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Historical Accuracy of the Bible



Authority of Scriptures - Steve Gregg

In "Historical Accuracy of the Bible," Steve Gregg argues that the Bible's historical accuracy can be confirmed through external historical sources and archaeology. While some scholars may doubt the historical accuracy of the Bible, Gregg maintains that their opinions do not reflect the consensus among experts in the field. Furthermore, Gregg cites various archaeological discoveries, such as the inscription of King David's name and references to King Solomon's Temple, as evidence that the Bible may be historically accurate.

Transcript

We're going to be considering the historical accuracy of the Bible as confirmed by external historic sources and by archaeology. These are the main ways that we know things that happened in the past. In our last lecture, we talked about the supposed tension between science and the Bible, and I sought to show you that it really isn't so great as imagined.

In fact, I don't believe there's any serious problems. I'm very interested in science. I could in no way consider myself an expert in any field of science, but I've done a fair degree of study just out of personal special interest, and I have always been impressed that those who see a problem in reconciling science and the Bible have a problem in themselves.

It's not a problem with the evidence itself. And that is also true, I think, with people who find problems reconciling the Bible with external historical information. There is an article in the current issue of Christianity Today.

This is the issue that's currently on the newsstands. It's September 7th, 1998. From things that I exert from this article, which I just read last night, if you decide that you'd like to get this article and can't find it on the newsstands, both the public library and the Linford Library will have the current issue, and you can Xerox articles from them if you want this information.

But this article is called, Did the Exodus Never Happen? And it is examining evidence

from archaeology primarily about some of the early events recorded in the Bible and their historical accuracy. The article begins, actually, with quotes from several liberal scholars who denied the historical accuracy of the scripture. Let me just read the kinds of things they say.

This quote comes from Baruch Halpern of Pennsylvania State University. He says, quote, the actual evidence concerning the Exodus resembles the evidence for the unicorn, unquote. In other words, nonexistent.

Another liberal scholar, Volkmar Fritz, director of the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Jerusalem, said, quote, the book of Joshua is of no historical value as far as the process of settlement is concerned, unquote. Another scholar from San Francisco Theological Seminary, Robert Koot, said, quote, the period of the patriarchs, Exodus, conquest, or judges as devised by the writers of scripture never existed, unquote. And they have a quote here from also Niels Peter Lemke of the University of Copenhagen, who said, quote, that Genesis and Exodus accounts are a fiction written around the middle of the first millennium.

Now, the first millennium means the first millennium BC, so sometime after 1,000 BC, much later than, of course, the stories would appear to have been written, especially if Moses wrote them. He says that the David of the Bible, David the king, is not a historical figure, unquote. Reading major scholars, these are biblical scholars, these are not, you know, representatives of the American Atheist Association, these are men who are biblical scholars, at least so they term themselves.

They obviously don't believe the Bible. You might wonder why a person would choose a career in biblical scholarship if he does not believe the Bible, or she. Well, that's a very good question.

One begins to wonder whether some people choose a field in biblical scholarship for the express purpose of undermining the Bible. However, reading these quotes is by no means a reflection of anything like the nature of the evidence in reality, nor is it a consensus opinion among those who really are expert on the subject. The Bible has over one-half of its contents taken up with what appears to be historical narrative.

That is, the narrative presents itself as if it is telling true stories. From Genesis 1, through the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, those five books are alleged to be written by Moses. Moses lived, it is believed, around 1400 years before Christ.

Or 1500 years before Christ, if not full agreement. It might even have been as late as 1200 years before Christ. But certainly over a thousand years before Christ.

And if he wrote those books, they obviously were not written in the first millennium B.C.

They were written sometime prior to that. Joshua and Judges and Ruth, and the books of Samuel and Kings and Chronicles all profess to be telling historical information about the history of Israel. And these books of the Old Testament occupy more than half of the pages of the Old Testament.

That is to say, while there are other kinds of literature in the Old Testament, there are the poetic books and the prophetic books, most of the Old Testament is historical in genre. It professes to be telling historical accounts. When you turn to the New Testament, you find the same phenomenon.

There are works in the New Testament that are not historical in nature. The epistles, for example. Although, by the way, the epistles often do have reference to historical events.

Paul especially gives certain autobiographical details, and he also gives some confirmation of some of the historical events of the life of Christ. But the epistles are not written principally as historical documents, but they are another kind of literature. Likewise, the book of Revelation is not written as a historical document, but the Gospels certainly are.

The four Gospels by themselves occupy more than half of the New Testament pages. Just those four books out of the 27 occupy more than half of the New Testament. And then you can add to that the book of Acts, which presents the early history of the church, and you can see that well, well over half of the New Testament is purporting to be historical.

Now, with that high density of historical information in the Bible, the issue of whether the historical claims of the Bible are true or not has a major impact on our ability to believe that the Bible is the Word of God or not. If the Bible claims that certain things happened, but they didn't happen, then it's clear that the biblical writers were either misinformed or simply not honest. They were either making up myths, pretending them to be true stories, or else they thought they were telling the truth, but just didn't have very good information.

But in either of those two cases, we could never argue that they were inspired by God, who himself, of course, would never be mistaken and would not be dishonest. So if God has all the information and is always honest, then we must consider that everything that he would inspire and tell would be true. Therefore, it's extremely important to know whether the historical stories in the Bible are stories about things that really happened.

Now, there are some stories, I don't think there are very many of this kind, that might not be historical and yet could be inspired by God, if they were, for example, presented to be a parable. Jesus told many parables about a sower sowing seed or a woman putting leaven in dough, and there's no reason to believe that he was talking about actual historical cases. He might be telling a parable.

A lot of people feel that the story of Jonah, while it is not a lie and is not inaccurate in the sense of poorly informed reporting, but that it is intended as a parable, as a story with a lesson. I don't believe that myself. I believe Jonah is a historical story and I believe that Jesus' use of it is a good example of confirmation of that.

But what I'm saying is a person might have a high view of the inspiration of scripture and still take a few of the stories in the Bible and say, well, I don't know that that really happened, not because I believe there's a lie here, but because I believe this story was not intended to be understood as history. It was presented as a parable or as a lesson or an allegory or something like that. There are not many stories, I think, in the Bible that people could honestly say that about.

Certainly the vast majority of the stories present themselves unmistakably as if they are history. Now, the first 11 chapters of Genesis, for example, have often been challenged by critics of the Bible as certainly not historical. While many critics of the Bible have been willing to believe there probably was a man named Abraham and an Isaac and a Jacob and that these men may well have been somehow involved in the founding of the Hebrew people as a nation.

The stories in Genesis prior to Abraham's time, which are in Genesis chapters 1 through 11, have often been thought to be mythical. You've got there the story of the creation in six days. You've got the story of a talking serpent in a garden deceiving the first parents, Adam and Eve.

You've got the story of Cain and Abel. You've got the story of a flood that covered the whole earth and eight people surviving in a box. You've got the story of the people building the Tower of Babel and everyone speaking the same language until their languages were miraculously confused and then they were scattered throughout the world.

That's really what the contents of Genesis 1 through 11 is about. And there are people who would purport to be evangelicals, that is, they purport to believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, who would say, but we shouldn't necessarily think that those first 11 chapters of Genesis are really historically true or even were intended to be understood as historically true. It should be understood that these were instructive myths that taught religious lessons and so forth, and that the writers never intended for us to take them as true stories any more than Jesus intended for us to take his parables as if they were true stories.

Now, I would contest that strongly. For one thing, Jesus grew from those first 11 chapters of Genesis frequently in such a way as would make no sense at all if he did not think they were historically accurate. For example, he told the Jews that all the bloodshed of all the righteous who have been slain, from Abel to Zechariah, who is a prophet who was slain in the book of 2 Chronicles by the Jews in the temple, he said all the innocent blood

that was shed from Abel to Zechariah will be required of this generation.

That means that his generation would be punished for the guilt of all that bloodshed. Now, he mentioned Abel's blood. If Jesus did not believe that Abel was a historical character, how could anyone be guilty of his blood? How could any living person be justly punished for the blood of a mythical person who never lived and therefore never died? It would be as if somebody said, I'm going to hold you responsible for the death of Humpty Dumpty.

