sort, like the Epistles and the Book of Revelation together make up, you know, 22 of the 27 books in our New Testament.

But the five that are historical are the biggest books, and they make, the four Gospels themselves take up more than half of the New Testament. And then you've got Acts on top of that. In fact, if you just take the Gospel of Luke and Acts, both written by the same author, they make up about a quarter of the New Testament.

And then Matthew and Mark and John put it way past the halfway point. So both Testaments are more than half consumed with historical narratives, which, if the Bible is not historically accurate, well then certainly more than half of it has to be rejected. And that's the half that determines whether these religions are true, whether Judaism really had God's sanction at any time, or whether Jesus really did live.

And if he didn't, or if he didn't rise from the dead, then there is no valid Christianity. There could be, people can make up religions like the cults do, but Christians make the distinctive claim that Christianity is based on reality, on truth, and that reality is historical reality. Now, in one sense, that makes Christianity more vulnerable than any other religious system to disprove.

All one would have to do is disprove some historical event that the Bible said happened, and you've undermined the whole system. Some might think that this makes us more insecure, but the truth is it's actually a stronger position to be in because historical things can be verified. If they really happened, there's very many times verifiable cross-references in other historians, archaeological things that have been discovered, artifacts that confirm.

For example, as recently as 30 years ago or so, there were who still thought that David might have been a mythical character, but just in my lifetime, certainly, coins with David's name on them have been found from the period of David, and so they now know David was not a mythical character. I knew he wasn't, but, you know, skeptics are always looking for ways to undermine anything that may disqualify the Bible for being taken seriously by modern people. The interesting thing is that the trend has always gone against them.

Taking the Old Testament, for example, I want to take the Old Testament second. I want to take the New Testament first, and we'll talk about the Old Testament. We're going to talk about the historical accuracy of both of these.

I won't give all the information that's available simply because I'm trying to cover too much in too short a time here, but obviously, the central concern of every Christian is

the story of Jesus. His existence is particularly important, and then what kind of person he was and whether he's the kind the Bible describes or whether we really have legends and myths about him there. That's pretty important for us to find out.

Now, one of the popular views that's been around for a while is called the Jesus myth theory. Historians usually don't take it, but people who are ignorant of history often are attracted to it. The idea is this, that the story of Jesus in the Bible is entirely made up, but it's made up from components of earlier stories in other more ancient religions, religions that most of us are not very familiar with.

The old ancient Egyptian religion of Osiris and Horus, and the Parthenian religions of Mithras, and the Greek legends about Bacchus, really, and the Indian legends about Krishna, and some of these others. More ancient than Christianity, these legends, they have deities which it is claimed have stories very similar to those of Jesus. In fact, the elements of their stories were so widespread in different religions that when we find them later popping up in the Gospels, there's every reason to believe the Gospels are simply presenting another myth of the same kind because you've got a deity presented who has all these characteristics that these pagan deities allegedly had.

Now, what are we talking about here? I mentioned the video on YouTube called Zeitgeist. This came quite a few years ago, but it's been watched by millions and millions of people. I know about it because callers have called me on the radio about it many times.

So I watched it, and I actually made a two-part video series debunking it point by point, but I'll just give it to you in a nutshell. Zeitgeist claims that if you study the religion of Horus and Osiris, which is ancient Egyptian religion, or Mithras, which was in the Roman Empire around the time of Christ but predated Christianity, we assume, of Bacchus, of Krishna, and of other ancient deities in mythology, that they all have certain things in common, and what this video pretty much claims is they were all allegedly born of a virgin. All these deities were born of a virgin.

They were all called the Son of God. They all worked miracles, including things like walking on water and turning water into wine. They all had 12 disciples, and they all were crucified and rose again on the third day.

Now, allegedly, this is true of all these deities whose religions predate Christianity by hundreds of years, if not thousands of years. And so, you know, this is really shaking up a lot of Christians. They're watching it.

Wow, this is an amazing thing. I had no idea that all these things we know about the story of Jesus, that they were also in all these mythological stories about these mythological gods. And don't let it worry you for more than 30 seconds.

All you have to do is research any of those religions, and you'll find out that every one of

those parallels is made up out of whole cloth. I looked into these. You can do so yourself.

Get an encyclopedia. Look up Horus. Look up Osiris.

Look up Mithras. Look up these deities. There's not one of them that, even in their own myths, there's no alleged virgin birth of any of them.

None of them had 12 disciples. None of them walked on water, as far as any of the mythologies about them go. One of them did turn water into wine.

That's because he was Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, you know. So, turning water into wine is what you expect a god of wine to do. So, you got that.

But there's no other parallels between Bacchus and Jesus, and certainly none of them were crucified. Not one of those ancient gods, if you read how they died, most of them died. In fact, they all died in their mythology.

But none of them died crucified. I mean, one of the close parallels they suggest between a mythological deity and Jesus is Krishna. They say he was crucified and rose again the third day.

Well, wait a minute. Krishna was? What do the actual stories about Krishna from Indian, you know, religion say? They say that Krishna was shot with an arrow by a huntsman who mistook him for a deer, and he was killed. Shot, I think, in the foot by an arrow, and he died.

But then he, I think he came back to life in some way, immediately. And so, that's sort of supposed to be like, okay, a god who died and came back to life. But there's no crucifixion.

Being shot by an arrow is not the same thing as being crucified on a cross, and rising the third day, that's not part of the story. I believe that Krishna, as I recall, was thought to have come back to life. But I'm not even sure about that, because most of these didn't.

Most of these, none of them were crucified. There's not one of those ancient deities that the mythology claims they were crucified. None of them had anything special happen three days after they died, and none of them were resurrected.

One of them, Osiris, the father of Horus in the Egyptian mythology, he died, and his nemesis, whose name was Set, cut him into a bunch of pieces and distributed his pieces all over the world. Well, Osiris' wife, one of the goddesses, went and found all those pieces and assembled them again, and she found every piece except his sex organ. So, she made one and added it to him and got herself pregnant, and Horus, the god, came.

So, Horus was virgin-born, supposedly. That doesn't sound like a virgin birth to me. Your mom makes a makeshift sex organ for your dad, and somehow the other parts of his

body are present, but he's dead, and she gets pregnant.

This is not a very close parallel to anything that is said in the Bible about Jesus. In other words, you do have, on occasion, references to gods who died, and in some cases, have some kind of an ongoing history. In the case of Osiris, he never came back to life in the world.

He became the lord of the underworld, so he was like in Hades or whatever. That's not the same thing as rising up and resurrecting. So, they make it sound, when they list all these things, as if there's these close parallels between all these myths and Christianity.

The truth is, none of the parallels exist. They just don't exist, and what's more, what they fail to point out, is that the story of Jesus is set in an actual, real historical setting, in a location, in a certain years. I mean, Luke, for example, says it was the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, and Pontius Pilate was the procurator of Judea, and Herod was ruling in this area, and he's given all these time markers.

This is when John began to preach, and when Jesus began to preach. Jesus, in the stories, is not represented as a mythical character at all, but somebody who fits into a historical narrative, who actually interacts with known historical characters, like Herod, and like Pilate, and frankly, with the writers of the Gospels themselves, who many of them interacted with him. So, the mythologies of the pagan deities, they don't really occur in any particular time frame.

They just kind of happened in the imaginary world of, you know, before time existed, or something like that. There's, you know, no one in the religion of Mithras is said to have ever really, no historical characters ever said to have met Mithras, or have had any historical interactions with him, or likewise with Horus or Osiris. These are all stories like the stories about Zeus and the gods on Mount Olympus.

These are all mythologies that don't connect in any way with any historical setting or any historical people. Jesus, on the other hand, has a genealogy that's taken every generation from Adam up to Jesus, has recorded the names of the people, the year of his ministry beginning, his actual interaction with known people who were, you know, known from secular history. I mean, it could be fabricated, but there's nothing about it that looks fabricated, whereas the mythologies are all quite clearly fantasies.

So, to make it look like another one of them is ridiculous, and what's interesting is that there are some really strange similarities between, say, the religion of Mithras and of Christianity, because they had, the worshipers of Mithras had something where they were kind of sprinkled in the blood of a sacrificed bull. They'd be in a pit, and the bull would be on a grid above them, and they'd sacrifice, and the blood would come and cover them, and they say, some people say, well, that's like baptism in Christianity. Well, I don't think baptism in Christianity has very much similarity to having a bull slaughtered

over you, to have his blood, you know, cover you.

I'd rather be immersed in water, frankly, myself. It's a very different kind of experience and a very different kind of meaning, and just because every ancient religion has some kind of weird rituals, it doesn't mean that no matter how strained the comparison is, we have to say that these others gave rise to the Christian teachings, and what's interesting is we don't have any sources for the Mithraic religion that have come from any earlier than the third century A.D. Now, Mithras was probably worshiped before the time of Christ, but we don't have written sources about what they said or what, you know, the myths about him are not known from sources that early. The sources we have are much later than Christianity started.

