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Is The Bible True? (Part 1)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the question of whether the Bible is true. Greg explains that the Bible is a collection of 66 separate documents written by approximately 40 authors over a period of 1,400 years, and its claim for truth remains despite being academically attacked in various ways especially in the past 40 years. He argues that the Gospels are reliable historical documents that apply to tests of credibility, and work as a source of information on Jesus. Critics who claim that the Bible has been significantly altered are misinformed and misguided.

Transcript

Tonight I was asked to speak on the topic, how can we know that the Bible is true? Sometimes I'm asked if I believe the Bible is inerrant, and I'm not sure what to say exactly because I'm not sure what inerrant means. The word is not found in Scripture. It is a term that evangelicals have adopted in the past, perhaps, century and a half to counteract the notions of a more liberal kind of biblical scholarship that has denied that the Bible is trustworthy.

And in response to that liberal mood, fundamentalists in the late 1800s and evangelicals to this day have adopted the term inerrancy for Scripture. Now, inerrancy either means there are no errors in it, or it was written in such a way that rendered it incapable of having errors. And I'm not really sure exactly what inerrancy means.

And I don't think we need to worry ourselves too much about the word inerrancy, since the Bible doesn't use it. We don't even have to have an opinion about it. My suggestion is that the Bible is true.

And that's good enough for me. I don't know what the word inerrant means. What the Bible claims about itself is that it is true.

And I believe that the Bible is true and therefore reliable. Like most evangelicals, I believe that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice for the believer. Actually, Jesus Christ is the final authority, but he believed in the Bible.

And he, of course, is the main subject of the Bible. And I believe that when we come to the Bible, we're coming to a reliable record of what God has revealed to man through prophets and through apostles. And so to say that is to say what Christians of a more conservative sort have said for many centuries.

But there are many people who doubt this today. There are many people who think that we're gullible to believe that the Bible is true. The Bible has been attacked on many fronts, especially in the past 40 years.

But actually, you could extend that out more than a century. There's been a very strong attack from the academic world on the Bible from many directions. I'd like to say something about most of those objections if I can, but I can't talk at length about them all.

I would like to, but I have a great amount of material I want to cover. So I'll try to give you a basic understanding of what some of the objections are to the Bible, why the objections are not very considerable to somebody who's aware of the facts, and why we can believe that despite the mood of our age and the scientific and philosophical arguments that are being made against scripture from bestselling authors, whether it's Bart Ehrman in his interest in textual criticism or whether it's the Jesus Seminar trying to recreate Jesus in their own image, or the Da Vinci Code, or the Zeitgeist Jesus myth theory. There's all kinds of stuff out there.

It's all come out in recent decades, and it's all got one thing in common. They're all trying to say you can't trust the Bible. In particular, you can't trust that the Bible is telling the truth about Jesus.

I believe that those who say those things either are very naive or very agenda driven. In fact, I used to say very frequently on the radio and other places, I've backed away from saying this so much, not because I have changed my mind, but because I found it was a little provocative. I don't mind being provocative.

I don't want to come off as a provocateur. I don't want to be a controversialist. But I used to say very frequently that everyone on the planet who is not a Christian falls into one of two categories.

They're either ignorant or dishonest. Now, you might be able to see why that might be controversial or provocative to say something like that, because everybody on the planet, that means people who are atheists or people who believe in other religions, everybody who's not a Christian is either ignorant or dishonest. Now, I don't know how the population divides up proportion wise between those two.

I believe there's a great number of dishonest people who know the facts, but do not give an honest assessment of the facts, because they know already what they're willing to

believe. And no matter how many facts you present, nobody will believe what they are not willing to believe. A person will believe ultimately what they choose to believe.

And many people simply have decided they don't want to believe in the Bible for whatever reason, because it may remind them of a childhood where they had bad experiences in the church, or it may, in their mind, associate them with kind of weirdos that are in the news, that are, as Christians are usually represented in the media and so forth, and they don't want people thinking of them like that. Or they just want to live in sin, and they don't want to give that up, and they realize that if they really accept what the Bible says to be true, the word of God and all that, it's just going to have to change their lives in ways that they're not really prepared to change. Those are the people that I would say are not honest.

There are dishonest people who, although they know enough to be believers, they are simply unwilling to let the evidence lead where it naturally will lead them. The other category are those who are ignorant. Now, that doesn't sound very flattering to say someone's ignorant, but let's face it, we're all ignorant of many things.

