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Authority of Scripture: A Survey



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Authority of Scripture: A Survey" by Steve Gregg, the author argues that the Bible is the final authority for Christians, containing the revealed mind of God. While younger generations may reject the Bible due to a lack of understanding and cultural indoctrination, the authors of the Bible were likely eyewitnesses to the events they wrote about. The Bible's historical claims, particularly those of Jesus dying and resurrecting, suggest they are credible, and while the Bible includes stories of miracles, they are not present throughout the entire text.

Transcript

Why should we talk about the scriptures? Well, I'm going to be talking at the moment about the authority of scripture, and that means I need to define my terms. What do we mean by authority? Authority means the right to make decisions, the right to govern. A parent has authority over his or her children in the home.

The owner of a business has authority over the employees that they hire. Obviously, government officials have some authority over the citizenry, and authority just means that that person or that thing is the one that everyone answers to legitimately. I say legitimately because there are people like Diotrefes, that's mentioned in 3 John, who loved to have the preeminence and liked to be the boss and liked to pretend to authority, but John, who wrote to Gaius about him, said, don't follow him.

He's not the real deal. There are people who pretend to have authority. It's interesting, when Jesus was preaching in Capernaum, the first time he went into a synagogue that we read about in Mark's Gospel, it says that as he preached, the people in the synagogue were astonished because he spoke as one who has authority and not as the scribes.

Now, the scribes were the ones who usually taught them, the rabbis who taught them in the synagogues on a regular basis. They'd heard a lot of them, but Jesus, they were hearing for the first time and he didn't talk like them. He spoke as one who has authority.

Now, to speak as one who has authority doesn't mean you do have authority. I've had people tell me all kinds of things that they assert to be true, and they sound very authoritative, but they don't know what they're talking about. To speak as if you have authority doesn't mean you do.

To speak authoritatively doesn't mean you pound the pulpit or that you shout or you do anything like that. That might make you sound impressive, but your authority may be zero. You may not have any authority to speak on a subject at all.

There are many subjects I have absolute zero authority to speak about because I have no knowledge of them. Jesus spoke as one who had authority, and they marveled that he did so because most of their teachers didn't dare to do that when they're talking about the things of God. They spoke more mealy-mouthed, a little more like me.

You know, well, some people think this, some people think that, some people think that. There's all these different views. I kind of lean this way.

That's how the rabbis taught too. They didn't speak as saying this is the way it is. You know, when Jesus spoke, he said, you've heard that it was said an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, but I say to you, turn the other cheek.

You've heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you, if a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he commits adultery with her in his heart. He says, you've heard this from the teachers and even from the Old Testament law, but I'm saying this. He spoke as if he had authority that no others had.

Now what's interesting is that in that same story I was mentioning earlier in Mark, it says the people marveled that he spoke as one who had authority. And the next thing we read about is a demon-possessed man jumped up and began causing a scene in the synagogue. And Jesus said to the demon, come out of that man immediately.

And the demon came out of him and the man was set free. And then it says, then the people were even more astonished. And they said, what kind of teaching is this? For with authority, he commands even the evil spirits in the old man.

In other words, they noticed first that he was talking like somebody as if he had authority, but did he? Who knows? Then he cast his demon out and said, well, he does have authority. Even the demons recognize his authority. Well, the demons have to recognize his authority.

Unfortunately, sometimes his people don't. But to recognize the authority of Christ means that we recognize he is the final arbiter on all matters. And in saying that, I have just assumed a certain definition of what it means to be a Christian.

Because I do know people who call themselves Christians, but to let Jesus be the final

arbiter on all matters is simply not their intention. They would like to have a ticket to heaven, I suppose, but they would not like to have a king or a Lord. But Jesus is the Lord of everything.

Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Now to say that someone's in authority, as I said, means that they have the right to make the decisions, the right to rule. It's not the same thing as power.

A man may have the power to enforce his will on other people, but he may just be a bully. He may have no authority, no right to do it. Anyone who's bigger than you can pick on you, but that doesn't mean they have the right to do it.

It means they're just asserting their superior strength. When a policeman stands in front of traffic and directs it and puts up his hand, a semi truck stops. The policeman doesn't have the power to stop that truck, but he's got the authority to do it.

It's the right. It's the intrinsic right to make the decisions that is what authority is. Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and the son of the Holy spirit and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. Now that's how you make disciples. A disciple is a Christian and a Christian is a disciple.

Christians are made disciples by being taught to observe everything Jesus commanded. Jesus said in another place, but that was by the way, that was at the end of Matthew and Matthew 28 verses 18 through 20, but in an earlier place in his ministry in John 8, 31, Jesus said, if you continue in my words, then you are my disciples. Indeed.

So a true disciple is a true Christian and a person who's a true Christian is one who continues in what Jesus said, recognizing his absolute authority and being intending at least to let him make all the decisions for them. Now let's face it. Many people who go forward in an altar call have never decided to do that.

They've just been told if you just say a prayer and raise your hand and go forward, then when you die, you go to heaven. Isn't that all that's involved? Well, no, there's more than that. If you happen to do all that, you're saying you're signing up, signing up for what? To be a slave, to be owned by Jesus Christ.