None of us believe that Humpty Dumpty really lived. He's a fairy tale. And no one would ever talk about, you know, we're reopening the investigation to see who pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall and we're going to bring that person to justice.

That's ridiculous. Nobody would assign guilt for the destruction of that which never really existed. And when Jesus said that the righteous blood of Abel through Zechariah, he included Abel as being equally historical as Zechariah and all other righteous people who were killed.

It's clear that Jesus was not of the opinion that the story of Cain and Abel, which is found in Genesis 4, he didn't think of that as a myth. In another place, when he was asked by the Pharisees about issues of divorce and what are the grounds for divorce or not and what they are, he said, well, have you not read that he who made man made them in the beginning, male and female? And he said, for this cause, shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and the two shall become one flesh. He's quoting Genesis 2, 24.

He says, therefore, what God has joined together. He's referring to the fact that it says that God has made the man wife one flesh. He says, what God has joined together, do not let man put asunder.

So he's giving an ethical teaching about the legitimacy or not of divorce based on what he professes is a historical thing. Didn't you hear what Jesus, what God did in the beginning? He says, didn't you read what God did? He made the man and the woman one flesh. Obviously, if God did that, you don't want to break up what God did.

Now, of course, if Jesus didn't believe the story in Genesis chapter two, if he thought it never really happened, it would hardly provide any basis for giving moral instructions for our behavior. You can't base morality on a story that is untrue. If God really did institute marriage in the way that Genesis says, and Jesus seems to have taken that for granted, then we must assume that the, that he can make a point that is binding on it about divorce or whatever.

So Jesus believed in Cain, believed Adam and Eve. He also believed in Noah, who also has his story occupying a great portion of Genesis one through 11. Jesus said, as it was

in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the son of man.

For as in the days that were before the flood, they did eat and they drank and they married and were given in marriage until, and they knew not until the day that the flood came and took them all away. So shall it also be in the coming of the son of man. So he said that there's going to be actual times that he predicted and they would have a certain character to them.

And the way they would be, would be very much like the times of Noah, as if the times of Noah were a reality. If there never was times of Noah, then there could never be another time later. It was like them.

And so what I'm saying is if the writer of Genesis chapters one through 11 did not intend for us to understand them as historical, it was such a subtle intention that Jesus missed it. And I would not expect Jesus to be mistaken, but even if we didn't have any words from Jesus on this matter, just reading Genesis chapters one through 11, you can see that there is evidence that the author is intending to present this as if it's historical. You would not need, for example, chapter five, which documents the generations from Adam to Noah, 10 generations tells how old each guy was when he had his first son.

Then it tells how many years he lived after that. And then his death. And it does that for each individual, obviously trying to link, provide a historical link, a genealogical link from Adam to Noah.

And later on in Genesis, before you get to chapter 11, or actually in chapter 11, you find a similar kind of genealogy from Noah to Abraham. So it seems to me that if the author of Genesis expected his readers to realize he's giving mythology, he's giving religious stories that have a moral to them or something like that. And he was not trying to convey the idea that this is historical.

He would not provide all this detailed linkage of one character to the next through a genealogy, which goes so far as to tell everybody's age at the time of the birth of their first son and then their age at the time of their death and how many years it was and so forth. The detail that is given there certainly does not look like a collection of fables. Now, of course, the person might profess to be writing history and hope that his readers will think it's history, and he might be making it up.

That's always a possibility. But in terms of Genesis 1 through 11, it is quite, I think, a major mistake for skeptics to say, well, you know, we can believe that the Bible's inspired, but not believe those first 11 chapters because they weren't written to be believed as history. Now, okay, having said those few introductory remarks, we can say that history, or at least alleged history, is what most of the Bible is about.

And that's very important. It's very helpful as a matter of fact. You know, Judaism and

Christianity are the only two major world religions that are founded upon alleged historical events that can be tested, that can be researched.

You see, Islam doesn't have as the basis for its reality any historical event. Islam, its authority is based on the claim that Muhammad, in a private interview with the Archangel Gabriel, received from the Archangel Gabriel the writings of the Quran. And if that is true, of course, then the Quran is an inspired book, and Islam is a religion that God wants everyone to believe.

However, how could you confirm it? There's no particular great historic event that you could do archaeology, you couldn't do any research to find out whether that interview with Muhammad and the Angel Gabriel really occurred. You can't test it. Hinduism and Buddhism, likewise, they don't have any particular confirmable or falsifiable historical events that they point to as the basis of their founding.

Buddhism and Hinduism simply are philosophies. Buddhism has its origins in the enlightenment of the Buddha. As he sat under a tree, he suddenly realized this Eightfold Path, or whatever.

And, well, I mean, if you think the Eightfold Path makes sense, then you can be a Buddhist, but you can't confirm that from, there's no historical claims there. There's nothing that happened that anyone could, you know, prove or disprove. And that's why I say that Judaism and Christianity, the religions of the Bible, are the only religions in the whole variety of world religions, or the major ones anyway, that make anything like historical claims for their validity.

You see, Judaism claims its validity on the basis of the historical founding of the nation by God. This founding was the result of a complex of events, where God delivered them out of Egypt, brought them to Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai, he gave them his laws, entered into a covenant with them, and took them through the wilderness for 40 years, and then, through Joshua, conquered the land of Canaan, gave them that land.

And there are tremendous details given of the progress of that conquest, which details can be seemingly confirmed or falsified from things like archaeology. If it could be shown that these events never, ever happened, well, that would just undermine the credibility of Judaism altogether. Likewise, Christianity is not based on the philosophy of Jesus.

Many people mistakenly think it is. Some people say, I'm a better Christian than most of you, and my whole religion is just the Sermon on the Mount. Well, what they mean is they think the Sermon on the Mount reflects a very high ethical standard, and that's about the best the world's ever seen, and so that's my religion.

As if Christianity is based upon the ideas or teachings of Jesus. Now, I'm not going to tell you that the ideas and teachings of Jesus are not significant in Christianity, but the

validity of Christianity, whether it is true or false, rests upon historical claims. The claims that there was, A, a man named Jesus, B, he did and said certain things, and C, he died and rose again.

And especially that latter point, if he did not rise again, then nothing in Christianity can really be trusted. If there is a historical event called the resurrection of Jesus Christ, if that occurred, then it essentially proves that Christianity is the truth after all. If it did not occur, it proves conclusively that Christianity is not true, because the essential claim of the Christian faith is that Jesus is alive, that Jesus is risen, and that his rising from the dead demonstrates that he is the Lord as he claimed to be.

It was God's way of proclaiming him publicly to be Lord. Now, if Jesus rose from dead, that's a historical event. If you could find his body, if you could go back to his grave and find evidence that no resurrection occurred, it would disprove Christianity right out.

You can't do that with Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam. There's no historical claims that you could go to and say, well, that proves that they're wrong or that proves they're right. They're not testable on this basis, whereas the religions of the Bible are, and in a big way.

I mean, it's not as if the Bible has a few historical claims and sticks its neck out a little bit like hope no one finds enough to disprove these. It's like the Bible's full of historical information, claims to be telling about the reigns of over 40 different kings and so forth. And, you know, if it's not true, it certainly is vulnerable to disprove, because the historical claims are on the surface, they're bold, and they are fundamental to the validity of the whole religion of Judaism and of Christianity.

And we need to understand this, because it will do no good to say, well, I don't believe in the Exodus. I don't believe that ever happened, but I think the Ten Commandments are a great moral code, you know? Well, the Ten Commandments might be a great moral code, but if the Exodus didn't occur, then the Ten Commandments are not from God. Judaism never was, never did have anything to do with God, because it's all based on a lie, a claim that God saved these people and made them his people, but it never really happened.

And likewise, if someone says, well, I think the Sermon on the Mount is the greatest sermon ever preached, that's going to be my religion from now on, but I don't believe, you know, Jesus ever really died or rose again. I mean, died maybe, but not rose again. Well, that person can believe what he wants about the Sermon on the Mount, but he has no basis for thinking that the Sermon on the Mount carries any more weight than any other sermon.