In fact, when Christianity was dominant in the Roman Empire in the third, fourth century, that's when we have the earliest documentation for even many of these myths, which could be, if you find anything that resembles the two, that the mythology is copying Christianity, which had become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. You wouldn't be surprised that it would influence other religions rather than be influenced by them. The point is, if people say Jesus is just a myth, there's no evidence he really lived, they're simply letting you know that they know nothing on the subject.

Let me give you some exterior witnesses outside the Bible that simply tell us that Jesus was a historical character, and very little else is said about these witnesses because they're not Christians. They're anti-Christians. There's pagan Roman historians and there's pagan Jewish historians, what I mean by that, unbelieving Jewish, who had no interest in confirming anything about Christianity, but they lived at the time, they were contemporaries with the apostles, and they sometimes mentioned Jesus.

The most important historian of the Roman Empire was Tacitus, Cornelius Tacitus, and his years that he lived was from 55 AD, which was, you know, Paul was preaching and Peter was preaching in those years, to 117 AD. Now, he wrote many volumes of Roman history of the emperors. In one of them, Tacitus wrote this, and what he's talking about here, he's talking about the fire that burned Rome down, and you know, you probably know something about that story.

Nero is thought to have started that fire, and not only do we think so, but his citizens thought so, and so he was starting to be pretty unpopular in the eyes of the citizens who'd lost property and lives and things like that of their loved ones, and so there began to be kind of a revolt against Nero. So, Nero decided to blame someone else for the fire, and it happened to be the Christians that he blamed, and several Roman historians tell us. So, Tacitus tells us this, therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty a class of men loathed for their vices whom the crowd styled Christians.

Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the

procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor. Now, this is just mentioned as an aside. He's not there to confirm Christianity's true or anything like that.

In fact, he said the Christians were known for their vices. By the way, Christians were accused of being cannibals and polygamists and things like that, partly because they misunderstood what they were doing when they were eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus, and you know, and they called their sister and things like that, and brother, husband. I mean, people misunderstood them and called them incestuous, called them, you know, cannibals and things like that, and so the Roman pagans thought of the Christians as characterized by vice, and so Tacitus says these people were known for their vices, hated for their vices, and so Nero substituted them as the culprits for the burning of Rome, and he says, now, these people were called Christians, and where their name comes from is this guy Christus, which is the Latin form of Christ, and he's writing in Latin.

He said, Christus, their founder, had been executed by the sentence of procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor. Well, the Bible agrees with that. That's exactly the same time period that the Bible says that Jesus was crucified.

Now, knowing that a Roman historian confirms that Jesus was crucified by Pilate during the reign of Tiberius doesn't tell us much about the life of Jesus. It doesn't confirm very much that we find in the Gospels, but it certainly tells us he's not a myth, you know, and that there really was a Jesus, and the few things we're told by the Roman agree with what the Bible says. We might not be surprised if the Bible tells us more about Jesus than a Roman historian who doesn't even believe in him would, but that's just an interesting external to the Bible witness.

There was a historian named Thoulas who lived around 52 AD. His works have been lost. We don't have them anymore, but some of the ancient Christian writers had his works and knew of them and quoted him.

One of those is Julius Africanus, who was writing in 221 AD, but he quotes from Thoulas, who lived in 52 AD, and that's very much contemporary at the times of the apostles in the early days of the church. And it says, Africanus wrote this, he said, Thoulas, in his third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun unreasonably, as it seems to me. Now, what darkness? He's referring to the darkness that covered the sky when Jesus was crucified, that there were three hours of darkness, and it was in the middle of the day.

So, you know, Thoulas is talking about that phenomenon that happened. The Bible records it also, and he's explaining it was an eclipse of the sun. Well, he says, Africanus says, I think he's unreasonable in saying that.

Yeah, he is. You can't have a full moon and an eclipse of the sun at the same time. The

nature of an eclipse of the sun makes it impossible for there to be a full moon, and this was Passover when Jesus died, which was full moon.

So, obviously, it was not an eclipse. Whatever explanation is given for that darkness has got to be something else. But it's interesting that a Roman historian felt the need to give some kind of explanation for this preternatural darkness that came about when Jesus was crucified.

There's another guy about whom we know almost nothing. He was a man in prison writing to his son. A letter has been found by archaeologists from this man, and he has an interesting statement.

He's not a Christian, and he's writing sometime probably around 73 AD, which is just after Jerusalem was destroyed. This man's name is Mara Bonserapion, and he's Assyrian. He's in prison writing to his son, and he writes this.

He's encouraging his son to stand on principle and not to cave into popular sentiments against his conscience. He says, 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. Now, the wise king that the Jews executed just before their kingdom was abolished, which was in 70 AD, could be no one other than Jesus. The Jews did not kill any of their kings.

They didn't even have real kings at that period of time. They had, however, one that this man, a pagan Assyrian, referred to as their wise king. He apparently had respect for this historical character, Jesus, but didn't believe he was the son of God.

And he compares him with Pythagoras and Socrates, who also died wrongfully, and disasters came on the people who killed them afterwards. So, he's just given that as another example from recent history. In other words, he sees the death of Jesus as much as part of his recent history as the destruction of Jerusalem is, and that Jesus is as much a historical character as Socrates or Pythagoras, although this man was much closer to the time of Jesus than to Socrates or Pythagoras.

I mean, if Jesus was a myth, it's not likely that this man would have already learned it, because this is too close after the actual alleged time of the events in the Gospels. We have to remember the Gospels were written when there were still a lot of living witnesses who could have said, wait a minute, that didn't happen. I was there if it didn't.

Now, we're going to talk about the dating of the Gospels in a minute, because that's controversial, but I just wanted to... These are some pagan sources. There's not an awful

lot. There's another Roman historian I didn't quote named Suetonius, and he doesn't speak directly about the life of Christ, but he does talk about the time the Emperor Claudius banished the Jews from Rome, which was about 49 AD.

This is also mentioned in the book of Acts, in Acts chapter... I guess it must be Acts chapter 16 or 18. When Paul comes to Corinth, he meets Priscilla and Aquila, and they had left Rome because it says Emperor Claudius had banished all the Jews from Rome. Well, this is also a fact recorded in Suetonius, a Roman pagan historian, and he's talking about this, and he says that because of troubles that were constantly being instigated among the Jews on account of Christus, Claudius banished the Jews from Rome.

Okay, what's interesting is he says that the reason Claudius did so is because the Jews were continually having riots and so forth, instigated by Christus. Well, Christianity and Judaism were in conflict all the time, as you see reading the book of Acts. Almost anywhere Paul went, for example, the Jews tried to get him stoned or thrown in jail or something else or caused riots.

Very commonplace. And it would appear from what Suetonius said that the preaching of Christ was controversial among the Jews in Rome, and it caused riots and things like that. So Claudius just said, throw them all out of Rome.

He's not saying that Christ was in Rome causing these riots, but it was instigated by Christ. That is because of Christ. Now, the reason I didn't give that quote in its detail and so forth is because it doesn't really profess to know very much about the life of Christ, but it does suggest that Christianity had reached Rome prior to the reign of Claudius.

If there were problems being caused by Christianity's presence, then it must be there. That means 49 AD, that's like less than 20 years after the alleged crucifixion of Christ. Now, he was crucified in Jerusalem.

Already within less than two decades, there's communities of people as far away as Rome that have heard the story from people. I mean, mythology doesn't happen that quickly. It took 200 or more years after the time of Alexander the Great for mythological accretions to be added to the stories about him.

Eventually, there were stories about Alexander working miracles and so forth, but no one said that in the first 200 years after he died. It takes a while for myths to grow about real people. Alexander was a real person.

The miracles were not real. That's why it took hundreds of years for stories about them, too. But the stories about Jesus' miracles were believed and spread everywhere between Jerusalem and Rome within 20 years, according to Suetonius' testimony.

Now, there's Jewish sources, too, and they're pretty much more important because the Jews were closer to the situation. Jesus lived his life and his mystery among the Jews,

and therefore what the Jews say are important. It's also important because the Jews rejected him.

Therefore, again, anything Jewish sources say that might confirm the historical reliability of the Gospels is something they accidentally confirm. They're not trying to confirm it because they're actually trying to debunk Christianity. In the Talmud, which is the books that Orthodox Jews read today, they were written in the period of time just after the period of Christ, and the Jews already had their story about Jesus to debunk the Christian story.

Now, their story was not, Jesus is a myth. Their story was, Jesus was not the good guy that Christians say he was. Now, here's, for example, there's frequent hostile references to Jesus in the Talmud.