He's, you've been bought with a price. You're not your own if you're a master, you embrace him as King and Lord, or you don't become a Christian at all. Now, some people would challenge that definition, but you can't do it biblically.

Now, how do I know what Jesus wants? Well, that's what, that's where the Bible comes in. First of all, we have the gospels, not first in order of the arrangement of the canon of

scripture, but we do have in first importance, we have the story and teachings of Jesus himself. In the four gospels, we have his teachings.

Then we have also the teachings of the apostles, and that's what we have in the remainder of the New Testament. After the gospels, we have the writings of the apostles, and Jesus said about the apostles in John 13 20, he said, whoever receives him that I send, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives him that sent me.

Now, you can't receive God without receiving Jesus, who was sent by God, and you can't receive Christ without receiving the apostles that he sent. The word apostle means sent ones, that's the Greek word *apostolos*, one who is sent. And he's speaking to the apostles, says whoever receives one who I've sent, receives me.

So, if Jesus sent somebody as an apostle, and not very many people are sent as apostles, but we know of at least 12 or 13 or so in the New Testament who Christ sent as apostles, and many of them wrote books of the New Testament. And all the books of the New Testament were either written by men who were apostles, or else who were very close to the apostles. So close, in fact, that it can be rightly assumed they couldn't write their books without the apostles' oversight.

Luke and Mark, I'm thinking of primarily, Mark traveled with Peter, and it is said that Mark's gospel is actually the gospel according to Peter, which Mark translated from Aramaic to Greek, hearing Peter preach it. Luke traveled with Paul up until the time of Paul's death, and he also knew all the other apostles, because Paul did too, and they traveled together. So, Luke and Mark are the two guys who weren't apostles, who wrote significant books of the New Testament, but they were so close to apostles, it is assumed they were apostolic men.

They could not possibly have written their books without the oversight and endorsement of the apostles that they traveled with. Now, therefore, when we have the writings of apostles, we have the writings of those that Jesus sent, and to receive one that he sent is to receive him. It's as good as if it was in the Gospels.

What about the Old Testament? Well, Jesus said something about that too. Jesus often quoted from the Old Testament. Actually, he quoted it to back himself up, as if his credibility rested somewhat on the agreement of his teachings with the Old Testament.

He often would say to his critics, have you not read? And he'd quote something from the Old Testament. Or go and learn what this means, and he quotes the Old Testament. And Jesus is continually affirming the Old Testament.

He said, if you had received Moses, you would have received me at the end of John chapter nine. But he says, if you don't receive Moses' words, how can you receive my words? He said that all the law and the prophets would be fulfilled by him. Well, you

wouldn't think he'd see it necessary to fulfill scriptures that were of no value or not valid.

The law and the prophets he considered to be, and also the Psalms, he said. By the way, the Psalms, of all the Old Testament books, none is quoted more frequently by the apostles than the Psalms. They found more in the Psalms that correspond with the life and teaching of Jesus than anywhere else in the Old Testament.

What we mean is that Jesus is the center of all authority, and everything he enforced, everything he endorsed, we must accept. He endorsed his apostles, so the entire New Testament, which was written by them, is as if he'd written it. The Old Testament he endorsed also, but in its own place.

He did say that the law and the prophets would be fulfilled. He was going to fulfill them. He said he didn't come to destroy them, but to fulfill them.

So they're not going to be destroyed, but they are going to be fulfilled, he says. And he did fulfill them. We know that because he said not one jot or tittle of the law will pass until it's all fulfilled, okay? Not one bit of the law will pass away until all of it's fulfilled.

Has any bit of the law passed away? Anyone here still going to the temple and offering sacrifices on a regular basis? That's a major part of the law. That's more than a jot or a tittle. That's passed away.

Jesus said what goes into a man's mouth doesn't defile him, so it says he declared all foods clean. That's another jot and tittle of the law that's passed. Jesus said not one jot or tittle will pass until it's all fulfilled.

So it's clear if those things have passed, as they have, circumcision, is that mandatory anymore? Read Galatians if you think it is. Those things have passed. What's that mean? It means that all the law has been fulfilled.

But what's that mean? Well, Jesus said, and Paul agreed with him, that if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbors yourself, you fulfill the law. The law was given by God. Jesus recognized the law of Moses, the Psalms, the prophets, and so forth, all as given by God and all necessary to be fulfilled, and he came to fulfill them.

That means he recognized the divine authorship of all of them. It doesn't mean that everything in the law is still pertinent to us because some of that's the old covenant which was fulfilled. Now there's a new covenant, but that was even predicted in the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 31 predicted that there'd be a new covenant and that it would not be like the old covenant. In Jeremiah 31, verses 31 through 34, Jesus in the upper room with his disciples said, this cup is the new covenant. There's a new covenant now.

The writer of Hebrews correctly deduces where there's a new covenant, the old is defunct, the old is obsolete. So we're not under the old covenant, but that doesn't mean it wasn't from God. That doesn't mean that Moses and the prophets didn't speak under inspiration as they claimed to.