I mean, you could give a sermon denying everything in the Sermon on the Mount, and it could be as equally true. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, if Christ isn't who we claim to

be, what's the point of believing what he said? So the real issue with being a Christian is whether the claims of the Gospels are historically accurate. If they are, then Christianity is true, even if I didn't like what the Sermon on the Mount said, even if I didn't like the Ten Commandments, if I didn't like anything that was taught in the Bible, but the events recorded actually happened, I would have to acknowledge this religion is true.

It may not be palatable, it may not be my preference, but it is true. And that is something everyone needs to understand about Christianity, because a lot of people, when they talk about, well, you know, Christianity may be true for you, but not for me, they don't realize that the truth of Christianity rests not on my acceptance of the values or the principles or the teachings of Christianity. Christianity's validity rests on whether a historic event occurred or did not occur, something that is objectively a reality.

It either did or didn't. And so this is why it is so important to the Christian, should be, to know whether the Bible is historically accurate or not. I read you several quotes from modern scholars who say that the Bible is not, at least some of those early stories in the Old Testament, are not historically reliable.

They are, they express the mood of a certain ilk of scholars today, generally the same, the kind of scholars that you'll find writing in what's called the Biblical Archaeological or Archaeology Review, a magazine that's in most libraries. It's basically liberally oriented, based on, they call it Biblical Archaeology Review, but they're anti-Bible for the most part. They don't believe it's historically accurate.

Most of the stories there seem to be trying to prove they're not. The problem is, the whole basis for denying the historical accuracy of some of these stories is simply that they haven't found anything yet to confirm them. But what's amazing is how many things they do find and what they do confirm.

You can bet that lots of the stories in the Bible will never be confirmed by archaeology. You know why? A lot of the stories in the Bible have to do with private conversations between Abraham and God. There was no one else there.

We do have a record of them. They were recorded historically here, but there were no other witnesses. They're not going to be found, you know, proven by additional witnesses any more than if I told you about my things that happened between me and God in my devotional life.

You know, I'm the best authority you can get on what happens in those situations because I was there, no one else was. You're not going to be able to find a lot of people confirming it because they weren't there. But there is much in the Bible that is easily confirmed and has been confirmed, and what you need to be aware of really is the mood of the scholarly environment of your times.

In the 19th century, that is in the 1800s, it became very fashionable in the realm of biblical scholarship, especially in Europe, and then that trickled over into America, to doubt the historical accuracy, especially of the Old Testament, especially of the early books of the Old Testament. A man named Julius Wellhausen brought together theories that had been formulated over several decades previous to him by various scholars, and he synthesized them into a view of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Old Testament, the books allegedly written by Moses.

And Wellhausen said, Moses didn't write these books. In fact, Moses couldn't write these books because it was claimed in the days when Moses allegedly lived, which was thought to be about 1400 years before Christ, writing had not yet even been invented. And therefore, written language not being in existence, it's clear that Moses could never have written anything.

You've got to have an alphabet. You've got to have writing as an institution to use, something that you can use to write things. And Moses, they say, lived at a time before there was writing.

And even if he hadn't lived before that time, they felt they found, the scholars felt they found evidence that the five books of Moses were not written by one man, but that they are an interweaving of four different traditions that were from four different populations or four different periods of time of the Jewish people. Some of them in conflict with each other, but roughly woven together into one narrative, maybe put together in its final form about 450 years before Christ. Now, by the way, 450 years before Christ is about a thousand years later than Moses alleged time.

So they were suggesting that any claims that Moses had written these books could not be trusted. He didn't write any of it. He didn't write anything.

Writing wasn't even available to him, they said. But about a thousand years later, the Jews, after their exile in Babylon, put together in a final form, four different traditions that were mostly orally passed along for the many centuries. And the form they finally took is what we have in the Pentateuch.

Well, this became the reigning orthodoxy and biblical scholarship in the 19th century. And obviously, if that is true, then none of it is historical. None of it can possibly be the word of God.

It raises serious questions about the authority of the law at all, or the, or even where the Jews came from. I mean, this, this means that the stories about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not true. It means that the Exodus is not true.

It means that the founding of the nation of Israel, one of the most important things in the Old Testament, we don't have any historical information about. And this of course, was

the way scholars were talking in the late 19th century. Then something changed.

There was a man named William Foxwell Albright, usually called the Dean of Biblical Archaeologists. This man did archaeological studies in Palestine. He was a professor of archaeology at Johns Hopkins University.

And he did what the Wellhausen and the other scholars had not done. These scholars who came up with their opinions reached their conclusions just by reading the Bible and trying to find little, little hints and little word changes and use of different vocabulary and so forth. And they made all their conclusions as to whether the Old Testament was historical or not without appeal to archaeology.

But Albright went into Palestine and did archaeological studies. And by the way, through his early training in his university years, he had picked up this Wellhausen view, usually called the documentary hypothesis, that none of this is historical. And he went into his studies as a skeptic.

But he kept unearthing things that gave him a jolt. He said it gave his unbelief a jolt because he kept finding things archaeologically that the Bible had said were there. And confirmations of a striking sort began to emerge all over the place.

And Albright's studies gave rise to a totally new mood in the scholarly world about whether these stories were historical or not. So that even skeptics had to back off on their criticism. They never gave up totally the Wellhausen view of the documentary hypothesis.

But the skeptics had to moderate their criticism more because more and more discoveries were coming forward that proved there were reasons to believe the historical accuracy of these stories. I'll give you some examples in this session later. But I want to say that since the time of Albright, there's been a resurgence of the liberal skepticism.

Those quotes I read from the beginning of this article in Christianity Today at the beginning of this session are representative of that modern skepticism. You can see there's been a full pendulum swing back on the part of these scholars. You might ask, what is it that has caused this swing back to skepticism? When Albright had had brought really the nature of biblical scholarship far in the direction of believing again that the Bible is historically accurate.

Why has there been this swing back to almost total skepticism about it? Well, you might think it's because they have found some new discoveries that somehow contradict the stories in the Bible. But as you read up on this, you'll find that they have not found anything new that has contradicted the Bible. They just not have.

They have certainly not found things to confirm everything in the Bible. Now, a great number of stories of Bible have been confirmed from archaeology, but there are some

that have not been and they probably never will be. There are certain reasons that certain stories may never be confirmed from archaeology.

They may have never been recorded by anyone other than the biblical writers, or even if they were recorded, they may not have survived. Or if they did survive, we may not have found them and may never find them. So, I mean, there's a lot of reasonable suggestions why we don't know necessarily where to find any outward confirmation of the story of Joseph in Egypt, perhaps.

But just because we haven't found it doesn't necessarily prove that it didn't happen. Now, it is true that something as significant as the Exodus, where all of Pharaoh's armies got wiped out in the Red Sea, or something as significant as Joseph saving the nation of Egypt by his leadership, you might expect that in Egypt there'd be some kind of confirmation of that, there'd be some kind of records of it. And there may be some hints of this, but there is no direct confirmation yet.

But there are a number of Egyptologists, and that's what this article is principally about in Christianity Day, two of the main ones, Kenneth Kitchen and James Hoffmeier, have recently been, they're experts not only in the Semitic language and so forth, but they're also Egyptologists, and they have come out against the new skepticism. Kenneth Kitchen is a veteran ancient languages expert at the University of Liverpool in England, and also an Egyptologist of high rank. And then James Hoffmeier just published a monograph entitled *Israel and Egypt* with Oxford University Press, that's a scholarly journalist of high rank.

These two men have been coming and they've been countering now the skepticism. So you've had this swing, first you had the Wellhausen skepticism, then you had Albright coming in and proving that the Wellhausen skepticism was unfounded, because he found all these archaeological confirmations. Then you have this swing back from the biblical archaeological review team trying to debunk everything, because they have not found convincing evidence of every story in the Bible they think they should be able to find it out.

And then you've got this fourth movement of these Egyptologists who are saying, wait a minute, we are finding stuff. The liberals who are called minimalists, I guess because they'll believe only a minimal amount of what the Bible says, and that minimal amount will be determined by what they can prove archaeologically. Minimalists, by the way, the liberals I'm talking about who say this to everybody, their philosophy of the Bible is it's guilty until proven innocent, basically.