They usually call him the hanged one because in Judaism, whoever is hanged on a tree is cursed, so it's kind of an insult. He's the hanged one. They also refer to him as a sorcerer, which is interesting too because there are some skeptics who say, well, Jesus may have lived, but he certainly didn't do supernatural things.

Those are just myths that arose later on. Really? Then why did the Jews feel they had to explain supernatural things that he did? They said he did sorcery. At the very least, it suggests that there is something that he did that they felt they had to explain away that we might recognize as miracles.

But here they have one important passage. Oh, by the way, the Talmud also says that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Jewish girl and a Roman soldier named Panthera, but some people think that Panthera is a corruption of the word parthenos, which in Greek means virgin. Since the Christians said Jesus was the son of a virgin, the Jews may have taken that word in the Greek and turned it into a proper name and said, no, that's just the name of a soldier who raped Mary and Jesus was the illegitimate son.

That's what the Talmud teaches. So, if you think the Talmud is kind of a good book, that's the official book of Orthodox Judaism. They have the most blasphemous things about Jesus of any religious literature.

At least, Islam says that Jesus was the greatest prophet who ever lived, even greater than Muhammad, but just not the most recent, so Muhammad has to be followed. But Islam actually does say Jesus is the greatest prophet that ever lived. Judaism said, no, he's the illegitimate sorcerer, you know, who was crucified rightfully.

And there is an interesting passage in the Talmud that says this, on the eve of the Passover, they hanged Yeshu, which is a Hebrew form of Yeshua, Jesus, of Nazareth. And the herald went before him 40 days saying, Yeshu of Nazareth is going forth to be stoned in that he practiced sorcery and beguiled and led away the Israel. But they found nothing

in his defense and hanged him on the eve of the Passover.

Now, obviously, this story doesn't resemble the Gospels very much. Because, for example, there was no 40-day announcement, you know, anyone who can bring anything to exonerate this man, come forth. Oh, they couldn't find him, so they hang him.

It's interesting, it says he was, the herald went saying he's going to be stoned to death for sorcery, and then instead of getting stoned, he was hung. But that's obviously not what happened. But what's interesting is it agrees with the Bible in some points.

One, it agrees that Jesus died at Passover, which is unusual. Passover is not a time when they normally want to crucify people. In fact, the reason they broke the legs of the two thieves crucified by Jesus is they didn't want any dead bodies hanging on crosses at Passover, which is the next day.

And so they, and so it says they hanged him on the eve of Passover, so they got that right. And what's interesting too, it says that they accused him of sorcery. Well, in John chapter 8 and other places of the Gospel of John, the Jews say to Jesus, we said you're demon possessed.

We said you're from the devil. And so, you know, the fact that the Jews would attribute his miracles to sorcery and to demons is what the Bible actually says the Jews said. And then in the Jews' own writings, they more or less confirm that.

This doesn't confirm that the Gospels are true, but it does support a few things in the Gospels and essentially shows that even the enemies of Christianity never suggested that Jesus didn't exist. It never crossed their minds to suggest it. Now, Flavius Josephus is the most important witness of all, partly because he was Jewish and he lived in Jerusalem.

He was born in Jerusalem. He was also, he was born in Jerusalem in 35 AD. That's just five years after Jesus was crucified.

So, he grew up in Jerusalem where the apostles were preaching. And the apostles preached there for some decades before they left, at least two decades. So, Josephus would have been at least 15 years old at the time of the Jerusalem Council when all the apostles were still in Jerusalem, or most of them were.

So, Josephus grew up in the town where Christianity was being preached, and then later became a historian. He fought in the Jewish war against the Romans, and he was captured, and he knew that the Jews couldn't beat them, so he tried to persuade the Jews to surrender. Sort of the same thing Jeremiah did.

Jeremiah saw that the Babylonians were going to destroy Jerusalem, so he tried to

convince his countrymen to surrender so they'd survive rather than die in a vain attempt to fight off their invaders. Josephus did that too, and the Jews today don't like Josephus much because they see him as sort of a traitor, sort of like they saw Jeremiah as a traitor. The Jews threw Jeremiah in jail because he was saying to surrender.

That's how the Jews kind of look at Josephus. But the Romans liked him okay because he cooperated with the Romans after he was captured. He actually served as a translator to the Roman general Titus at the walls of... When Titus wanted to make negotiations with the Jews offering terms of surrender, Titus didn't know their language, so Josephus served as his translator there.

The Jews hated him so much they threw a rock down and hit him on the head once, Josephus. But after the war was over, he was taken to Rome, and he was commissioned by Rome to write a detailed history of the Jews. He wrote two.

One's called Antiquities of the Jews, which takes it from the very beginning of Jewish history on up to his own time, and the other is called the Jewish War, which is a detailed account of the war in which he was a participant. And he's a very good historian and a very important witness when it comes to Christ because he does say some things. Now, he was not a Christian.

He never became a Christian, so he didn't say anything favorable to Christ in order to confirm Christianity because he wasn't a believer in Christianity. But it's interesting some things he did say. One of the things he said was about John the Baptist, which isn't technically about Jesus, but since John the Baptist is the first main character in all four Gospels who introduced Jesus to the crowds, it's interesting to know that John the Baptist doesn't only exist in the Gospels, but Josephus was very much aware of him, and so was his generation.

Josephus wrote about the destruction of Herod's army in a war. Herod had stolen his brother's wife. You remember, that's why he killed John the Baptist.

John the Baptist rebuked Herod for that. And the father of the wife that Herod jilted in order to take his brother's wife was also a king. I believe it was Eratus of another kingdom nearby, and he came and made war against Herod over this thing, and Herod suffered heavy losses.

Now, Josephus is talking about that. He says, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God as a punishment for what he did to John, who was called the Baptist, for Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both to justice toward one another and piety toward God, and so to come to baptism. Now, Josephus is simply mentioning a theory of the time that Herod's army suffered defeat because of what he did to John the Baptist, and so his readers will notice that this John the Baptist, he was a guy who

preached that people should do good things, and he was a good man, and he got killed by Herod, and he's baptizing people.

Well, we don't have much about John here, but everything we have confirms what the Bible says about John, the same things. But there's more. There's this reference in Josephus' writings.

He's talking about a time before the fall of Jerusalem when Ananas the high priest stoned to James, the brother of Jesus, and he says, So Ananas the high priest assembled a council of judges and brought before it the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, whose name was James, together with some others, and having accused them as lawbreakers, he delivered them over to be stoned. Now, by the way, we have ancient Christian records from later centuries about James as being stoned also, but the Bible doesn't mention it. The Bible doesn't mention the way that James died, which means that Josephus could not have gotten the information from the Bible.

He had separate sources for that, but the Bible does say that Jesus had a brother named James, and it's interesting that this man who is stoned in this manner is described as James, the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ. Now, what that means is Josephus knew there was a man named Jesus and that some people called him the Christ, though by calling him the so-called Christ, Josephus is distancing himself from any affirmation that Jesus would be the Christ, the Messiah, but he said, you know, the one they call the Christ. Now, how many Jesuses who were called Christ, having a brother named James who was stoned, how many of those would there be at that period just before, you know, the destruction of Jerusalem? Obviously, he's referring to the same Jesus the Gospels referred to, though he doesn't have any knowledge of the Gospels.

Josephus has never read the Gospels. He has his information from regular historical sources, and he's living in the town where Jesus was crucified five years before Josephus was born. That's recent history.

Now, there's one other statement of Josephus, and many have thought this one may not be authentic. I think it is, but this one he writes about Jesus, and he sounds like he's a believer, and the fact that Josephus was not a believer has made people think, well, this statement couldn't have been written by Josephus because this sounds like it was written by a believer, so Christians must have gotten a hold of the manuscripts of Josephus and stuck this in, but let me read it, and you'll see what I'm talking about. In Josephus' historical writings, he says this, Now, there's obviously some things here that sound like it's written by a Christian.

He says, if we should call him a man, you know, it almost sounds like he's more than a man. It says, this man was the Christ. Now, Josephus wouldn't have said that because he didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah, and then he has this business about Jesus appeared to them on the third day alive again.

The divine prophets haven't spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him. Well, certainly, anyone who could write that would have to be a believer in Christ, and therefore, skeptics say, well, Josephus didn't write this. It was obviously written by a Christian, but before we go there, we have to notice some other things.

The passage has some things that Christians, generally speaking, would not write. It says, At no time in history did Christians ever refer to Jesus as a wise man. He was never considered to be anything so mundane as a wise man.

He's always the son of God or the Messiah or something like that. A wise man? This sounds like something any Jew might say about a teacher like Jesus, but a Christian wouldn't use that term. It also says, He led astray many of the Jews and the Greeks.

Well, certainly, no Christian would say that Jesus led anyone astray. That'd be a view of a Jewish person who's not a Christian. And then he says, And the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not died out.