Jesus believed they did. And so Jesus even said in Luke 24 that all things that were written by me in the law of Moses and the Psalms and the prophets had to be fulfilled. So everything in the Old Testament he saw as divinely mandated to be fulfilled in himself.

That would suggest if he authorized or endorsed, not necessarily all the laws are still valid and binding in the new covenant, but he endorsed the divine authorship of the Old Testament, and he certainly did. And then we have the Gospels and the epistles written by the apostles whom he ordained. That makes up the whole Bible.

That means that if we rightly study the whole Bible, we can rightly understand what Jesus believed to be what God had to say to us and what Jesus himself wanted to say to us. So we have the scriptures and they are the written repository of the Word of God. Now I had someone call me once years ago and say, why do you say the Bible is the Word of God when the Bible says Jesus is the Word? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus is the Word. Why do you say the Bible is the Word of God? And I thought that was an interesting question. I was raised a Christian and I always believed that the Bible is the Word of God, so I decided after that person asked me that to look it up.

And the truth is the expression Word of God is found quite a few times in the Bible, but you can never expressly identify any of those usages with a reference to the written Bible. For example, when in the New Testament, whenever it talks about the Word of God, it says, you know, Peter went to this town and preached the Word of God. Paul went to this town and preached the Word of God.

He wasn't preaching the New Testament, it wasn't written yet. He may have preached the Old Testament some, but he was preaching the gospel. And usually the gospel is what's called the Word of God, but there's nothing wrong with referring to the Bible as the Word of God since it was inspired by God.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. If you have mastered the scripture, or maybe it's better to say if the scripture has mastered you, then you are equipped and complete for every good work that God has for you to do. That's what Paul said, because it's inspired by God.

Peter said in 2 Peter chapter 1 in verse 19, he said, knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture, it means the Old Testament prophets, no prophecy of the scripture comes from anyone's private interpretation, but rather holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. So Jesus and the apostles made it very clear that the Old Testament scriptures are scripture inspired by God, so there's really no part of the Bible that a Christian who believes in Jesus is at liberty to discount. Yes, we can look back and say, okay, Leviticus says I have to offer all these sacrifices.

Well, that's the old covenant. We're not under the old covenant, but it was a covenant that God made. See, there are people today who argue that God really didn't tell them to do those archaic barbarian things, to kill the Amalekites, to kill the Canaanites, to stone people who did such and such things.

The true God would never tell people to do that. That was just Moses' idea. That was just Joshua's idea.

Well, according to the New Testament writers, including Jesus, those were prophets of God who spoke for God, and like Jesus said, if you don't receive Moses' words, how can you believe mine? Well, that's a good question. If Moses was not speaking from God as he claimed to be, then maybe Jesus isn't either, because Moses spoke about him, and one reason we know that Jesus is who he said he was, one reason is because he fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. So what I'm saying to you is that the scriptures contain the revealed mind of God.

Jesus is the word of God made flesh, but he's not walking among us in the same sense as he was 2,000 years ago, but the word of God has also been preserved for us in his teachings, in his disciples' teachings, and even in the Old Testament teachings insofar as we understand them as he did. Remember, it says in Luke 24, I believe it's verse 44, it says that after his resurrection, Jesus met with his apostles in the upper room. It says, then he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.

This would be the Old Testament scriptures. There were no New Testament scriptures yet. So Jesus opened his disciples' understanding to understand correctly the Old Testament scriptures.

Therefore, what they thought the scriptures mean when they wrote and quoted them was coming from what Jesus inspired them to recognize them to mean. So to understand the Old Testament in light of the new is to continue to recognize the teaching of Jesus, because Jesus taught the Old Testament too. So that's why I would say the Bible is, like Jesus himself, the final authority.

It derives its authority from him. After all, he is the eternal word. Insofar as the Bible is the word of God, it is simply the word that's been inscripturated, written down.

Jesus is the word who was with God from the beginning, through whom all things were made, and who was made flesh and dwelt among us 2,000 years ago. The scriptures, then, are the final authority on things. Now, I want to just say this.

Many people today assume the scriptures are not true, and that's just because of the mood of our age. I just want to tell you something. When I was younger, just a generation ago, most people who were educated and decent folks assumed that the Bible was the word of God.

Most people were professing Christians in the United States, at least. Some of them didn't live by it, but they had a high regard for it. I remember a young man my age, when we were teenagers, he got saved in the Jesus movement, and he said, you know, back when I was an unbeliever, whenever I'd watch Billy Graham on television, whenever he said, the Bible says, he said, that just gripped me.

When he said, the Bible says, he said, I knew that was something. Now, today, if you tell a kid, the Bible says, it doesn't faze them at all. Why? Because there's been about 30 or 40 years of indoctrination, not just in schools, but very largely from a miscommunicated research, from popular media, the Da Vinci Code, for example, or Zeitgeist, the internet video, are things that basically undermine the true stories of Christ in the Bible.