One reason that Albright was able to affect a different mood in scholarship is in those days, in the days of Albright, the Bible considered innocent until proven guilty. That is to say, if the Bible said something happened, there would be no reason to doubt it unless they found archaeological proof that it didn't happen, or any evidence that didn't

happen. That is the way we all want to be treated if we tell a story, isn't it? I mean, if I tell you a story of my life, I don't want you to sit there skeptical and tell you can prove every feature of it.

I would think that if you could disprove some feature of it, you would certainly reject my story. But I mean, it's a common courtesy we give to people that if we don't know them to be lying, if we don't have any reason to believe they're lying, that we accept what they're saying. Now, we could be deceived by them in this way, but that's just the way we can't operate with a total skepticism about everything we hear and see.

And so with the Bible, in a more reasonable age, that of Albright, people believe, well, the Bible should not be said to be lying unless we can prove it to be lying. And what they found, again and again, was many confirmations were that the Bible was telling the truth. But on the parts that you couldn't confirm, you figured, well, if the Bible is truthful on this, this, this, and this, and this, which we can confirm, well, we'll assume for the time being it may be also reliable on these other points that we have not yet confirmed.

But the mood has shifted entirely the other direction now. The skeptics believe that unless you can prove it did happen, you should view the Bible as myths and fables. By the way, this view of the Old Testament history is very much the counterpart in the Old Testament of the New Testament group called the Jesus Seminar, who take exactly the same approach to the stories of Jesus.

They say, and even in the introduction of their book, *The Five Gospels*, they say their approach in studying the life of Jesus was to assume that unless something could be proven to be true, it was probably a fable. It was probably a legend about Jesus. Now, that's not a very good starting point for researching history.

But of course, they don't believe there's so much research in history as religion. They think that the stories of Jesus and the Gospels were more religiously motivated rather than historically motivated. But you can see immediately, if a person begins to look at a purportedly historical document and says, I won't believe one word of it until I can confirm it from outside sources, then you're going to have much occasion for skepticism about it.

But if you say this purports to be a historical document, I will bring no greater degree of skepticism to this than I do to any other document, unless, of course, I find evidence that is false, then I'll be skeptical. That, to my mind, is a way of being embarrassed. The scholars who have taken the other approach have often been embarrassed, and I'm going to give you many examples of that in our notes.

On page four of the notes I've given you, near the top of the page, you'll see point B, historical accuracy. Here's a quote from William F. Albright. As I said, he was an archaeologist, professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins University, considered the world's

greatest expert in Oriental archaeology.

In his book, *Archaeology and the Religions of Israel*, page 176, he said, quote, there can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition, unquote. Now, he is the leading archaeologist of his day, and he said there can be no doubt. Now, this man didn't come from the position of an evangelical.

He was raised and trained a liberal, but his archaeological discoveries led him to say there can be no doubt that archaeological discovery has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition. Now, when he says the substantial historicity, he doesn't mean that everything in it has been proven to be historically true, but it has been proven to be substantially true. The basic substance of it seems to be confirmed.

The general larger picture of the historical scene that the Old Testament presents seems to have been confirmed archaeologically. He says there can be no doubt about that, and he's not claiming that every detail has been confirmed or could be. But here's some interesting examples of how the Bible has, through archaeology, been confirmed to be historically accurate many times after a long period of skeptics saying it couldn't be right, and then they were embarrassed by later discoveries.

The Old Testament speaks frequently of a group of people called the Hittites. They were one of the many tribes of Canaanites that Joshua was to drive out of the land of Canaan. They were not all entirely driven out of Canaan.

Before the hostilities between the Hittites and the Jews arose, Abraham bought a field called Machpelah from Ephron, a Hittite. When you read of the sons of Heth, that's the Hittites in the Bible. You've probably read that recently in your Bible reading if you're keeping up.

And that was the Hittites that Abraham was dealing with there. Later on in the days of Joshua, the Hittites had wars with the Israelites because the Israelites came in to take their land away. Some of the Hittites survived, and even much later Bathsheba was married to a Hittite, Uriah the Hittite.

So for a very long period of Israel's history, over a thousand years, we know there were Hittites around. Abraham was 2,000 BC, David was 1,000 BC, and there were Hittites in both of their lives, and perhaps before and after that period too. The problem is, until a short time ago, a reasonably short time ago, in the last century, scholars were convinced that the Hittites never existed for the simple reason that archaeology had never unearthed any evidence of their civilization.

And therefore, being of this skeptical mindset, if we can't prove it true, it must be false, they said, well, the Hittites never existed. The Bible made them up. The story is

obviously fiction.

Whoever wrote those stories made them up to be part of players in a fictional account. But this is one of many occasions where the skeptics were embarrassed by later discovery. Through modern archaeological excavations, it's now possible to document over 1,500 years of Hittite civilization, which means, of course, that just in the last century, there has been a great deal of discovery of the land of the Hittites, and many artifacts, and many monuments, and many writings where their names are mentioned, and the details of their history are confirmed through archaeology.

So where the Bible was thought to be inaccurate by most scholars, it has been proven to be correct, at least in terms of the existence of this people. An interesting discovery was made in Pithom, an Egyptian city. According to Exodus, chapter 1, verse 11, Pithom and Ramesses were two Egyptian treasure cities that the pharaoh required the Israeli slaves to build, when the Jews were slaves in Egypt.

The pharaohs required them to build cities for them, and this city of Pithom was one of those cities. We read later in Exodus, chapter 5, that when Moses told Pharaoh to let the people go, Pharaoh said, you Jews must have too much time on your hands. If you want to talk about going out and worshipping your God, I must not be keeping you busy enough.

Therefore, I'm going to make you busier. They were making mud bricks, and straw was a component of the bricks to hold them together, and the pharaoh had up to this time been giving them straw. But he says, from now on, I want you to make the same number of bricks, but I'm not going to give you straw.

You get straw from wherever you can find it. And so the Bible records that the Israelites, they had to go out and pluck up grass and stuff and do whatever they could to get straw, and yet they had to keep up the same pace of production, which became impossible for them to do. Well, Pithom was excavated.

In 1883, Neville and in 1908, Kyle, two archaeologists, found at Pithom, the lower courses of brick of the city were filled with good chopped straw. The middle courses, meaning those that were a little higher on the wall, had less straw, and that was stubble plucked up by the root. In other words, it was grass plucked by the root.

And the upper courses of brick were pure clay, having no straw whatsoever. That is recorded in Haley's Bible handbook, page 120. So archaeologists found that the walls of this city correspond very closely to what we would expect if the Bible is true on this matter.

The lower layers of brick were laid earlier on when the Israelites had straw. There's plenty of good chopped straw in there. But as the city building progressed, they weren't

given straw, so they plucked up stuff by the roots and used it.

And eventually, apparently, they just couldn't keep up the production, so they just stopped putting straw in at all. And you can see it documented in the bricks. Now that doesn't prove, of course, everything in the book of Exodus, but it's an interesting incidental discovery that seems to confirm an incidental point.

It tends to indicate that the book of Exodus may be true even on the non-essential points that it records. On the matter of Moses' literacy, remember I said that Wellhausen and people in his day believed that Moses couldn't have written the Pentateuch because writing wasn't invented yet. Well, that's not correct.

Now it is known. This has been abundantly debunked today by archaeology. In 1901, J. De Morgan discovered at Susa a black stone containing the written legal code of Hammurabi, king of Babylonia, and that dates centuries prior to Moses' time.

It actually dates from the time of Abraham, 2000 BC. That's about probably at least 600 years before Moses. I've seen this stone.

It's in the British Museum. I had occasion to see it once when I was over there teaching, and it stands as I recall. They have it on a pedestal, so I forget exactly how high the stone is.

I think it's about as tall as this podium I'm standing by. It's sort of a cone-shaped, black, smooth, shiny stone with all these little inscriptions all the way around it. It contains the law code of an ancient Babylonian king named Hammurabi.

And it's writing. It's got writing. And this proved that the scholars were mistaken as to whether writing existed Moses' day.