There's no known case of any early Christian writer in the Bible or in the Church Fathers ever referring to the tribe of Christians. The term tribe is not used of the Christian movement by any known Christian writer. So, there's things about this quote that make it sound like it's not written by a Christian writer, and there's things about it that make it sound like it is.

One theory that makes perfectly good sense is that in the process of copying out this passage, and of course, with Josephus' writings, as with the New Testament writings, we don't have the original from his hand. No one has seen his handwriting, no one living today has. We have copies of copies of copies.

Ancient books had to be copied every, you know, few decades as they wore out, or else their text would be lost. And most ancient books never did get copied because they weren't important enough for people to go to the trouble, but really important books that people wanted to preserve got recopied a lot. Now, in recopying, sometimes a few changes happen.

A few words drop out, maybe a word is put in accidentally, or maybe by way of explanation, but there is some suggestion that when Josephus said, if indeed we should call him a man, he's being sarcastic. There arose at this time a wise man, if indeed we should call him a man. As an unbeliever, he might be, you know, giving a nod to the Christians.

The Christians certainly would object to us calling him a man, so if we dare use that term for him, there was this wise man named Jesus. And then when it says he was the Christ, it's entirely possible that he had written he was the so-called Christ, because in the other passage about James' death, Josephus does refer to Jesus the so-called Christ, and the

term so-called might have been accidentally dropped out by a copyist, and now the newer manuscripts say he was the Christ, but he might have written he was the so-called Christ. That could have been altered in copying.

And the reference to, you know, he appeared to them the third day and fulfilled all these prophecies, it's entirely possible that Josephus said they reported that he had risen on the third day and appeared to them and fulfilled all these prophecies, but that reported part could have been left out. Now, one reason for thinking this theory is possibly correct about this passage is that a man who's a non-believing Jew, an expert in Middle Eastern languages named Shlomo Pines, kind of a funny name, Shlomo is not that unusually Jewish name among Yiddish-speaking Jews, but Shlomo Pines is a scholar, he's Jewish, an unbeliever, and an expert in ancient languages. In 1972, he presented an Arabic translation of Josephus.

Now, Josephus, like other books, was translated into other languages. Josephus wrote in Greek, or maybe in Latin, but probably in Greek. Our manuscripts of Josephus are in Greek.

But an early Arabic translation exists that was translated into English, and it seems to have, it may have the original reading. The Greek ones might have been tampered with. The Greek ones might have left out the so-called before Christ, and as they say about he rose from the dead.

But this version, many scholars feel this is the more original way that Josephus wrote it, and that the way we have it in our Greek versions has experienced some tampering. But here's what an early Arabic translation of Josephus, how the same passage reads. At this time, there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous.

Many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship.

They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was, as they say, perhaps the Christ, the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets had reported wonders. And the tribe of Christians so named after him has not disappeared to this day.

So there's nothing about the passage as it reads there that could not have been written by a non-Christian. And especially since Josephus elsewhere, in an undisputed passage where James was stoned to death, he does refer to Jesus as the so-called Christ. And so he, you know, this different version of the passage may very well be the original, and there's reasons to believe it could be.

That is to say, it's translated from the original and has not missed out on the corruptions that came through the transmission of the Greek text to us. Anyway, it's very, it'd be very strange to suggest that Josephus didn't write this passage in some form, partly because it is in his characteristic style. If you read much of Josephus, you'll get real tired because he's very verbose, very long sentences, lots of, you know, dependent clauses, and he's got a very burdensome style of writing.

This passage is in his style exactly. And as far as all the manuscripts of Josephus that we have, they all have this passage, although perhaps in a corrupted form. We don't have any earlier versions of Josephus where it's missing, which would give us the clue, oh, he didn't write it, but somebody added it to later manuscripts.

So the textual evidence, the style, and so forth, make it seem like it is real. And it would only take a very stubborn, convinced skeptic to insist that Josephus did not confirm the existence of Christ, and that he was regarded as the Christ, and that he was crucified by Pilate, and that the Christians believed he had risen the third day. Now, Josephus is writing this in the very first generation of Christians, so it's clear that Christians in Jerusalem, the very city where Jesus died, were claiming that he'd risen from the dead a short time after he was known publicly to have been killed.

Now, think about this. If it isn't true, if Jesus wasn't crucified, why would Josephus, who lived just almost immediately after the event, why would he think it was true? Why would Tacitus think it was true? Why would everybody think it was true? Now, there's more than that. Because we have not only Josephus and the pagan sources, we also have some very good sources called the four Gospels.

Now, as soon as you say the four Gospels, a skeptic is going to say, oh, but that's in the Bible. You can't use the Bible to prove the Bible's true. Well, wait, wait, wait, wait.

Do you know what the Bible is by any chance? Do you realize that those books were not in the Bible until 300 years or more after they were written? They were individual historical accounts written by different people on two different continents to different audiences, recording events that they knew, some of them firsthand. Matthew was a witness. John was a firsthand witness.

The Gospel of John specifically twice says, I was a witness to this. I saw this. I was there.

Mark and Luke were not written by witnesses, but they were written by men who spent a better part of their later life with witnesses. Mark traveled with Peter. Luke traveled with Paul.

And although Paul was not a witness of the life of Jesus, he saw the resurrected Christ at the time of his conversion, and he spent a great deal of time with the other apostles who walked with Jesus. So we're talking about people very close to the situation here. Luke,

in traveling with Paul, also spent time in Jerusalem with the other apostles, and in collecting information about Jesus, he had access to the eyewitnesses, and he says so in the book of Luke.

At the very beginning of the book, he says, you know, I've talked to the eyewitnesses. I've seen others before me who've written the accounts, and I've had a comprehensive knowledge of this. That's how he opens the book of Luke.

Now, to say that these men, although they independently at different times in different places, wrote their stories of Jesus from what they knew to be true, either from firsthand knowledge, in the case of Matthew and John, or secondhand knowledge gained from the firsthand witnesses, as in the case of Mark, and by the way, Mark's gospel might really be Peter's gospel, so that'd be a firsthand account too. These are pretty good witnesses, and they're pretty good because they're not identical. They do give different details than each other, which means they don't depend on each other.

Sometimes the details they give seem to contradict the details in another. For example, three of the gospels record the transfiguration, and they mentioned that the last recorded thing before, that was Jesus at Caesarea Philippi saying, who do you say I am, and you know, who do people say, I remember that story about Jesus asking the disciples that. Well, after that event at Caesarea Philippi, the next event in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is always the transfiguration.

But interestingly, Matthew and Mark say, after six days, that is, he was at Caesarea Philippi, then after six days, he went up on the mountain. Luke says, about eight days later. Now, that's not the same as after six days.

At least verbally, it's not the same. Although, if about eight days could mean seven days, he didn't say eight days, he said about eight days. So he said, I'm not committing to eight, but it's around then.

Well, you can't get much closer to eight than seven. If something happened after six days, that's seven days, right? So we have Matthew and Mark saying, after six days this happened. Luke says, about eight days.

What we see about that is they're both telling us the same information, but Luke is in no sense copying from them. His memory or his sources haven't repeated it in the same terms. It's the same information, but it's very differently worded.

If he was dependent on Matthew and Mark, for example, he'd no doubt have just said the same thing they did, after six days. That's the easier way to say it. So we have many evidences of independence of these gospels.

Now, when you have independent witnesses, two of them, at least eyewitnesses, and the other two conversant with the eyewitnesses and using them as their sources, you've got

some of the best attested historical documents you could hope for. You don't have anything close to that about Julius Caesar or about Caesar Augustus or about Cleopatra, or you don't have anything close to that about Alexander the Great. You've got sources that are hundreds of years written about them, hundreds of years after their life, not by anyone who knew them.

The life of Jesus is better attested in ordinary historical terms, in terms of witnesses who wrote, who were conversant with this information, eyewitnesses in many cases. Of any ancient person in history, you have none for which a better historical source material is available by normal standards of judgment. Now, of course, people don't apply the normal standards of judgment to the gospels.

The gospels are first-rate historical records, and there's no reason to believe, for example, if Josephus said something that disagreed with the gospels, there's no particular reason to favor Josephus over the gospels. He's a historian, they're historians. Maybe they're right, maybe he's wrong.

That doesn't happen, but the point is the gospels were included in the Bible hundreds of years later when the canon of the New Testament was put together, but they were included because they were known to be accurate historical records, and they wanted to keep those in the Bible, so they put them in the Bible. There were other gospels that were known not to be accurate historical records. There were quite a few of what we call the Gnostic gospels, and as early as the third generation or even the second generation after the apostles, these were written, and the church immediately recognized they were forgeries and never accepted them.

The Da Vinci Code claims that they were accepted by the church until Constantine in 325, and Constantine burned them all, the ones that weren't the four gospels, because he favored the four. This is so absurd. Of course, everything in the Da Vinci Code is absurd.