Or there's these, you know, National Geographic and the History Channel always have these documentaries showing that the Exodus never happened, and that, you know, the things the creation is not a true story. That's been, we now understand evolution to be the correct explanation. And so we have all this indoctrination that kids have received, and then, even more important than that, for the younger generation who don't really have usually, now, younger people here, don't be offended I say this, if you're an exception, but the millennials and younger people in general today, they're not looking for evidence anyway.

They don't make an argument for their views. They feel their views. They go with what they feel.

They have friends who are gay, so certainly if the Bible says being gay is wrong, it must be wrong. They have, you know, friends who've divorced their husbands, their wives, just because they weren't happy. So the Bible said that's the wrong thing to do? The Bible must be wrong, because certainly my friends, my heart goes out to my friends.

The way I feel is what's going to determine what's real. That's the younger generations, for the most part, their way of validating things. And the Bible, on that basis, is not validating to them.

When they hear about Canaanite men, women, and children being killed, that doesn't feel good. When you hear about someone gathering sticks on the Sabbath and getting

stoned to death for it, that doesn't seem right. And so it's mostly today, most people who reject the Bible, the younger people at least, aren't doing it because of all the indoctrination against it.

It's just because it doesn't, they've been taught that it teaches things that go against our sentiments. And sentiments are basically all that a lot of people go by. You know, the Bible says there's a way that seems right to a man.

That's your sentiments. It doesn't seem right that two people who are married and unhappy should have to work it out. It seems like you should leave each other and find someone else to be happier with.

It seems like it. It doesn't seem like someone shouldn't be able to marry the same sex. I mean, it just seems like they should have the same rights, you know, straight people have about that.

There's things that seem right. Twice the Bible says there's a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Therefore, we have to assume that those who wrote the Bible were on a different page than our modern culture is on a great many things.

And that is the main reason why modern young people just assume the Bible's wrong. Not because there's been any evidence that it's wrong. And by the way, whatever evidence they may have become acquainted with is frankly false.

I'll be glad to point that out to you in detail, but I won't have too much time to do it tonight, but I have lectures on that at the website. The main thing to know is if someone says, well, you know, I don't know why you think the Bible's the word of God. It's just written by men.

Those are just the ideas of men. I like to say, well, who's the author of the ideas you hold? Angels? Where did you get the idea that marriage is for anybody who wants to be married to anybody? Where'd you get that idea? Who wrote that? That's an idea of a man, is it? Or a woman? Or someone who's not sure which they are? Someone came up with an idea, but it wasn't God. The real question is the men who wrote these things, did they know what they were talking about or not? Now, most people know so little about the Bible, and they can't be blamed for that.

They're not Christians, and they haven't been taught correctly. I think the church is to be blamed more than anyone else for the ignorance of our culture about the Bible. We've had the Bible, more than that.

We've had more access to valid, apologetic information about the Bible than any generation prior to us. We've got the internet, not that you can trust everything on it, but we the internet has all kinds of information on it, if that's correct. There's books on this

stuff are so abundant.

Any Christian who cannot defend the Bible to a skeptic has been lazy. I'm not saying you're going to hell for it, I'm just saying you're lazy. And you don't realize how dangerous it is to be lazy until one of your children or one of your friends comes up and says, well, why should I believe what the Bible says? None of my friends do.

You know, the Bible says the hand of the slothful will be under tribute. That means to be a slave, but the hand of the diligent will bear rule. If you're lazy spiritually, you'll be spiritually a slave.

You need to fight a spiritual warfare, and that involves being valiant for the truth, because the enemy is the father of lies, and he's not taking a break, but we are too often. And you know, it's like there's two armies and one's fighting and the other isn't, not as much as you could. I mean, certainly there's Christians out there fighting the good fight on the mission field and in various other places, but let's face it, the Christian army is, at least half of it, sitting around just hoping the bad guys will go away.

But we need to do our research. Now, I'll tell you, if you do your research, you'll find out that the people who wrote the Bible did know what they were talking about. I mean, let's put aside for the moment even the question of whether they were inspired by God.

Now, I believe they were, but just that, let's just say that's a claim that too many people are going to think is superstitious. So let's put that claim aside for a moment to say, did these people know what they were talking about? More than half the Bible is historical narrative, much of it written by people who were there when the events recorded occurred. In other words, much of it is eyewitness.

The four of the five books of Moses were written by Moses, and they're about his lifetime. They're about his experiences. Joshua probably wrote Joshua, and it was about his experiences.

We're not sure exactly who wrote Samuel and Kings, but they were certainly people who were writing down their experiences and passing them down. Did these people know what they're talking about? Well, let's just put it this way. They certainly knew their material, and whether it was true or not, better than anyone who's lived after them would know.

There's all these people who say, well, you know, we don't know who wrote the Gospels. This is the typical unbeliever stance. This is what Richard Dawkins or Sam Harris or Christopher Hitchens say in their books.

We don't know who wrote the Gospels. It certainly wasn't by anyone who knew Jesus, really. And you know this because, why exactly? Do you know that the people who received the Gospels from their authors said that they were written by Matthew and

Mark and Luke and John? Now, these are the guys who received them from the hands of the authors.