It existed hundreds of years before Moses' day. A later discovery in 1929 of what's called the Ras Shamra texts date from exactly the same period as Moses and were found in Palestine, which proved that writing was known in Palestine in Moses' day, and obviously he could have known how to write. The Bible indicates that he was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

That says about that. He certainly would be literate. Writing was available to him, although the scholars once thought that wasn't true.

Once again, they were embarrassed by a later discovery. The evidence of the fall of the walls of Jericho is ambiguous. I've given you a quote here in your notes.

Since I wrote these notes, there has been uncertainty thrown on this data. In Joshua 6:20, it says that after the Israelites had marched around Jericho for seven days, on the seventh day they blew the trumpet and made a lot of shouting. And it says the walls of

Jericho fell down flat so that the people, meaning Israel, went up into the city every man straight ahead and they took the city.

In those days, lots of cities were walled. Almost all of them were. It's the only way to defend themselves against invasion.

And Jericho was no exception. It was the first Canaanite city that the Jews conquered when they came into the land of Canaan. And unlike most of the cities they later conquered, this one was conquered supernaturally.

God knocked the walls down, according to scripture, and the Israelites then went in and slaughtered the inhabitants. Now, early excavations at the city of Jericho by a man named John Garstang, who excavated in Jericho between 1930 and 1936, seemed to confirm what the Bible says about this. In his book, Joshua and Judges, on page 146, Garstang wrote, quote, as to the main fact then, there remains no doubt the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up over the ruins into the city.

Now, ordinarily, if the city walls are attacked from the outside and pummeled from the outside until they fall down, they would normally fall inward. You know, I mean, the pressure is coming from the outside. Garstang reported that the walls of Jericho fell outward.

And one could easily confirm this, you would think, by looking at the stones and how they were laying. If this is true, of course, then it leads to one of two conclusions. One is either God knocked the walls down, as the Bible says, or else the people in the city knocked their own walls down from the inside so that they could be invaded and butchered by the armies on the outside.

Knowing human nature, one would seem to think that the first of those alternatives is more likely. And therefore, it would perhaps confirm the biblical account. Doesn't prove it, but it would seem to move in the direction of confirmation.

Now, since the time of Garstang, who excavated Jericho from 1930 to 1936, a woman named Kathleen Kenyon excavated in Jericho also. She did some work there for about six years in the 50s, about 20 years after Garstang. And she, apparently not an evangelical, concluded that the story of Jericho couldn't be true, because she said that Jericho was destroyed too early, maybe even a couple centuries too early, for it to be done by Joshua or in Joshua's day.

She believed, let me see, I have some current information here. Let me give you here. Kenyon, that's Kathleen Kenyon, dated Jericho's destruction to 1570 BC.

That would be probably a couple hundred years too early to be done in the days of Joshua. And she says, this happened when the Egyptians kicked the Hyksos, which are a

ruling class in Egypt, out of their land and pursued them north to Jericho and beyond. While her early findings were published in journals and in a popular book on the subject, only recently has the technical report of her excavations been completed and published.

By studying it in detail, Bryant Wood, director of the Associates for Biblical Research, discovered evidence in her findings that sometimes contradicts her own conclusions. For example, one type of pottery she had unearthed was made for a limited time in the late 15th century, 150 years after Kenyon's 1570 date BC, and seals were found for pharaohs from 1570 to as late as Amenhotep III, who died in 1349 BC. Contrary to Kenyon's conclusions, these artifacts make dating Jericho's destruction feasible between the 15th and the 13th centuries, when most conservative scholars believe the Exodus occurred.

Now, if you got lost in that discussion, basically, as I was saying, Garstang's conclusions in the 30s seem to confirm the biblical account. Kenyon's discoveries at the same site, 20 years later, seem to say, nah, the destruction of the city was too early, a couple centuries too early. But now, only recently have her technical monographs and her technical data been analyzed, and her conclusions did not even agree with what she found.

And what she found proves that there was civilization there at Jericho way up, at least until 1349. That's at least 150 years longer than she thought, and brings it up into the period of time that its destruction apparently happened at the time that Joshua lived. So again, the evidence about Jericho is still disputed, but it seems as if maybe the final word is not in, but in general, much of the discovery seems to be favorable toward the biblical account of Jericho.

So, here's a very interesting example, at least I've always found it so, I never know what everyone else will find interesting. I've always thought this is fascinating. In Daniel chapter 5, we read of the fall of Babylon to the media Persians.

Darius the Mede comes in, and he conquers Babylon, kills the king, and takes the city. According to Daniel chapter 5, the king that was killed there when Babylon fell to the media Persian Empire was named Belshazzar. It's plain about this.

The name Belshazzar appears several times in the record. Now, there was a problem with this for a very long time, because the name Belshazzar was not known from any inscriptions or any historical documents, even from that, you know, about that period. The name Belshazzar was not known outside the Bible.

In fact, Daniel alone of all writers recorded the name Belshazzar, and the worst part was that there were other historians, ancient historians, who had lived about 300 years after the fall of Babylon. Herodotus, for example, and Thucydides, I think was another. These were Greek historians, but they recorded the fall of Babylon, and they indicated that when Babylon fell, the king of Babylon was someone named Nabonidus.

Now, Nabonidus is not the same name as Belshazzar, and therefore there appeared to be a conflict between what the Bible said about the fall of Babylon, and what other historians said. First of all, the name Belshazzar was not known from any findings outside of the Bible. And therefore, there was reason to doubt, the critics thought, that he ever existed.

Secondly, you had conflicting evidence from other historians that said that the king of Babylon at the time of fall was Nabonidus, and that's not the same person as Belshazzar, it would appear. Now, until 1853, no mention of Belshazzar was found in Babylonian records, and Nabonidus, who lived from 555 to 538 BC, was known to have been the last king of Babylon. To the critics, this was one of the evidences that the book of Daniel was not historical, but in 1853, an inscription was found in a cornerstone of a temple built by Nabonidus, in error to a god, which read, quote, may I Nabonidus, king of Babylon, not sin against thee, and may reverence for thee dwell in the heart of Belshazzar, my firstborn favorite son, unquote.

Now, obviously, in 1853, with the finding of this inscription, you have the first time that the name Belshazzar appears anywhere other than in the book of Daniel, which recorded it hundreds of years earlier. Because only Daniel had mentioned Belshazzar, of course, the critics assumed the man never existed, assuming that Daniel can't be true, unless we can confirm it from outside. Well, it became confirmed.

There was a man named Belshazzar. Nabonidus himself refers to him in an inscription and refers to him as my firstborn favorite son. Well, that's not all that's been found since then.

Nabonidus and Belshazzar and their careers have been documented from other findings since that time. It is now known that at the time of Babylon's fall, Nabonidus, the father, was in semi-retirement and living in Arabia. And his son Belshazzar had been left as king in the city of Babylon to rule in his absence.

So that was quite correct, both to say that Nabonidus was king and that Belshazzar was king. Herodotus said Nabonidus was. Daniel said Belshazzar was.

And both were correct. There were two kings. What's interesting about this is that the Bible shows, even in minute details, its accuracy in that in telling the story, Daniel says that when the writing appeared on the wall and Belshazzar was terrified and could not read it, and his wise men could not read it, he offered a reward to whoever could read the writing.

He says, I will make him third ruler in the kingdom. Now, the Bible doesn't give any clues why he would say third ruler because the Bible doesn't even mention Nabonidus. It just mentions Belshazzar.

Why not make him the second ruler? There's no explanation in the Bible, but now archaeology has explained that for us because Belshazzar himself was second ruler. He could only give as another position below himself third. So in a sense, the Bible and archaeology just kind of supplement each other.

They don't contradict each other. And what's ironic is how the scholars have never learned their lesson, that just because they have not yet found confirmation of something that the Bible says, they assume vehemently and dogmatically that this person never existed, this event never happened. And yet again and again their bold claims have been embarrassed by later discovery.

Same thing is true of Tiglath-Pileser. Tiglath-Pileser is the king of Assyria mentioned in 2 Kings 15:29 as the one who conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, taking many captives with him. A generation ago, critics argued that this king never existed.