And I think the majority of people on the planet are unbelievers because they are ignorant. And I don't say that as an insult. I simply say that as an observation.

They don't know. They don't know what the Bible says, or if they do, they don't know what support there is for the Bible in outside sources. They just don't know what the evidence is and what it points toward because they've never had it presented to them.

And at least tonight, I'd like to present some of that to you so that no one here will have to go away saying they were ignorant. I can't do anything about your dishonesty, but I can dispel your ignorance. So let's talk about the question, how can we know that the Bible is true? First of all, what do we mean by the Bible? Now, you might say, well, why do we have to start with something so basic as that? Everybody knows what the Bible is.

Everybody's got several copies. Every motel room has copies of it. Everyone knows what the Bible is.

Well, everybody knows that the Bible is the book that Christians believe is the word of God, that's true. But many people have no real idea of what the Bible is. It is simply a collection of books, 66 separate documents written over a period of 1400 or more years by a great number of authors.

The best estimate that scholars can come up with is about 40. There are a few of the books, we're not quite sure who wrote them. If we knew, we might have say 41 or 42, but there's approximately 40 authors of the Bible.

Many of them knew each other, but many of them did not know each other. But they all wrote, many of them at different times over a period of 1400 years. And much of what

they wrote is historical information or at least purports to be.

When people say they reject the gospels, I think they often don't even know what the gospels are. I had a friend who's an atheist or an agnostic at least, who was raised as a missionary in Argentina. And I used to have lots of long conversations with him, a very intelligent man.

And after many conversations, he said to me one night, he says, well, in order to be a Christian, do I have to believe the Bible's the word of God? I said, no. If you want to be correct, you have to believe the Bible's the word of God, but you don't have to believe that to be a Christian. Because being a Christian is a belief about Jesus, not about the writings about him.

I believe the Bible's the word of God. I think anyone who studies it out will come to that conclusion. But that's not what makes me a Christian.

What makes me a Christian is I believe in a real person, Jesus, who is the incarnation of God, who came to this world to establish his kingdom, to die as a redeemer, to rise again, and to be enthroned on the throne of David at the right hand of God, and therefore is the King of kings and Lord of lords. I believe that, I submit to that, I submit my life to that information. And that is what constitutes me as a Christian.

Now I could do that, even if I had questions about some of the books of the Bible, whether they were inspired or not. After all, a lot of them don't claim that they are. Actually, there's no New Testament book where the author actually claimed that they were writing a book under inspiration, except for the book of Revelation.

It's the only book in the New Testament that claims inspiration for itself. Paul did claim that he was inspired in some of his statements. He would say, now the spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times, perilous times will come or something like that.

Paul would claim inspiration for some of his statements, but no writer of the New Testament actually made an issue of inspiration of their works. None of the writers of the Gospels claimed to be writing inspired works. Now I don't mind believing that they did write inspired works, but it's not a question I have to defend because they never claimed it.

If they claimed it, I have to defend it to believe it. But what they did claim is they were telling the truth that what they had, they got from God. That is, they saw and heard Jesus and they had received divine revelation from him at various times.

And they were writing truthfully about what they knew to be true about him. That's what they claimed. 40 different authors writing the Bible over 1400 years.

And the reason I say that is because some people have, I think, rather naively said, well,

if you find one mistake in the Bible, then the whole thing is suspect. Well, I would say if you find a mistake in the Bible, you might suspect that there could be other mistakes in the Bible, but it doesn't throw out the whole thing. After all, on one occasion, Matthew quoted what would appear to be a quotation from Zechariah.

But he said, as it is written in the book of Jeremiah the prophet. Now he said it was written in the book of Jeremiah the prophet, and he quotes something that appears to be from Zechariah. What do we do with that? Well, there's lots of things you can do with that.

I'm not here to bother with those kinds of issues right now because there's at least two or three different ways to explain that particular issue without having to decide that Matthew made a mistake. And as an apologist through the years, I have many times laid out what appear to be contradictions in the Bible and explain ways that they can be harmonized without difficulty. That is one that can be harmonized.

But the issue here is what if I harmonize it and the skeptic says, I still don't accept your explanation. I think Matthew made a mistake. Okay, then you can believe that Matthew made a mistake.