Who's more likely to know who the author is? The persons who received them from the hand of the author or someone living 2,000 years later who just says, I don't like anything in this book. I guess I'll say these guys didn't know what they're talking about. Well, you can say whatever you want to say if it makes you sleep better, but that doesn't mean you have any truth in it.

You know, whenever an unbeliever challenges something in the Bible, I would just suggest that you do this. If you can't answer them completely, and maybe you can't because there's thousands of questions out there. If you don't answer all of them, then you can't answer them all.

But one thing you can always say is, okay, the Bible says this is true. You say it isn't true. How do you know? I can tell you how Matthew knew what Jesus said because Matthew heard him say it.

I can tell you how John knew that Jesus rose from the dead because John met him after he rose from the dead and actually saw the empty tomb and touched Jesus after he was risen. I know how they knew. How do you know? I mean, let them be the ones that are on the defensive.

They might as well be. They don't know what they're talking about. Honestly, I mean, the atheists who speak against the Bible, most of them don't know what they're talking about.

Now, some of them are scholars. I'll admit it. There are some scholars, liberal Bible scholars, who've decided they don't believe the Bible is true.

But I happen to know, because I read them that they are just guessing. You know, when you come to the Bible, you come with an attitude, either of open-mindedness or default skepticism. And if you come with an open-mindedness, you'll find nothing in the Bible, and frankly, nothing outside the Bible, that will convince you that the Bible is not true.

That's why so many skeptics became Christians when they read the Bible. In fact, many of them, C.S. Lewis, Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, a guy named Frank Morris, and many others, they became believers when they set out to try to disprove the Bible. These were intelligent guys, philosophy professors, journalists, scientists, and they set out to disprove the Bible, and they became believers by studying it.

Now, I dare say that no one who's ever written a book on atheism has studied the Bible very adequately. And it's amazing to me when I read Christopher Hitchens and I read Richard Dawkins, these atheist books, the affirmations they make out of the Bible, which I think, you know, you may be pretty knowledgeable about biology, but you don't know

the first thing about what you're talking about when you're talking about the Bible. And you know what? That's true of almost every skeptic you'll meet.

Now, you will meet some people who are skeptics now who used to be Christians, or said they were. There are some people who used to be Christians, or they said they were Christians, and now they're atheists or skeptics or something else. Because they once were in the Christian fold, they do know something about the Bible.

They might be able to quote it better than you. So can the Jehovah's Witnesses, probably, but they don't know anything about it. They don't know what they're talking about.

They don't understand it. They even have to read a translation that's been altered deliberately to support their views. They don't know what the real Bible says.

And there are people who did know the Bible reasonably well. That is, they could quote it. They could tell you where things are in the Bible.

And then they became unbelievers. But actually, when I've talked to these people, it's very clear that when they actually seek to quote the Bible and try to apply it, they haven't thought very deeply about it. They heard things from their pastor, and their pastor is not much of a scholar, it's evident by the things he said, and they found them to be goofy things.

And there are things that I find to be goofy things that Christians say, too. Anne Rice wrote a bunch of books about vampires. What's it called? The Interview with the Vampire? I think that was the one that had Brad Pitt and someone else in it.

She became an evangelical, or no, she became a Christian some years ago. I remember when she became a Christian, but she became a Roman Catholic. Well, since then, several years later, she decided to publicly renounce Christianity because she says, I can't believe all the goofy things the Catholic Church teaches.

Well, I can't either. But the truth is, lots of people who spent some time in the Christian folder have rejected goofy things in many cases. Churches sometimes say goofy things, and it's a off on the Day of Judgment to say, well, the preacher said something goofy, so I rejected what he said.

Well, God, no doubt, will say, well, good, you should reject those goofy things. Why didn't you study my Bible? Why didn't you study the Word of God to see if that's goofy? It's actually not goofy. It's pretty offensive sometimes.

There are things that really go right against our culture, right against our sentiments, but it's not goofy. It's serious stuff. Now, as far as evidence goes, like I said, most young people, and maybe a lot of people even our age, I say our meaning my age, the baby

boomers, their dislike for the Bible is not academic, it's not intellectual, it's emotional.

They don't like what the Bible teaches, and therefore, it's more convenient for them for it not to be true, so that's what they decide. The Bible is an inconvenient truth. And it's, you know, the reason it's inconvenient is because we weren't going the right way when God intervened.

He found us going the wrong way and says, no, you got to go the other way, and it's quite a climb back. You've been going downhill for a long time. It's not going to be the easiest thing, but it's worth it.

And some people say, I'm not sure it's worth it, and I know it's not easy, so I don't want it. But there are some people who have been fed false information who believe that there is evidence against the Bible. They believe that the Bible's been proven wrong.

Let me just say that when I was, like I said, when I was younger and most everyone believed the Bible was the Word of God, whether they liked it or followed it or not, that has changed so that almost everyone thinks it's not the Word of God, including a lot of people in churches. But nothing new has been discovered to cast doubts on the older view of things. It's the drift of culture.