Don't ever trust anything that Dan Brown ever writes as having a historical basis, but the truth is, he says, and many people who've read the Da Vinci Code have repeated, and it's amazing what people's sources are. They come with, oh, don't you know that there were lots of other gospels, and Constantine burned all the ones except the four gospels. He only wanted those four gospels, and nothing like that ever happened.

We don't have record of Constantine burning gospels. We do have record of there being other gospels, but the early church never accepted them, because they recognized them as forgers. There's the gospel of Philip, the gospel of Peter, the gospel of Thomas, the gospel of Mary, the gospel of Judas.

All have been found, but they were all written in the second and third century, long after those people were dead, and the church knew they were written by forgers, but these

four gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John, were recognized as authentic way before Constantine was born. Constantine's rule was started around 312 or 313, something like that. In 170 AD, two church fathers, one was Irenaeus, and the other was Tatian, they both confirmed that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the only four gospels the church ever recognized, and that the church everywhere around the world recognized them.

This is 150 years almost before Constantine had any effect on anything, so the recognition of the four gospels as authentic and the others as inauthentic existed at least as early as Irenaeus and Tatian, that was 170 AD, but Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who's a disciple of John, so I mean, if, you know, these guys were not far removed from the time these gospels were written, and the early church had a reason to keep in mind who wrote their gospels, and by the way, you know the gospels in the Bible, they are written anonymously. In your Bible, it says the gospel according to Matthew, gospel according to Mark, the editors put that on there. Matthew didn't say, this is Matthew writing, he just wrote a story.

His name is not in the story except as one of the characters in the story, one of the disciples. He doesn't mention, hey, that's me, by the way, you know. The book was written anonymously.

Mark was written anonymously. Luke and John were written anonymously. These gospels all were.

It's interesting because the false gospels all claim to be written by someone important, but they weren't. The real gospels were really written by someone important, and they don't boast about it. They just expect the church to know who wrote them.

Why? Because they lived with the church and they gave them to the The church would, of course, know who it was who handed them this book and said, hey, I wrote this book about Jesus, you know. I mean, the early church lived with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and these men wrote these books and left them with the church. How could the church forget who the authors were within two generations so that, you know, Irenaeus and Tatian were mistaken about who wrote them? Now, by the way, some might say, well, it's not so much they're mistaken, they made up these names to make them seem authoritative.

Matthew, John, these are important apostles. Yeah, those two would be. Mark and Luke, not so much.

In fact, we know very little about Mark or Luke apart from the fact that we have a gospel each attributed to them. Mark is mentioned a few times in the book of Acts as a minor character, not necessarily in a very good light because he traveled with Barnabas and Paul, and he abandoned them. And then when Barnabas went to take Mark with him

again, Paul said, I don't trust that guy.

This is the guy who wrote the gospel of Mark? And yet Peter in 1 Peter chapter 5 mentions Mark as being his disciple following him around and helping him. So that Mark traveled with Peter is attested by Peter himself. But Mark is still very obscure.

Even when he traveled with Paul and Barnabas, he did so because he was Barnabas' nephew. There's to carry their bags. This was not some mighty preacher, some famous guy.

Why, if you've got a gospel that was written by a nobody and you want to attach a name to it to make it somebody, why pick Mark? The only reason to ever suggest that Mark wrote it is because he did. And Luke is even more obscure than Mark. Do you know Luke is not even mentioned in the Bible by name, except in two places where Paul in his letters is giving a list of people who are with him.

It's usually a long list and Luke is in there. He's about as obscure a character as anyone in the Bible. He did travel with Paul in the book of Acts, but he doesn't ever mention himself.

He wrote the book of Acts. He never mentions himself by name. So you don't even find the name Luke in his own writings, even about himself.

You have him saying, we went here and they made us do this and whatever. I mean, there's some, what they call the we sections in Acts. Luke is present, but he doesn't say who he is.

Luke is extremely obscure. Mark is extremely obscure. If the church is trying to make up false attributions for gospels to make them seem credible, why pick guys who are relatively unknown? Why not pick Philip? Why not pick Thomas? Why not pick Thaddeus? I mean, these were actually apostles.

No, there's no reason for these gospels to have the names of authors on them that the church has passed down to us, unless they're the real names. And there's no reason to believe they aren't. There's a man named Pappius who lived at the end of the first century and he knew some of the apostles and he knew a lot of people who knew the apostles.

And we learned a lot about where the gospels came from, from Pappius' writings. And let me just read something he said here. Pappius wrote, and this is at the end of the century, so John might not have even been dead yet when Pappius wrote this.

He said, Matthew composed the Logia, which means the sayings of Jesus, in the Hebrew dialect and everyone translated as he was able. Now, we have the gospel of Matthew in Greek, not in Hebrew. So Matthew's original draft was in Hebrew or Aramaic, which is

sometimes called Hebrew.

Aramaic is the language Jesus spoke and Matthew spoke, and so he probably wrote the sayings of Jesus originally in the actual words and language Jesus used. But to be read by a broader audience who didn't speak Aramaic, everyone spoke Greek. So people translated into Greek and we, in our gospel of Matthew, we only have Greek versions.

We don't have the original. But Pappius said that Matthew wrote the original Aramaic version. And with reference to Mark, Pappius said this, Mark being the interpreter of Peter.

Now, we know from Peter's own words in 1 Peter 5 that Mark traveled with Peter. It says, Mark was the interpreter of Peter. Whatsoever he recorded, he wrote with accuracy, but not, however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by the Lord.

He was in company with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord's discourses. See, Mark's gospel doesn't really contain the discourses of Jesus like Matthew and Luke and John do, but Pappius tells us Mark basically served as Peter's interpreter. Matthew wrote in Aramaic and other people translated into Greek.

And it also says this, this is Irenaeus speaking, who was, again, Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, so not far removed from the apostles themselves. He said, Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundation of the church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.

Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had also leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a gospel during the residence in Ephesus in Asia. So, these are early sources who, as near as we can tell, would have no reason to deceive.

If someone says, well, we can't believe those testimonies, that's just the Christians talking about their own books. Well, who else is going to know more than the Christians about it? And if they're going to lie, wouldn't they make more impressive lies? Why wouldn't they say Jesus wrote this one himself? Why didn't they say Luke, who traveled with Paul, he wrote that one. And it's obvious that early church had no motive to misrepresent the facts.

In fact, just like you and I, if we were living in the second century and we had these gospels that are fairly new, we'd want to take pains to not forget who wrote them and to make sure the next generation of Christians knew who wrote them. You know, they're our holy books. Why would we want to deceive ourselves and everyone else about them?

But the idea is Christians apparently are the only people who can't be trusted to tell the truth.

Now, if you watch, you know, most news, you'll find that if anyone is going to tell the truth, it's probably going to be the Christians, because people who aren't Christians don't have much conviction about telling the truth, it would seem. But Christians do. The Christians believe that liars will have their place in the lake of fire, and that would have some impact on them deciding whether to tell the truth or not about things.

And so, the gospels are excellent historical sources, and they are independent of each other. They tell many of the same stories, but with different details in some cases. Different enough that some people think they're contradictory.

If you read the four stories in the four gospels of the appearances of Christ after his resurrection, it's really hard to harmonize them. You know, who saw him first? Was it Mary Magdalene? Was it the other women? Who was it? Well, you can harmonize them if you want to, but it's not easy. The main thing is that we have four independent accounts that all agree that on the third day, Jesus' tomb was found empty, and he appeared to a bunch of people.

And the first ones he appeared to were women, and Mary Magdalene among them. You might have a hard time figuring out all the details of who he appeared to when, but the very earliest record of the appearances of Christ after his resurrection come from not the gospels, but from 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians was written before any of the gospels were written, and Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 records.

He said, I presented unto you what was handed down to me. He means from the other apostles, because he knew them. He says that Jesus Christ was crucified, died for our sins, according to the scripture, that he was buried, and he rose again the third day, according to scripture, and he was seen.

Then Paul gives a list of people who saw him. He was seen by Peter, he was seen by the twelve, he was seen by 500 at one time, and Paul says some of them have since died, but most of them are still alive if you want to consult them. You know, I mean, Paul's, this is, he's writing before the gospels were written, and he's saying he got it from the apostles, which goes back further.

Most scholars would say that the origin of Paul's information has got to be no more than like 10 years after the crucifixion, because he wrote early enough, and he got it from someone earlier. So, we, I mean, the fact that Jesus rose, that many witnesses saw him, I mean, even the way Paul says it, he appeared to 500 at once, of which most are still alive, but some have died. I mean, he's trying to make sure he doesn't get it wrong here, you know.

There's a lot of these people saw him, and you could really find a lot of these people, but you have to admit, some are not with us anymore, some have died. I mean, that just sounds like giving the kind of details to make sure I'm not trying to lead you astray that there's 500 people around still that you can talk to. But, I mean, the Christians made attempts to be accurate and honest, and it was their enemies that didn't care whether they were being honest or not, and so there's every reason to believe the gospels.