That doesn't change anything about his eyewitness account of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, does it? If Matthew quoted Zechariah and forgot for a moment that he was quoting Zechariah and thought it was Jeremiah, does that throw his entire testimony into question? I wouldn't think so. I've heard many preachers quote from Paul and say they're quoting Jesus or something. They didn't know better.

They were making a mistake. It doesn't mean their whole sermon was invalid. I remember hearing the sermons where people said, Jesus said, you'll reap what you sow.

No, he didn't. Paul said that. But what's the difference? It's in the Bible and it's authoritative, but it does prove that the preacher was not inspired at the moment that he said that because he made a mistake.

Did Paul make any mistakes? He did. He told us so. In 1 Corinthians 1, he says, I thank God that I did not baptize any of you, any of you Corinthians, except for Crispus and Gaius.

Then two verses later, he says, oh yeah, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. And if I baptized any others, I don't remember. That's what Paul says.

Now I was raised very, very much a fundamentalist and that bothered me when I read that to tell you the truth. Wait, if the Holy Spirit is inspiring Paul, why would he say, I didn't baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, and then have to correct himself two verses, oh, I forgot. I also baptized the household of Stephanas.

I don't remember if there's any others. You see, I always knew that Paul had passages in his writings where he would say, I don't have any word from the Lord about this, but I'll just give my judgment on this. My particular understanding of inerrancy and inspiration wouldn't allow that to be true.

I couldn't let Paul speak that way. You have to know, Paul, that you do have a word from the Lord. Your very writing is a word from the Lord.

But Paul said he didn't. So I had a doctrine of inspiration that made me say that Paul was wrong in saying that he didn't have anything from the Lord about this. But if he didn't know he had something from the Lord about, how would I know that he did? And I realized that I was often defending things that the Bible doesn't say about itself.

I was defending Paul on points that he was denying about himself. It doesn't bother me if Matthew forgot that it was Zechariah, not Jeremiah, he was quoting on one occasion. It doesn't bother me if Paul thought he had only baptized two people, and Corinthian later remembered and corrected himself, no, there were some more too.

That just shows they're honest. He could try to cover that up. But that's what I'm hoping for, honest writers.

This idea of whether they are inspired in every word they write. Maybe they are, maybe they're not. Some of the evidence make me have questions about that, but I don't have any question about whether they're reliable and competent witnesses.

And that's the important thing we need to come to. The people who wrote the Bible were not ordinary people. In some ways, they were ordinary.

But when people tell you the Bible is just written by men, well, whose are the opinions you're giving us? Like your opinions aren't the opinion of a mere man? You know, why should we believe you when you say it's only the opinions of a mere man? The truth is, many people try to get off the hook, get their conscience off the hook about the Bible by saying, this isn't the word of God, it's just written by men. Well, in one sense, it is just written by men. There's no women who wrote any books of the Bible, so I guess they're all men.

But they're not just men. It says in 2 Peter 1, around verse 20, it says that no prophecy of the scriptures of any private interpretation, for the prophecy did not come in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Okay, holy men.

Not every man's a holy man. Don't know enough holy men. I know a lot of people, but holiness is a rare characteristic.

These were holy men set apart, the word holy means set apart by God. God set these

men apart. They weren't just your ordinary man on the street.

They were holy men of God. And they spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Now, I don't know how he moved each of them.

Some of them, I mean, I don't know if it was just kind of an urge inside or if they were getting verbal, audible voices sometimes or whatever, we're not told that. What we're told is that these were not ordinary men. They were special men that God selected to write his words.

Prophets in the Old Testament and apostles in the New Testament. The Old Testament was written by prophets. The New Testament books were written by apostles.

Both were holy men of God and they were not your ordinary men. And in the case of the prophets, the prophets said things like thus saith the Lord, meaning what I'm about to say is God speaking, 4,000 times in the Old Testament. Not always the exact phrase, but something equivalent.

Thus says the Lord, thus says God. Hear the word of the Lord. Those kinds of phrases are found 4,000 times in the Old Testament.

Now that doesn't mean they're telling the truth, but they claim to be. And that's what we need to examine. Are they? Is the Bible really what God told holy men to write and move them through the Holy Spirit to write? I think so.

I believe that if I would say I don't know, I'd have to be dishonest. Because the evidence that they are telling the truth, once it's considered with an open mind, admits of no other verdict, in my opinion. So it's not one book, it's 66 books written by 40 different authors approximately.