Why? Well, they couldn't find any confirmation outside of the Bible that he existed. And obviously the fact that the Bible mentioned it couldn't be trusted. You couldn't just take it from the biblical writers, even though they were there.

If you couldn't confirm it from outside, then the Bible must be false, was their assumption. However, Tiglath-Pileser's capital city was excavated and his name was found pressed into clay tablets reading, quote, I Tiglath-Pileser, king of the Westlands, king of the earth, whose kingdom extends to the great sea, unquote. So, again, the critics were wrong and the Bible was right.

Tiglath-Pileser did exist and he was who the Bible says he was, even though the scholars for many decades denied it. Similar story exists for Sargon II, another king mentioned in the Bible only one place. Isaiah 20 verse 1 says, Sargon, king of Assyria, sent Tartan and fought against Ashdod and took it, unquote.

Well, in all ancient literature, this is the only mention of Sargon II and, of course, was once held to be a historical mistake in the Bible. I've got a quote here from Haley's Bible handbook. He says, quote, in 1842, Bata discovered the ruins of Sargon's palace in Khorzabad on the north edge of Nineveh, with treasures and inscriptions showing him to have been one of Assyria's greatest kings.

Yet his name had disappeared from history, save this lone mention in Isaiah, till Bata's discovery. So, from the time of Isaiah, 700 years before Christ, until 1842, there was no record of this, one of the greatest kings of Assyria, no record of his existence survived, except in one passage, and that passage happened to be in the Bible. Since that time, archaeology has confirmed it.

Here's sort of a sweeping statement about the Old Testament and its archaeological confirmation. Gleason Archer, in the Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties, made this

statement, quote, 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. Or even of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Yet all 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, unquote. That's a good summary statement of how the trend has gone. So, one begins to wonder about the security of these modern skeptical scholars who say, well, we have found no evidence of the Exodus, we found no evidence of this, of Joseph, we found no evidence of that, and yet, you know, they should learn from history.

That's their field, after all. They should look at recent history, for example, and see how their predecessors in biblical scholarship, the liberals who denied the veracity of scripture, have been again and again shown to be wrong for the simple reason that they took the same approach that the modern guys are taking. That if they can't find it, if they haven't found it, then let's not be true.

There are, in fact, a number of recent discoveries of interest that, although they don't straight out prove the Bible to be true, they all fall in line with what one would expect to find. Let me read a few paragraphs, if I could, since there's quite a bit here and I don't have it all memorized. This is out of the current issue of Christianity Today and the article I mentioned.

Let me give you a few things. Here, the names Yitzhak, which is Isaac, Yaakov, which is Jacob, Yosef, which is Joseph, and Yishmael, which is Ishmael, all begin with something linguists call the Amorite imperfective. They all start with a, what we call a Y sound.

Yeah. All these old names. Now, we don't have confirmation that these men existed from archaeology, but they, all these names, which are grouped together in a short period of history in Genesis, they all begin with the same linguistic feature, what's called the Amorite imperfective.

From studying lists of thousands of names found from the third millennium and later, Kenneth Kitchen shows that 55% of the names during the time of the patriarchs begin with the IY sound, but already by 1500 BC, the whole thing drops to a tiny percentage and never ceases dropping after that. Where Kitchen asks, did the fiction writers of the middle first millennium BC get these names if they were composing their biblical novelists as thousands or more years after the names had fallen from popular use? To summarize, what he just said is that those names are very typical of the kinds of names that proliferated in the period that these men are said to have lived in the Bible. But that feature at the beginning of names, which exist in 55% of the thousands of names looked at in that period, almost disappears as early as 1500 BC, which is around the time of the Exodus.

So the names of these men, Jacob, Ishmael, Isaac, Joseph, they all begin in the with this letter and they all lived before the Exodus. And during that period of time, about 55% of the names known from that period do start that way. If these stories were made up stories made up thousands of years later, he says, how would the fiction writer in the fifth century BC, 450 BC, how would he know these names? How would he know this feature of these names? It's more or less a confirmation, although of course it doesn't specifically prove that those exact men existed.

Certainly moves in that direction. Abraham and later Isaac made a treaty with King Abimelech and Jacob made a treaty with Laban. Kitchen says, I have over 90 documents of ancient treaties and covenants to compare from 2600 BC down to 600 BC.

And there is no room for a mistake here. The treaties he explains, take distinctive forms over the centuries with oaths and curses and stipulations being presented in different orders and being given different emphases. The ones which Abimelech and Abraham made and that Laban made with Jacob fit precisely the structure of the treaties from the middle of the second millennium, but not neither later nor earlier ones.

In other words, the, the content in Genesis of the treaties made with Abraham and Abimelech on one hand and Jacob and Laban on the other hand, they fit exactly the structure of treaties known to have been made in that area in that period, but they don't fit the structure of treaties made in an earlier or later period. So again, it's sort of a, sort of a accidental confirmation of the Bible. Here's another one.

Genesis 37, 28 states that Joseph was sold by his brothers to slave traders on their way to Egypt for 20 silver shekels. Tracking the price of slaves sold from 2400 BC to 400 BC using extra biblical sources, I mean, sources outside the Bible, Kenneth Kitchen finds that this amount matches exactly the going price in the 18th century BC. That is 20 shekels for a slave is exactly what slaves sold for at the time when Joseph allegedly lived.

But then it says steady inflation had driven it up to 30 shekels by the 13th century BC, which corresponds to Exodus 2130 or Exodus 2132, which actually places the price of the slave at 30 shekels. It went up to 50 shekels in the eighth century, which corresponds to second Kings 1520 and to nearly a hundred shekels soon after the exile in the sixth century. Now, soon after the exile in the sixth century is when the critics believe this story of Genesis was actually written.

But in the days of those men, slaves were selling for a hundred shekels, but Genesis says that Joseph was sold for 20 shekels, which archeology proves is exactly the amount slaves were sold during that time. So, I mean, you've got these various confirmations. I'm going to skip over some of this.

Let me see here. There's some real interesting stuff. If you want to read more, this

article has a great deal in it.

Kitchen says that the reason he believes that there's no surviving evidence of the Exodus or of Joseph is, there's two reasons. He says one, that archeology finds either inscriptions in stone monuments or else they find papyrus, which are written sort of paper products. And the story of Joseph would probably be written in papyrus, but his realm of operation was down in the Nile Delta where it's very wet.

And papyrus doesn't last very well. The papyrus that has survived from ancient times has been in the Dead Sea and other of the driest spots on the earth where they don't mold and mildew and stuff like that. And he thinks that if there were papyrus records of Joseph, we'll probably never find them.

They probably would not have survived. He says, as far as monuments are concerned, we don't expect to ever find a monument confirming the Exodus because most monuments only recollect stories that are famous, positive stories in the history of the nation. Things that the nation feels they want to boast about to later generations.

The Exodus would have been an embarrassment to them and we would not expect them to inscribe on stone anything about that. Now that may just seem like a ploy to squirm out from under the lack of direct evidence about the Exodus, but it is not an unreasonable suggestion. It's interesting, a surviving Egyptian document called the Laden Papyrus 348.

In that document, orders are given, quote, to distribute grain rations to the soldiers and to the Aperu who transport stones to the great pylon of Rameses, unquote. Now Rameses is one of the cities that Exodus says the Israelites built for the Egyptians. Scholars disagree among themselves, but many believe that the Aperu is an Egyptian form of the word Hebrew.

And if so, I can't prove this, but if so, then this confirms that the Hebrews were building the city of Rameses and in this Egyptian papyrus has been found to confirm that. There's more here, much more, but I'm going to continue to skip. In fact, I won't give any more from this article because we're going to run out of time, but there's quite a bit here.

It's a very good, thorough article. I would also point out that very recently, 1993, excavations found the only, or the first, known archaeological reference to King David. Believe it or not, many modern scholars have been denying not only that these ancient guys, Abraham and Moses existed, some of them even denied that David and Solomon existed.

However, they have now found David's name, the House of David is a term that's found on an inscription in Dan. Excavations were made there just a few years ago and it was found in 1993. I remember when it was in the news because no one had ever found any

excavations that mentioned David before, but now we know that there was a David.