Now, I won't talk about the book of Acts now simply because the time is going by so quickly, but many things in the book of Acts have been confirmed by archaeology too. For example, there's a, well, I won't go into it, but there's, you know, some of the governors and even the treasurer of Corinth is mentioned as a convert of Paul's traveling with Paul, and they found a pavement in Corinth that mentions this guy's name as the treasurer of the city, and so forth. I mean, archaeology has again and again confirmed what the gospels claim happened historically.

Now, that's the New Testament. Now, the Old Testament has a lot more history in it, and I'm not going to talk about all of it. I'm going to give you some general statements about it to help you understand the nature of it because people generally assume the opposite.

But the New Testament is the most important because Jesus and His life and death and resurrection are the most important thing to the Christian. More than that, if that is true, then Jesus is the Son of God and definitely a reliable witness, the best authority we could consult, even about the Old Testament. And Jesus confirmed many of the stories of the Old Testament.

He said Moses raised up the serpent in the wilderness, you know, the brazen serpent. That's from the book of Numbers. He talked about, He just talked about many Old Testament things, what David did and, you know, I can't go into all of the things, but Jesus was continually referring to things in the Old Testament as true, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights, as it was in the days of Noah that they ate and drank and married and were given a marriage.

I mean, He's talking about these Old Testament things. No sooner did Lot leave Sodom and Gomorrah than the fire and brimstone came down, Jesus said. He even talks about Adam and Eve when they asked Jesus, is it right to divorce your wife for any cause? He said, well, didn't you read how it was in the beginning that at the beginning God made them male and female and said for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

He's quoting Genesis 2.24. He says that's how it happened. Didn't you read how it happened? Now, Jesus is telling us that Genesis 2 is accurate history. It really happened that way.

At one point, Jesus said to the Pharisees, all the righteous blood that was shed from Abel until Zechariah, whom you slew between the temple and the altar, will come upon this generation. The blood guilt for all the people who died righteously beginning with Abel. Abel, that's like one generation from Adam and Eve, and that's when righteous people started dying.

Jesus said, yeah, and the guilt of it's going to come on you. Guilt of a fictional character's death cannot come on anyone. If Abel was not a historical character, then his death could not bring guilt upon anybody because it didn't really happen.

There's no real guilt. Jesus treated the Old Testament as historical record from Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, certainly Abraham. He mentions Abraham numerous times.

Moses, he mentions at the burning bush. David, the martyrs all the way up to Zechariah, which was in the late, you know, 2 Chronicles history. In other words, if we know that Jesus, that the records about Jesus are historically accurate, then we have enough information just like people who saw him would have to conclude, is he special or not? You know, oh, he raised dead people.

He rose himself from the dead. He opened the eyes of the blind. He cured lepers instantaneously.

The records tell us this, and he did these things publicly, by the way, and these records were published well within the lifetime of people who could say, wait, I was in Capernaum. There's no, there was not a day like that when everyone in the whole city had come out and all these miracles were being done here. I lived there at the time.

I didn't see it. By writing these histories as early as they did, the gospel writers set themselves up to be vulnerable, to be contradicted by many people who could have been equally witnesses. We have no record of anyone in the first century ever saying, wait a minute, that didn't happen.

No one wrote an alternative story and said, hey, the Christians were saying Jesus was here and he did that and so forth. I lived in that town. I never saw this happen.

And of course, many of the miracles happen to people that are named. The blind man Bartimaeus, who is healed. Why is his name given? Obviously, not all the people Jesus healed their names.

Bartimaeus is named by name because he was part of the church and they knew him by name. They didn't learn the names of everybody. They got Zacchaeus's name.

I mean, Nicodemus's name, but most people, you don't have their names. Jairus, these must have been people who became believers. Jairus's daughter was raised from the dead and these people were in the early church.

They were witnesses to these things. Now, I just said the gospels were written well within the lifetime of witnesses, but there are people who'd say no. You can Google, when were the gospels written? And there's website after website that says, well, Matthew might've been written in the late nineties and Mark, maybe in the early nineties and Luke, maybe 110 AD and John, maybe 120 AD.

And they put all these really late dates on them, all of which would make it impossible for them to be written by the people that the church has always told us they were written by. But is there any evidence of when they were written? N.T. Wright is one of the most famous New Testament scholars alive today. And I remember someone asked him the question, when were the gospels written? He said, and I knew the same because I'd read enough on it, but it was good to hear him say it.

He says, we do not know with certainty at all when any of the gospels were written. They could have been written anytime from 50 AD to the late eighties AD conceivably. And therefore it's almost entirely speculation.

So when people say, oh, they weren't written until the second century, that's because people want to suggest the histories are not reliable. They weren't written by witnesses. One of the most common thing you'll hear, you read Richard Dawkins, you read Sam Harris, you read the atheists that are writing books now, say the gospels weren't written by anyone who ever saw Jesus.

Well, that's their faith statement. They don't know when the gospels were written, but we have a very good indicator of when they might've been written because Luke wrote two books. The second one was Acts, and he refers to it as his second one.

If you read the opening chapter of Acts, it says, in my first book, Theophilus, I wrote about Jesus of everything he began to do and teach from the beginning until he was taken up. He's talking about the gospel of Luke. The gospel of Luke was the first book Luke wrote.

Acts is introduced as my second book. Now, Acts follows in detail Paul's journeys up until about the year 62 AD. When Paul arrives in Rome in 60 AD, he's a captive.

Luke is his best friend traveling with him for years and arrives in Rome with him. He's the historian. He's the biographer of Paul.

He's cataloged from the conversion of Paul through his early life, through his ministry, through his arrests, and there's a lot of detail about his arrest. Then the book of Acts in chapter 28, at the end, brings us up to 60 AD when Paul came to Rome. Then it says, the very last verse in Acts says, and he continued two years there, under house arrest, speaking to everybody who came to him.

Now, he continued two years there. Now, what's he there for? He's waiting to have a trial

before Nero, which will determine whether he's going to be beheaded or set free. This is kind of important.

The readers would be interested in knowing how that turned out. Luke would be interested in knowing how that turned out, but he doesn't tell us. Why? Apparently, it hadn't happened yet.

He must have written it before that happened, or else he would have told us. He wouldn't leave us hanging like that. We've been following Paul point by point.

Right up now, he's going to be on trial for his life. He's waiting in prison to be tried. Luke just drops the ball and says, that's all I want to talk about.

Bye. When he says he continued two years, what he's telling us is, up to the point of this writing, it has been two years. It has not been less, or else he couldn't say he was there two years.

Couldn't be more, or else he would say it was three years, or whatever. In other words, he is saying that all I can report is that Paul has been two years in Rome since we got here, and we got here in 60 AD. If that's reasonable, and I don't think anything else is anywhere near as reasonable as that suggestion, then Luke wrote Acts in 62 or 63 AD, but that was his second book.

That means Luke was written before that. Now, 62 AD, that's just 30 years after the crucifixion. Luke was written before that, because Acts was his second book.

And Luke, when he wrote Luke, said, many others have written stories of Jesus that I'm aware of, and I've also had eyewitnesses to talk to. Who are these others who had written before Luke? Almost all scholars agree that Mark was, and many would say Matthew was. Now, if that's true, then Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all written probably around 60 AD or earlier.

That's not, that's well within the lifetime of many people who would have seen Jesus. John could have been written considerably later. It's generally assumed he wrote later.

But what's interesting too, no one can reasonably say that either Matthew, Mark, or Luke were written after 70 AD. They may not agree they were written before 60, but they can't have been written after 70. Why? Because all three of those gospels record Jesus predicting that the temple would be destroyed, and not one stone would be left standing on another, and that happened in 70 AD, and none of the gospels mentioned that it happened.

They record the prediction, but they don't record, and that happened when the Romans came, and they certainly would, because the gospel writers love to point out when a prophecy came true. This happened that might fulfill this. This happened that might

fulfill that.

And Jesus told them, you'll find a cult there, and when they say, why are you taking that? Say, the master needs it, and they'll let him take it. And so they went, and they, lo and behold, that happened, just the way Jesus said it would. They love to tell of things that were predicted that came true.

Now Jesus' prediction about the destruction of Jerusalem did come true, but none of the gospels mentioned it. The only reason they didn't has got to be they didn't know it yet. It hadn't happened yet.

They had to have written before 70 AD, and in my assessment, if you do the math, I think you have to reach similar conclusions. I think those three, Matthew, Mark, Luke, were written before 60 AD, or at the latest, 60 AD, and Acts by 62. Now, therefore, we have very early dates for the gospels that we can argue for, and that's what the evidence points to.

I'll agree with N.T. Wright. We don't know when any of them were written. Some have suggested Mark could have been written as early as 50 AD.