It's the mood of culture that has turned against it, and that's more of a spiritual blindness and darkness than it is an academic thing. But once in a while, academics come along and say there's, you know, the Bible has been shown to be not true. Excavations in Nazareth show that there never were inhabitants in Nazareth in time of Jesus, and Bethlehem, there was no one there in the time of Jesus.

They haven't proven such things, but you'll hear those kinds of things. But what you'll actually learn if you actually do the study, that is, read what the archaeologists do say about this, is that they say, like Nelson Gleck, the leading Middle Eastern Jewish archaeologist of his day, he said there's not one thing discovered by archaeologists that controverts anything the Bible says. William F. Albright, who was once the dean of biblical archaeologists and a liberal himself, he said that many archaeologists have found their faith in the Bible increased as a result of doing excavations in Palestine.

Now, the truth is that no one has ever found an artifact that proves the Bible to be wrong, and many times what skeptics have said, like there was never a King David, there never was a Belshazzar, there never was Sargon II, there never were Hittites, there never were whatever groups of people that the Bible mentions. There's a lot of people who, especially in the 19th century, skeptics were saying, you know, archaeologists haven't found any evidence of these Hittites. Yeah, well, they didn't then, but they have now.

They've excavated over 1500 years of Hittite civilization. The Bible mentions the Hittites

going back to the time of Abraham and on beyond to the time of David, and yet archaeologists haven't found a whisper about the existence of Hittites until the 1800s, but now they have, they found whole libraries of cuneiform texts of Hittite, you know, writings and their civilizations, well documented now. Anyone who says, well, the Bible's not true, they're talking like people in the 19th century who didn't know anything yet about this.

That's in the early days of archaeology. Back in until 1853, the commonplace argument of critics was that Belshazzar didn't exist. Daniel 5 mentions Belshazzar as the last king in Babylon when Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon.

So the last king in Babylon is said to have been Belshazzar, but Thucydides and Herodotus, Greek historians, writing 400 years before Christ, they said the last king in Babylon was Nabonidus. Now, the Greek historians said the last king of Babylon was Nabonidus. The Bible said the last king was Belshazzar.

Now, of course, the critics, always on the side of whoever's not the Bible, said, well, the Greeks are right, and the Bible's wrong. Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon. Daniel was wrong in saying that Belshazzar was.

He must have just made up that person. Until 1853, when archaeologists uncovered a temple of a god worshipped by the Babylonians, and it had an inscription written by Nabonidus. In case you're losing track of the names, Nabonidus is supposedly the last king of Babylon mentioned by the Greek historians.

But this inscription by Nabonidus said to his god that he's inscribing this prayer to, may reverence for you be in my firstborn favorite son, Belshazzar. Now, that's not the last we've heard of Belshazzar, that was just the first. They've uncovered far more.

They now know that Nabonidus, the alleged last king of Babylon, was actually in retirement in Arabia when Babylon fell. His son, Belshazzar, was now the second king and the one on the throne in Babylon when it fell, just like Daniel said. Daniel knew more about it than anyone knew until 1853.

Until 1853, not one ancient authority believed or even remembered that Belshazzar lived, except Daniel. He was there, by the way. He's in the story.

But it took 2500 years before archaeologists actually uncovered the truth, and the truth was Daniel was right. The critics were wrong. By the way, it's interesting, when Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall, it says that he said, whoever can interpret that writing can be the third ruler of the kingdom.

No one ever knew why he said the third ruler of the kingdom until archaeology demonstrated that he himself was only the second. His dad, Nabonidus, was the first. So he couldn't give away a position any higher than the third position.

That's what he said in Daniel chapter 5. Archaeology and the Bible continually are found to be in agreement. Sargon II has been confirmed from excavations of his palace. For a long time, the skeptics said he didn't exist, although Isaiah 20, verse 1 says he did.

There's again and again, when people said the Bible is wrong, they're the ones who are wrong. There's never been anything yet discovered that proved that the Bible is wrong. Even David.

Skeptics were beginning to say there never really was a King David until, I believe it was the 1990s, as I recall. They found a coin that had David's name pressed into it. King David.

And there are many other things like that we can't go into in detail. Now, a lot of people say, well, the Bible, I don't care if it's historically correct, it's scientifically out of touch, scientifically out of date, because the Bible, you know, it's written pre-scientific times. Therefore, it's not surprising that the people were superstitious about a lot of things and it's scientifically wrong.

Well, of course, the Bible doesn't endeavor to say an awful lot of things directly about science. It says a few things incidentally. But, you know, much of what the Bible said has a scientific basis that we didn't know about until modern times.

Scientists discovered. For example, when you read the list of clean and unclean foods, it's now known that many of the foods that were listed as the unclean foods are unsafe foods, at least in ancient times when they couldn't cook them thoroughly. Swine, shellfish, and things like that, they carried microbes that ancient people didn't know how to cook out of them.

God just said don't eat those. You know, when a leper was supposed to be taken out of circulation and not be in touch with them and go out into the community, that's the oldest known quarantine laws of any society. There are older laws that are known to us from Hammurabi and the Babylonians, but they don't have this.

The Bible is the first ancient society code that practiced quarantine. Now, no one knew that that was necessary until Pasteur a couple hundred years ago. They didn't know about germs back then.