He was the king at that period of time. Also, although Solomon's name has not been found, several recent references to King Solomon and his temple have surfaced in antiquities markets, let's say I'm reading here, and gained the attention of the academic world. One is a receipt for a donation to the House of Yahweh, which may date as early as the 9th century BC when Solomon's temple still stood in all its glory.

Another is the seal with Solomon's name on it. That could very well date to the 10th century BC when Solomon still lived. I was mistaken when I said that Solomon's actual name was not found.

It has been found, but they have found more than one way to confirm Solomon's existence. Now, these details I don't give in order to say we have therefore proven the Bible is correct. All we can say is we have proven the Bible is often correct, at least as often as can be confirmed.

It has never been shown to be incorrect. That's the most important point. We do not expect every detail ever to be proven to be correct from external witness, but it would be very important if anyone found it to be incorrect by some external witness, but there is none.

And the times when scholars once thought that external witnesses did conflict with the Bible, they turned out to be wrong, and the Bible turned out to be right by later discovery. Now, moving to the New Testament and its historical accuracy, which by the way is perhaps far more of interest to us as Christians, let's talk about the historical validity of the life of Christ, which is found in the four Gospels, and of course there are allusions to it both in Acts and the Epistles as well. There are few, very few, bold enough to assert that Jesus of Nazareth never existed, and that he's a fiction concocted by the real founders of Christianity, whoever they might have been.

One of those people who has taught that Jesus never existed is Madeline Murray O'Hare, a very unintelligent woman in my judgment, the founder of the American Atheist Society, and I don't call her unintelligent just because she's an atheist. There are atheists who have brains. She just doesn't appear to be one of them.

To hear her speak on radio talks as if she talks as if she doesn't know anything and can't think. She's a very troubled woman too. Her son, who was raised an atheist with her, became an evangelical Christian some years ago to her chagrin.

It is the official position of the American Atheist Society that Jesus never existed as a historical character. Now it seems that if someone wants to debunk Christianity, they don't have to go so far and say there never was a Jesus. Even the liberal scholars of the Jesus Seminar, who aren't Christians, some of them don't even believe in God, they don't

claim Jesus never existed.

They know that you don't have such a widespread belief in an individual so shortly after his lifetime if he never existed. But you're not going to find many people, and the ones you find will not have very much in the way of brains and very much in the way of assessing evidences. I don't say that to be abusive.

I just say that as a matter of my opinion from examining those few that I've met who say that, who say Jesus never existed. But of course there are many who would say that Jesus, who did exist, was not necessarily the Jesus that we read of in the Gospels. It is thought by many that the Gospels were written maybe as much as a century after Jesus by a much later generation who never knew him at a time when belief in Jesus had evolved somewhat in the church and maybe developed into myths and legends about him had come up.

And although he had never ever claimed to be God, eventually by the time of the second century, Christians were claiming he was God. So they began to put words into his mouth and he never said the claim to be God and so forth. I mean, this is the way that some liberals talk.

They have no real evidence of this. This is their preference. And this is where the Jesus Seminar begins their inquiry.

They don't conclude that. They start with that as their premise, which is kind of silly, it seems to me, if you're trying to be a scholar. And they do call themselves scholars.

To deny the historical existence of Jesus Christ is to expose one's rank ignorance of historical sources. The Gospels of the New Testament were in circulation well within the lifetime of many who would have been Christ's contemporaries in Palestine. Yet it is noteworthy that no one, not even the most hostile of the enemies of Christianity, ever challenged the historical reality of Jesus.

Now, we know that the Gospels were in circulation within the lifetime of many of those people. Even some liberal scholars who always like to late-date things have suggested, like John A.T. Robinson, a liberal scholar, wrote a book called *Redating the New Testament*, where he gave very strong evidence that every book in the New Testament was written before 70 A.D. Now, his views are not universally held among scholars, but there's good reason to believe them. And I don't have time right now, in the little bit of time we have left, to go through all the evidence for an early date of the Gospels.

But it is, to my mind, impressive. In fact, it is certain that at least some of the Gospels were written before 70 A.D., and that's well within the lifetime of people who lived and would have seen Jesus. It's within the lifetime of the Apostles themselves, some of them.

Now, in fact, Jesus said some of them would not taste death before this date, and they

didn't. Now, if you're circulating throughout Palestine and throughout the Roman Empire, biographies about an individual who never existed, and people who lived at the time when he allegedly existed, read these things, they say, wait a minute, I grew up in Nazareth, I never heard of this guy, this Jesus guy. I never knew this person.

Or this guy who allegedly preached to multitudes on the hillsides of Galilee. I lived in that region, Capernaum, where the center of his activity, I never saw that. I never heard of this person.

No one has ever come forward to say, no, I was there, he wasn't. And it seems like with the great hostility that existed toward Christianity in its early days, in the time of the Apostles, who were contemporaries of Jesus, and therefore, their listeners were contemporaries of Jesus. The Jews or the Romans or someone who wanted to stand up for Christianity would have certainly brought up some contrary testimony if the stories were not historically accurate.

You just don't get away with this kind of a hoax when there's so many witnesses to the period who would have known that it happened or didn't. There are, let's see here, there are other contemporary historians, not Christian, but not particularly hostile either, who affirm the existence of Christ. We know that Jesus existed from sources outside the Bible who were not Christians.

These include Josephus, the Jewish historian, who wrote during the latter part of the first century. He was born, actually born in Jerusalem just a few years after Jesus died, and therefore, he was very close to being a contemporary of Jesus. And he wrote significant historical information about the period, and he mentions Jesus.

He does not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but he mentions him. He even mentions his miracles. He mentions John the Baptist, and he mentions Jesus' brother James in his various writings.

I've given you some references in your notes. Another historian, a Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus, the greatest Roman historian in the days of the empire, wrote around 110 AD, and he also confirms that there was a Jesus who was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius Caesar in Annals 1544. Another major Roman historian of the early period, Suetonius, wrote around 120 AD, and he, from records that were available to him from annals of the Romans, could confirm that Christianity was in Rome as early as 50 AD.

Now, Rome's pretty far from Jerusalem. Within 20 years of the crucifixion of Jesus, the belief that Jesus had died and risen again had been spread all the way from Palestine to Rome, and there were Christians there. How does, if a man never existed, how does belief that he did exist permeate the whole Roman empire within 20 years of his alleged death? There's too many living witnesses still at that time who could prove it wrong if it

was not true.

For more details, see FF Bruce in his book, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* There is more detail, and I could give it, but we want to move along and get through this material. I want to talk about Luke's accuracy, because Luke is the most significant historian in the New Testament. He wrote not only the book of Luke, one of the longest Gospels, but he also wrote the book of Acts.

So, he is the principal historian of the New Testament. Luke was one time accused of inaccuracy in Luke 3.1, where he made reference to Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene, or Abilene, ruling at the beginning of John the Baptist ministry in 27 AD. Critics said the man never existed.

The only Lysanias known to the historians was King Lysanias, who was executed by Antony at Cleopatra's instigation in 36 BC, much too early to be the man mentioned by Luke. So, Luke was thought to be inaccurate, because, once again, they had not found evidence of this Lysanias that he mentions. Then was found a Greek inscription from Abila, from which Abilene takes its name.

This inscription contained a reference to Lysanias, the tetrarch. The inscription dated between 14 and 29 AD, just the period that John the Baptist began his ministry, and therefore seemed to confirm Luke. Although, again, just like some of his Old Testament references, the critics had held Luke guilty until proven innocent.

Well, he was proven innocent. Luke's correct use of political titles, which varied from time to time and place to place throughout the Roman Empire, has often impressed historians. Luke consistently refers to Asiarchs and Tetrarchs, proconsuls, etc., by the proper titles.

Luke used the term Politarchs to denote the civil authorities of Thessalonica in Acts 17.6. Since the term Politarch was unknown in classical literature, this was considered by critics to be an error on Luke's part. Today, however, some 19 inscriptions have been found that use this title, five of which are in reference to Thessalonica. So, once again, the trend continues, always the same direction.

Confirmation, confirmation. You're not finding any archaeological debunking of the Bible. It's always the other way.