I mean, not many would say so, but it could be. You never know. There's just no way of knowing.

But to say they were written after 70 AD, the first three gospels, is almost an impossibility, and reasoning from how Luke closes the book of Acts in the year 62 AD and doesn't tell us what came next, which everyone's waiting with bated breath to hear about, must mean that it hadn't happened yet. He'd gotten that far, and he ends the story because that's how far he's lived till, you know, 62 AD at that point. So the gospels are very early, very independent, very reliable records, and although that's the opposite of that is said in every university by people who don't know what they're talking about or don't care about telling the truth, more likely.

This is so, and there are many conservatives. I'm harping on this because yesterday I was in the library at Lincoln with a Christian young man, 18 years old, and his atheist friend who's giving him a hard time, and I was asked to spend some time with him, and this young man knew, this atheist guy, he was like an Asian guy, real intelligent kind of guy, but he knew nothing about what he was talking about. He had taken a course at Yale about the history of the gospels.

I said, well, Yale, I know what they'll teach you. It's, it's, Yale's teaching is not going to be true. He said, oh, so you think there's a conspiracy to silence Christianity? He said, yeah, where you been? You know, haven't you been awake? You know, I mean, the number of professors in colleges who tell their students on the first day, if you're a Christian, you're going to fail this class.

I've lost track of the number of reports I've gotten of professors who say that, and they're not even teaching about the Bible. They're talking about sociology or math or English literature, but they have a vendetta against Christianity, and anyway, the point is, you're going to hear on the History Channel or Discovery Channel or on internet sites or whatever, or reading atheist books, or if you meet someone who's gone to college and studied this stuff, they say, oh, you know, the gospels, they were written so late, you can't trust them. Nonsense.

Where's your evidence of that? Oh, there's no evidence, it's just my professor said so. That's what I thought, and I happen to know your professor, professor has no evidence. I happen to have spent the last 49 years immersed in this kind of study from both sides.

I'm, you know, I'm very interested in the evidence against Christianity because I want to be able to answer it, and I read it when I find, when it's there. I know what they've got, I know what they don't have, and we've got the goods. They got nothing.

They got nothing. Now, let me just say about the Old Testament, a few basic things, and we're going to get a break here because it's gone quite long, and you've been sitting a long time, and some of you are not in very comfortable chairs, some are. I just want to make some, read what some archaeologists have said.

These archaeologists are not Christians, but they are Middle Eastern archaeologists who've written books on what they have found, and I just want you to hear the general tenor of what these archaeologists say. One of the greatest Oriental archaeologists, experts on the Orient, is William F. Albright, the late William F. Albright. His name's legendary in the world of archaeology.

He was not an evangelical Christian, but he wrote a book called Archaeology and the Religions of Israel. In that book, he said, there can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition. Now, he's not talking about every detail.

You can't confirm with archaeology whether Abraham stood under the stars with God one night and God said, so shall your seed be. There's no monuments for them to find. There are stories in the Old Testament they'll never be able to confirm or disconfirm because they were private conversations, but where there are connections with things that are confirmable, and there are a lot, archaeology, he said, has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition.

So we're not talking about the New Testament, the Old Testament here. We have some other quotes of interest. Another non-Christian archaeologist, Miller Burroughs, from Yale.

He wrote a book, What Mean These Stones? And in that book, he said, on the whole,

archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine. Now, this is universally acknowledged by those who know about archaeology.

They find again and again things that the Bible mentions in very ancient parts. I don't think that's me. No, that's me.

That's my phone. Okay. Nelson Gleick is one of the most famous Jewish archaeologists in Israel, and he wrote a book called Rivers in the Desert.

He said, it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Now, this guy's one of the most famous Jewish archaeologists ever. He knows what they have found, what they've not.

He lives in Israel. He says there has never been an archaeological find that has contradicted something the Bible affirms. Now, he's not saying that everything the Bible affirms has also been confirmed by archaeology, but they've never found anything that disconfirms it.

And again and again, they find things that surprise them where they thought the Bible was wrong. Let me give you a few examples that are interesting. Until 1853, the only way that anyone knew of Belshazzar was the fact that he was mentioned in Daniel chapter 5 as the king of Babylon at the time that Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians.

He's the guy who saw the writing on the wall. He's the guy who was slain by Cyrus that night when the Persians broke into Babylon and defeated them. Now, the king there in Babylon is said to be Belshazzar in Daniel 5. Outside of Daniel, the name Belshazzar was 100% unknown, and therefore skeptics said Daniel must have made it up.

And besides, we had other historians who said different things. For example, Herodotus. He said the last king in Babylon when it fell was a man named Nabonidus, which is a very different name than Belshazzar.

No, the last king in Babylon, Herodotus said, was Nabonidus. So, there were skeptics for hundreds of years who said the Bible is just, Daniel just made that up. There was no Belshazzar.

No one ever heard Belshazzar. The last king was not Belshazzar, it was Nabonidus. But something happened in 1853, which was the early stages of biblical archaeology.

They found a temple to a god in Ur, which is Babylon, and there was an inscription on the temple to a god, and the inscription was from Nabonidus. Now, Nabonidus, Herodotus said, Nabonidus was the last king in Babylon. But this inscription written by Nabonidus is

kind of interesting, it sheds some light on things.

He said, May I, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, not sin against thee. This is to a pagan god in this temple. May I, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, not sin against thee, and may reverence for thee dwell in the Belshazzar, my firstborn favorite son.

A hundred years before I was born, 1853. Now, that means Babylon fell in 539 BC, 538-539 BC. Over 500 years before Christ, Babylon fell.

Until 1853, almost 2,500 years later, no one except Daniel knew that Belshazzar had been the last king in Babylon, or that he even existed. All the other historians only knew about Nabonidus, but Nabonidus knew about Belshazzar. He was his firstborn favorite son.

Other things have been found since then. What is now known from archaeology is that Nabonidus, the king, was in retirement in Arabia and had left his son Belshazzar as the king in his place in Babylon. Babylon fell while Belshazzar was reigning, and Nabonidus was in Arabia.

Now, what's kind of interesting is in Daniel chapter 5, when the writing on the wall appears, and Belshazzar wants it interpreted, he says, whoever can interpret this writing for me, I'll make him third ruler in the kingdom. Why did he say third ruler? There's no explanation of why he'd say third ruler, but he himself was only the second. His father, Nabonidus, was the first.

Belshazzar was second. He couldn't give away any positions higher than his own. He could give away the third position, though.

Now, what's interesting is that the Bible and archaeology, therefore, in an interesting way, confirm one another and put to shame the skeptics. And what's really interesting is that Herodotus wrote 400 years before Christ and had already forgotten about Belshazzar, but Daniel hadn't forgotten him. That means Daniel's writing was closer to the facts, closer to the time than even 400 years before Christ, which means it was almost at the time.

It was contemporary. Now, I mean, that's one of many examples that can be given. I mentioned the Hittites earlier.

The Hittites are mentioned in conjunction with the story of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and even Bathsheba's husband before David was Uriah the Hittite. These were a Canaanite tribe that were around for a long time and mostly in conflict with Israel, though they were subjugated and Uriah the Hittite was one of David's mighty men in his army. But no one outside the Bible could confirm that the Hittites ever existed.

For the longest time, no other historians had mentioned the Hittites. No archaeologists

had found anything about the Hittites. And once again, just like the Belshazzar thing, critics said, well, the Hittites, that's fictional.

The Bible's just making them up for the story. No, they never really existed. But then, no surprise, archaeologists began to find Hittite civilization.

And to this day, they can document 1,500 years of Hittite civilization from archaeology, which means, of course, again, the Bible is correct and the critics were wrong. You'd think the critics might begin to speak more humbly so they don't have so much egg on their face, but they don't learn. Sargon II, there's a Sargon king of Assyria that is known from history, and there's a Sargon II who's mentioned only, in all historical writings, mentioned only in Isaiah 20, verse 1. Outside the Bible, no reference to Sargon II.

Once again, careless critics began to say, see, the Bible's not true. There never was a Sargon at that time that Isaiah was talking about until, of course, they excavated Sargon II's palace and found his palace and his kingdom, and now nobody doubts that Sargon II existed anymore. And the Bible said so way back in Isaiah's time, 700 years before Christ, but it took modern archaeologists to confirm it, that the Bible was right all the time.

This begins to look like a trend, and it is. Gleason Archer, who's a famous Old Testament scholar in his Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, said this, back in 1850, for example, many learned scholars were confidently denying the historicity of the Hittites and the Horites, of Sargon II of Assyria and Belshazzar of Chaldean Babylon, and even of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet all of these have more recently become accepted by the scholarly world because of their appearance in ancient documents discovered within the last 15 decades of archaeological investigation.