They didn't know about infectious disease. I mean, even during the Black Plague, they didn't know about that stuff in Europe. The Bible, however, interestingly says these people with infectious skin disease, get them out of the camp.

Keep them away from the well people. There's all kinds of things in the Bible that, you know, it's not making scientific statements, it's just giving laws. But we now know, because we know more, that there is a good basis for those things in natural law and in natural science, I should say.

But the main objection people have to the Bible scientifically, of course, is that there are miracles in the Bible. This is what the most skeptics will bring up, you know. You know, the creation in six days, Jesus walking on water, the sun going backward, you know, or holding still in Joshua's day and going backward in Hezekiah's day.

Jesus rising from the dead. These are things no one ever sees these things happen, so they must not happen. And the worldview of the Bible is foreign to the modern secular worldview.

The secular worldview doesn't include supernatural things or people or God, and therefore everything has to be in nature, in nature's terms. Well, the Bible doesn't assume that it has to describe anything in natural terms, because the Bible has a different worldview. There is a God, and if there's a God, then who's to say what he can't do? Some people say, but we've proven that miracles don't occur.

How's that? How did that happen? How did we prove that miracles don't occur? Well, they say, ancient people were superstitious. They didn't understand the laws of nature. They thought there had to be deities and gods to make things happen, but we now have studied these things scientifically.

We now know that it's not gods that make these things happen. There's natural laws. Storms don't come because, you know, Neptune or Poseidon is angry.

They come from because of natural meteorological circumstances that we can analyze now. Volcanoes don't blow up because one of the gods is angry. They blow up because of seismic activity that is now understood.

Now that we know scientific things, we don't have to postulate gods to make these happen. They say that the belief in God is to believe in something superstitious to fill the space between what is known. People knew a few things, but there's all this gap in here of what they didn't know scientifically, and so they just put God in there to fill the gap.

They call it the God of the gaps, and they say as scientific knowledge advances and expands, it closes the gaps. There's only room for God in these gaps. Once we've proven that we know scientifically the way this happens, we don't need God there anymore, and so the gaps are closing.

Eventually, there won't be any gaps left for God. Scientific progress is squeezing God out of his universe. That's what they say.

Wait a minute. It has never been assumed in the Bible that we believe in God because there's things we can't explain scientifically. In fact, the Bible assumes that the things it says are true could no doubt be discovered to be true by experimentation or by exploration, and we would expect it to be so because the Bible's not talking about nonsense.

It's talking about reality. Yes, there are realities in the Bible that we don't observe naturally simply because they're miracles, but this is, you know, Jesus walking on water is never going to be explained away by learning about scientific facts about, you know, water surface tension. It was a miracle.

You can say it didn't happen, but you can't say, well, that'll be explained someday. That's just, that's one of the gaps that'll be filled in by our scientific knowledge. No, you can only say it didn't happen or it was a miracle.

There's no other, there's no way science can fill in the gaps there. Men rising from the dead on their own three days after they're buried. There's no scientific knowledge that's going to explain how that happened.

It either didn't happen or it happened miraculously. You see, there are things that if they happened, they happened despite what we know about science, about nature, but the Bible is not ashamed of that because there's something else besides nature. There's somebody who created nature, somebody who superintends nature and can supersede nature.

You see, science can only study patterns. Sometimes the scientists have tried to seize the whole field of knowledge in the modern world. If it can't be proven scientifically, it can't be known.

Really? Do you know if you love your wife or your husband? Do you know if you love your children? How do you prove that scientifically? That's not a science. You can't go into a laboratory and put that on a Bunsen burner and prove one way or another whether you love your children. You know that from other ways than scientific discovery.

Science isn't everything. It's important and it's a great boon to humanity insofar as it stays within its boundaries. But anyone who says that science is the only way we know things is probably a professional scientist trying to preserve his monopoly because anyone who's smart knows there's a lot of things we know that aren't from science.

We know some things from history, for example. Most of what the bible gives us is historical records. More than half the bible is historical records.

You don't prove that scientifically, although archaeologists can confirm some of those things by finding things, but not everything is to be found. No one's going to find an artifact of, you know, Abraham having a conversation with God somewhere. I mean, what artifact is there to find? It's a historical story.

It either happened or it didn't, but it's not scientific. It's historic in nature. It's a different category than science.

And science is not the only category. C.S. Lewis was talking to one of his atheist friends

and said, his friend said, well, we know that, you know, miracles don't happen. Mary couldn't have been a virgin because, you know, it's impossible because that'd be a miracle.

And C.S. Lewis said, well, how do we know that miracles don't happen? His friend said, well, science has pretty much proven that miracles don't happen. And Lewis said, really, which of the sciences specifically has proved that? And his friend said, oh, that's just a matter of detail. All those intelligent people know that.

And C.S. Lewis said to him, well, I honestly don't, I've never heard that science has proven that there are miracles, and frankly, I don't think they could prove such a thing. And his friend said, well, what do you mean by that? And C.S. Lewis said, well, suppose we put four pennies in a drawer today, and I come back tomorrow and put two more pennies in the drawer. How many pennies will be in the drawer the second day? And his friend chuckled at the simplicity of the math.