In Acts 28.7, Luke speaks of Publius, the chief man of Malta, and he calls him the first man of the island. Inscriptions have now been found which give this same man the title First Man. Turns out that that was the office he held.

It was called the First Man of the Island. The inscriptions prove it, and that's exactly what Luke called him. It's obvious that Luke wasn't written by someone who wasn't really there, writing later fiction.

I mean, he knew the right titles for these specific geographic areas for the officers and so forth, something that a later writer would be unlikely to know. E. M. Blake Locke, professor of classics at Auckland University in New Zealand, in his commentary on Acts of the Apostles, he wrote this, quote, readers with some knowledge of the ancient history often have occasion to note Luke's careful writing. Acts 13.7 is an example.

Acts 13.7 mentions a proconsul named Paulus in Cyprus that Paul and Barnabas encountered on their first missionary journey. He says, in 22 BC, Augustus made Cyprus a senatorial province. It was therefore governed by a proconsul or deputy.

The name of a proconsul called Paulus has been discovered in North Cypriot inscription. Luke is a consummate historian, to be arranged in his own right with the great writers of the Greeks, unquote. In other words, again and again, archaeologists have found inscriptions and monuments that confirm what Luke said.

Luke didn't bend over backward to prove that what he was saying was true. He just reported and his reports are again and again confirmed. He's ranked with the best historians there are in terms of his careful work and his accuracy.

Sir William Ramsey, who is an archaeologist and at one time was a skeptic about the reliability of the book of Acts as history, in his book, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, wrote this, Luke should be placed along with the very greatest of historians. Another writer, W.T. Dayton, in the *Zonovan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* wrote, Luke was an able and deliberate historian, writing more than one-fourth of the volume of the New Testament, more than any other man. Modern research has vindicated the quality of his work.

Now there is one case where Luke is still thought maybe to be wrong because there's been no proof of his being correct and that is in Acts 5.36 and 37, Luke records an alleged speech by Gamaliel in the Sanhedrin and in that place Gamaliel mentions two movements that arose before the time of Christianity. Remember Gamaliel's speech how he said, you know, this movement if it's not of God it'll fade out. Well, he gave two previous examples of movements that were not of God and faded out on their own and he's trying to make his point.

He mentioned someone named Thutis who had risen up sometime or another and had some followers and they faded out and then he mentions later Judas. Now this Judas is known to us from history as Judas of Galilee. He's not known in the Bible.

He's the founder of the Zealot Movement. But Gamaliel mentions Judas and his movement but he mentions an earlier movement under someone named Thutis. Now the problem here is that we have no archaeological evidence or historical evidence from outside of the Bible that there was a man named Thutis who led a movement before Judas of Galilee.

Judas of Galilee was in 6 AD. Now there is a Thutis mentioned in Josephus from a later period, 45 AD and critics of the Bible said, ah, Luke made a mistake here. You see, he thinks that Thutis was before Judas and he puts it into an artificial made-up speech that he says Gamaliel made that Thutis had arisen.

But Gamaliel made the speech in 35 AD. Thutis didn't even live to 45 AD so Luke really made a blunder here. Now here's a quote that I like very much from Clark Pinnock.

I like it so much I included it in its entirety though it's kind of long. In his book, *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility*, Clark Pinnock made this observation. Quote, both consulman and henchman, these are liberal critics, Germans, discover in Acts 5, 36 and 37, a definite error in historical order given to Thutis and Judas.

Since Josephus dates of Thutis in AD 45, a full decade after Gamaliel's speech in Acts. In other words, Luke made a double mistake, a gross anachronism, which is where you place something in the wrong time period, and a faulty order. Such a conclusion does not jive with our knowledge of Luke's general trustworthiness elsewhere.

Is it not more probable that Luke is referring to another man named Thutis, otherwise unknown to us, who lived before Judas? It seems uncommonly bold to jettison the accuracy of Luke and the inerrancy of the Bible on the mere supposition that Josephus is always right, and that no evidence could possibly turn up to clear Luke's reputation. While insisting on their right to treat the Bible, quote, like any other book, unquote, some critics proceed to treat it like no other book by bathing it in the acid solution of their skepticism and historical pessimism, unquote. That is, once again, Clark Pinnock often says it exactly like it is.

He's a scholar of high rank, and he assesses the scholarly world quite accurately. They say, well, we need to be critical of the Bible, because the Bible, we shouldn't treat it sacrosanctly. We should treat it like any other ancient book, and we should critique it like we would any other ancient book.

He says that's what they say they do. But what they actually do is they treat it like they treat no other ancient book. They don't come to the writings of Homer with the same skepticism that they come to the Bible.

Why? Because Homer's doesn't challenge their lifestyle. Homer doesn't convict them of their sin. They can let Homer stand unchallenged.

The Bible, however, if it's true, condemns their lives, condemns their pride, condemns their choices. And therefore, of course, whether they're aware of it or not, there is this additional motive that is at work that makes the Bible different in the way they assess it than other books. Just something about Paul's accuracy.

Paul mentions in Romans 16, 23, which was written from Corinth, that a man named

Erastus was the treasurer of Corinth and had become a Christian. He's also mentioned in 2 Timothy 4, 20. Twice Paul mentions this man.

During excavations in Corinth in 1929, a pavement was found with the inscription, quote, Erastus, curator of public buildings, laid this pavement at his own expense, unquote. So we seem to have external confirmation even of the existence of this man, Erastus, who was the treasurer of Corinth in Paul's day and later became a Christian. Let's summarize what we've been saying and we're going to close down this session.

I'll summarize with some important quotes. This comes from Miller Burroughs. This man is a non-evangelical.

He does not believe in the inspiration of scripture. He's a Yale archaeologist and he wrote a book called *What Mean These Stones?* On page one, he said, quote, 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, unquote.

Of course, more than one, one who did was W.F. Albright. He was a skeptic until he did excavations in Palestine, but Miller Burroughs says that more than one archaeologist has had that experience, that their confidence in the historicity of scripture has been strengthened as they discovered things. Not because they were evangelicals and had to believe in the inspiration of scripture, but because they were convinced by the evidence they unearthed.

Another important witness is Dr. Nelson Gleck. He's widely recognized as the dean of Palestinian archaeologists. He's the president of the Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Institute of Religion.

In his book *Rivers in the Desert*, page 31, Dr. Nelson Gleck said, quote, it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And by the same token, proper evaluation of biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries, unquote.

Now, unless this man's lying, and by the way, it could easily be proved if he was. I mean, if people say, hey, wait a minute, Nelson, you forgot about this discovery. How come you're making this sweeping statement? He's speaking as an expert and no one has refuted him.

There has not been one archaeological find that has controverted a biblical reference, that has proved it wrong or contradicted it. The only reason anyone still has skeptical is because they haven't been able to confirm everything. There's nothing that's been found to contradict the Bible.

And again and again, things are found to confirm it. Sir Frederick Kinman, former director of the British Museum, in the book *The Bible and Archaeology*, wrote, 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 cannot but gain from an increase in knowledge, it suggests that it is true.

A superstition does not gain by an increase in knowledge. The more you learn, the more superstitions fade away because increase in knowledge tells you they're not true. But Sir Frederick Kinman says, you know, the trend here is clear.

You can't miss it. The more we learn, the more the Bible is confirmed. And we could suggest, therefore, that the Bible has nothing but to gain by the increase of knowledge.

The Bible doesn't have to hope that people stop digging before they find something to contradict it. They're not going to. That has been clearly proven from the past.

Let me read one more quote that's actually on page 10 of your notes. I'm skipping to it. We'll close this session with this quote.

Time magazine, about 25 years ago, had a cover story on the Bible. And it was talking about what archaeologists had done and so forth. This is December 30th, 1974, Time magazine.

And that cover story in the Bible, after surveying, you know, the status of archaeological discovery and so forth, the article closed with these words, quote. Now, by the way, Time magazine is not an evangelical journal. It's a very liberal anti-God magazine.

But it says, quote, after two, 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 the attack, unquote. In other words, the attack was launched two centuries ago.

Now that all these discoveries have been made and the rationalists have tried to prove the Bible wrong, and the dust settles, what's left? The Bible still stands actually more credible than before they started attacking it.