And he only lists like six examples, or he lists six, but there's a lot more than that. That's why these archaeologists say more than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by discoveries in Palestine. I want to give you just two other quotes by experts.

This one comes from Sir Frederick Kenyon. Now, he was the director of the British Museum. Ever been to the British Museum? It's got all these artifacts from the the Assyrian bas-reliefs, and anyway, it's got even the laws of Hammurabi on the black stela in the British Museum.

It's really cool to see those things when you go there. Anyway, this guy was the director of the British Museum, Sir William Ramsey. No, I'm sorry, this is Sir Frederick Kenyon, and it says he wrote in a book called The Bible and Archaeology.

He was a Christian, but also an expert. He said, archaeology has not yet said its last word, but the results already achieved confirm what faith would suggest, that the Bible

can do nothing but gain from an increase in knowledge. Now, if something isn't true, it's going to be vulnerable to disproof by the increase of knowledge.

When you learn more, you'll find out what the lies were. He says, you know, archaeology has already told us what the trend is. The Bible, as knowledge increases, the Bible is only going gain by this.

It's been a one-way trend. There's no exceptions to it. I mentioned the coins of David with David's name stamped on them.

Just recently, in the past few decades, were discovered. Before that, some people said David never existed. You know, they're finding this kind of stuff all the time.

I'll close with this quote that I love. It's from Time Magazine. Back in December 30th of 19... This is rubbed out.

I can't get the number. I think it's 1972, if I'm not mistaken. Time Magazine had a cover story about the Bible and about archaeological research and criticism of the Bible and things like that.

Here's how the article... Now, Time Magazine, by the way, is not a Christian publication. You may be aware. This is how they concluded their articles.

And listen carefully. He says, after more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived and is perhaps the better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms, historical fact, the scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began their attacks.

So, Time Magazine, after a whole article on this kind of information, it concludes, you know, 200 years of attacks on the Bible has actually made the Bible seem more credible than before they began the attacks because they're trying to disprove it. They just keep accidentally proving it's right. And so, you know, when we live at a time where the Bible's credibility is assumed to be fallacious, you know, I mean, except unless you're an evangelical Christian, obviously.

I mean, if you're raised believing the Bible's the word of God, then, of course, you believe it's true. But everybody outside the evangelical church has been told for a couple generations now in their schools and on the, you know, public television and, you know, and the history channels that they've been told, this stuff is... It's not true. It didn't really happen.

These are myths. These are things that, you know, legends that accrued that, you know, can't really trust them. But they're not speaking from evidence.

They're speaking from prejudice. There are... Let me tell you about the Jesus Seminar.

You know who Jesus Seminar are? They were kind of in the news a lot in the 80s.

These are like 70 liberal Bible scholars, none of them believers, who used to get together every six months to vote on whether something that the gospels say was true or not. They took, I think it was six years, going through the sayings of Jesus that are recorded in the gospels. They took each one, and they voted on which ones were likely to be authentic.

So they take something like, blessed are the poor in spirit. What do you think? 70 guys. How are they voting? They've got colored beads.

They've got red, pink, gray, and black. If you throw a red bead in the pot, you're saying Jesus definitely said that. A pink bead means he probably didn't say that, but he may have said something like that.

A gray bead means he didn't say anything like that, but he probably wouldn't have disagreed with that. And a black bead was he never said anything like that. Now, these 70 liberal scholars, they went through every saying of Jesus over a period of every six months they met for six years, and they voted on everything Jesus said.

And they said what they arrived at was the assured findings of science. And they published a book called the five gospels, because they not only use Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, they use the gospel of also. And so they published the gospels in colored letters.

And those sayings that were authentic were in red. Those that were, maybe Jesus didn't say it, but he might have said something like it, were printed in pink. Those that were something Jesus wouldn't disagree with, but never said anything like it, would be in gray.

And the things that Jesus wouldn't even agree with are in black. More than half was printed in black. They decided that over half what's in the Bible, Jesus wouldn't even agree with.

And only one-fifth of the sayings of Jesus were given a red rating. And they published this as, you know, these are the great scholars, the greatest Bible scholars in the world have voted on this. And therefore, this is the scientific conclusion about the gospels.

Scientific voting? What do you think, guys? Do you think this is authentic? I don't think so. Okay, you can give that one a black, you know. This could be.

Maybe he said something like that. Maybe. But what are they basing it on? On their own opinions of what they think Jesus would have thought or said.

They don't believe what's written about him. So where are they getting their information? From their own imaginations. This is scientific.

And yet they got cover stories every Easter for years. The Jesus Seminar was on the cover of Newsweek, the cover of Time, and the bilingual was, you know, Jesus never said, blessed are the poor in spirit, or something like that, you know. What was interesting, I got the book, I looked at it, and I thought it was rather interesting because there was a saying, some of the sayings from the gospels are also in the Gospel of Thomas, which is a Gnostic gospel, a fraudulent gospel.

But the saying about, you know, the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. I think that's the one it was. It's also in the Gospel of Thomas, along with the other gospels.

And I looked in the Gospel of Thomas, it was given a black rating. They published it in black, saying Jesus really did say this. But the same statement in Mark and in Matthew was published in gray.

Like, he may have said something like this. So what's interesting, the same statement, what's in the Gospel of Thomas, it's authentic. What's in Matthew and Mark, it's treated as not so authentic.

Does that sound like there's any bias there? It's the same statement. Did he say it or didn't he say it? Well, he did when it's in the Gospel of Thomas, he didn't when it's in the Gospels and the Bible, you know. So, I mean, this is scholarship, this is prejudice only.

And you have to understand that the people in the highest levels of the academy who are talking about the Bible, in many cases, have no agenda other than to totally discredit it and undermine anybody's faith in the Bible. Why? Well, there's political reasons for wanting to do that. Some of them are very obvious.

But it's also simply that the devil wants to attack faith in Christ in general. And so the Western Academy has been trying to do this ever since the late 19th century. They've gotten more and more ferocious.

But just so you'll know, that's not all the academics there are. There are conservative Christian academics whose training is every bit as good and whose prejudice is far less than these liberal critics. And you can find scores of the highest ranking scholars on the Bible who are evangelicals, who are convinced that every word of the Gospels is true, that it's the Word of God.

And yet they're not saying it's true because it's the Word of God. They're looking at the scholarly evidence the same as anybody else. The truth is, the evidence is for the Bible.

But prejudices can color somebody's treatment and presentation of the evidence. And that is what we usually have in the modern world. I read the books by the skeptics.

I read the books by the scholars who are not trying to fool anybody. And I'll tell you, Christians are going to have nothing to be embarrassed about when they say, I believe

the Bible is historically true. I believe the stories in the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, really happen.

Why? We've got the best possible historical verification for it. And that's without assuming that the Bible is inspired. We also may believe the Bible is inspired, but that's a separate issue.

If it's inspired, we would expect it to be historically accurate. But it could be historically accurate without being inspired. I had an atheist friend say, if I became a Christian, do I have to believe everything in the Bible is inspired? I said, no, you don't have to believe that to be a Christian.

Christianity is not what you think about the Bible, we think about Jesus. You have to believe the things the Bible says about Jesus are true. But the men who wrote them didn't say they were inspired.

You know, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, they never said they were writing under inspiration. Luke said, I studied this out, I'm an expert on the subject, I can tell you what happened. They say they're telling the truth.

They don't tell us whether they're inspired or not. Maybe they were. But whether they were or not, I don't care if they were inspired.

I want to know if they were telling the truth, because I'm not writing. I don't read Matthew to learn about Matthew. I read Matthew to learn about Jesus.

If he's telling me the truth about Jesus, well, I don't care if he's inspired or not inspired, as long as what he's saying is a reliable story. And we do have that in the Gospels. Even a person who's not an evangelical, doesn't believe in his phrase of Scripture, would still have to be compelled to say, you know, if I look at the evidence as objectively as I should, I'm going to have to say, these things must have really happened.

Or at least I have more reason to believe they happened than any other ancient historical story that I believe in. And I've often said on the radio, especially when I'm on non-Christian radio, that people who don't believe in Jesus fall into two categories. They're either ignorant or dishonest.

You might know that non-Christians don't like me to say that, because it's not flattering, but I'll tell you why. Most of them are ignorant. And there's no shame in being ignorant.

We're all ignorant about some things. And most people are definitely ignorant about the evidence for Christianity. They have no idea what's in the Bible or what there is reasons for believing it's true.

They've never looked into it. And the ones who do know those things and don't believe it

are dishonest, because if they had the same amount of historical evidence for anything else, they would believe it. If it wasn't about God, if it wasn't about Jesus, if it wasn't about supporting Christianity, the evidence that you have for the gospels being true, if you had exactly the same amount of evidence or even considerably less evidence for any story about any other historical character, they'd believe it.

They just won't in this case, because the ramifications are they don't want.