He said, there'll be six, unless there's been a thief in the drawer in the meantime. And C.S. Lewis said, that's exactly my point. The laws of mathematics can tell you how many pennies will be if there's been no intervention.

But the laws of mathematics can't tell you how likely it is that there will have been intervention. That's out of the realm of mathematics. That's in the realm of criminal justice science.

You know, I mean, it's a different subject. You can tell what mathematically will be the result if nothing interferes. But how do you determine if someone will interfere or not? Well, a witness would be a good way to know.

If you've got a security camera, you see someone come into the drawer and take out the pennies you got. Well, then you've got a witness. You don't have scientific proof.

You don't even have mathematical proof. You have visual proof. You've got a witness.

That's the kind of evidence that courts allow, most of all. I mean, there are some scientific forensic witnesses, DNAs and so forth. But for the most part, for most of history, criminal justice had to be decided, the guilt or the innocence of the party, based on witnesses or the lack thereof.

A witness who saw something, two witnesses independently who saw it and described it, was considered to be enough evidence to put a man to death. Even in a society where people were reluctant to put people to death, you know, two witnesses were enough to prove it. More than that's even better.

Well, what we have in the Bible, in the historical records, are the stories of witnesses. Now, but they have miracles in them. Yeah, there are some, not as many as some

people think.

Some people think that the Bible is just a bunch of miracles from cover to cover. That's not the way it is. The Bible tells over 4,000 years of history, from Genesis to through the book of Acts.

Over 4,000 years of history is recorded. The miracles after the creation itself and the early fall of man and so forth, the miracles are largely found during the periods of certain individuals like Elijah and Elisha, Moses and Joshua. Moses and Joshua earlier, at the time of the Exodus, God did some miracles to create the nation of Israel and to establish them in their land.

There were a lot of miracles in those stories, but then there were hundreds of years with no miracles recorded, hundreds. Then there's Elijah and Elisha. They did a lot of miracles too.

Then there were like 700 years or more of no miracles, and then came Jesus and the apostles. There's like three periods of miracles in 4,000 years. These periods last for a generation or two each, and then there's centuries without any.

So if a skeptic says, well, we all know miracles don't happen because I don't know anyone who's ever seen one. Well, the Bible doesn't basically indicate that you would expect to see one. So I guess the Bible's right because you haven't.

The resurrection of Jesus, I've heard skeptics say, I know Jesus didn't rise from the dead because no one I know has ever seen a man rise from the dead. I'd say, well, that means the Bible must be correct, or at least it's more likely to be correct than you because it doesn't tell us that you should be seeing people rising from the dead. It says that Jesus' resurrection was quite a unique event.

And when people think, well, the Bible is just full of all these miracle stories. There are a lot of them, but they're not throughout the whole thing. It's like rare epics of miracles.

Three, four periods of time where there's a bunch of miracles. The rest of the time, not so much. Just stories about things, people, wars they fight, and kings rising and falling, things like that.

The kind of stuff that really happens in history and really did happen. People witnessed it and recorded it. So a lot of people don't know the nature of the Bible.

It is mostly historical narrative and nothing in it has been proven to have not happened. And the most important claims of the Bible are historical claims that Jesus walked among us. Jesus said and did certain things.

Jesus died. He rose again. People saw him.

He ascended into heaven. That was witnessed by a lot of people. Now they're all liars or they're not.

If they are liars, one has to ask, why would they lie about such a thing? If someone says, well, because they wanted people to believe in Jesus. Why would they want people to believe in Jesus if he was dead? Why would they believe in Jesus if he was dead? What changed their mind about him? You see, we have to assume, well, we don't have to, but if we're reasonable, we should assume that the people who wrote the Bible, whatever they were, whether we think they're inspired or not, they were at least intelligent. Intelligent enough to give birth to Western civilization and the whole practice of British common law and a whole bunch of other things and to be believed by the most intelligent, educated people in the world for centuries and centuries.

A stupid person can't write that kind of thing that'll impress intelligent people so consistently. They could be lying, but they have to be brilliant liars. The people who wrote the Bible were more than average intelligent and they knew what they were talking about more than anybody since then knows about those things.

Did Jesus rise from the dead? Well, some say yes, some say no. The ones who were there say yes. The ones who say no all have something in common.

They weren't there. So you believe the ones you want to believe. I'd rather believe the ones who know something.

If somebody tells me something, I'd rather believe the person who actually knows whether it's true or not. The ones who know say yes. And so the scriptures, Christians have no basis for embarrassment about the scriptures at all.

If you would like to go into more detail, this is supposed to be a brief treatment, so I'm going to have to cut this off at this point and go on to another point, but at the website, as you know, everything is free. You can listen to 900 or so lectures of mine at the website for free. The very first or one of the first topical series is called The Authority of Scripture.

If you'll note, there's an in-depth treatment of the things I just scratched the surface of here tonight, but I just wanted to, I was asked to speak on it and I've never done so in a single hour before. I've just kind of scanned it, but there's much more there if you're interested.