They were holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit. And the books that we call the Bible were books that were collected and preserved by believers while other books were rejected. This is sometimes brought up as a criticism of the Bible, that you can't really trust what the gospels say about Jesus because they were written by believers.

Well, who else would have written about him? You ever read a biography of anyone where the author was not an admirer of the person they're writing about? And people who are admirers of the people they write about, I would think, would like to be accurate and present them as they really are. Now, true, some people might like to embellish stories. Alexander the Great, for example, we don't know of him from any biographies except some that were written 400 years after his time.

And as you get further and further from Alexander, they start attributing miracles to the guy. Nobody near his lifetime ever said he did miracles. In fact, we don't even know if anyone near his lifetime ever told his story.

Sometimes people begin to embellish things. And some people say, that's what the gospels did. They embellished things.

Well, we'll find that that was not a possibility. The gospels were written much too early to get away with that. Too many living witnesses were there for peer review.

Of course they were believers. Why do you think they were believers, though? It's not like they were born that way. The men who wrote the gospels weren't born in Christian homes.

They were the first Christians. They were raised not as Christians and became Christians as adults. Through what means? Well, presumably they were convinced by what they saw, the very things they're recording.

If they were not believers, that'd be a very strange thing to be recording all these miracles they saw and say, ah, but I don't believe it. Well, why wouldn't they? You'd have to wonder if they're honest and intelligent men. Anyone who saw and heard what the apostles saw and heard in the life of Jesus would be rather dull if they didn't become believers.

And who but believers would have an interest in preserving the story of Jesus for later generations? Now, sometimes critics have said, well, if Jesus really existed and was really all that, why don't we have more secular records of him? Why didn't the other historians write more about him? Why didn't the Roman historians write more about him? Well, as we'll see, they did write some, but not much. And the reason they didn't write much is they didn't even know of him in many cases. You have to realize Jesus was not famous outside of Israel in his lifetime.

He never left the country. There were times when thousands of people followed him, but they weren't Romans, they were Jews. The people in Rome were oblivious to what was going on in Palestine when Jesus was alive.

He wasn't a rock star worldwide, no. And even in the generations immediately after, even probably for the first two centuries after Jesus, no one could have guessed that his movement would become the huge thing so that now more than a quarter of the people of the planet claim to be part of that movement because they were a persecuted minority, fed to the lions, burned at the stake, eating underground in the catacombs. I mean, it took centuries for Christianity to emerge as a significant movement.

And because of that, how would any Roman authority in the first few centuries even be able to guess that Christianity or Jesus would be important enough even to record anything about? Just this peasant walking around in Palestine. Now, despite the fact that Jesus wasn't really that big a deal outside of Palestine in his time, there are Roman historians that do mention him. They say very little, but that's partly because they knew

very little in all likelihood.

But the fact that you read not much from the secular authority about Jesus is no argument whatsoever against the truthfulness of the story. The people who were there are the ones who wrote the story. They were impressed.

They became believers. And they said, other people need to know about this too. And so they wrote it.

And that's kind of how biographies end up getting written about other people too. If I read a biography of Ronald Reagan or Abraham Lincoln or Winston Churchill, I strongly suspect that the author is an admirer of the man he's writing about. I don't disqualify him to write on the subject just because he happens to admire the person that he's writing about.

If he didn't admire him, he probably wouldn't go to the trouble of doing the research to write a biography. Now, the disciples, on the other hand, who wrote the Gospels, they weren't just admirers. They were totally persuaded that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

And we find out why they were persuaded by the things they wrote, the things they heard him say and saw him do. And if anyone saw and heard those things and didn't become a believer, I'd have to wonder about their intelligence or honesty. If we ask the question, how can we know that the Bible is true? We're really saying, how can we know that the individual books of the Bible are written with true information in them? Well, the question could be asked, how do we know that anything is true? How do we know that any historical writing is true? When you read a newspaper, how do you know if that story's true or not? When you read history books, how do you know if they're true? When you get on the internet and look something up, how do you know if it's true, what you're reading? How can you know? The same ways that we would employ to test any story to know it's truth, we can apply to the stories in the Scriptures.

I would suggest four ways that we generally can determine that something is true, or at least our level of confidence in it can be very high. One is if the witnesses are competent, knowledgeable, and honest. That is the sources.

If a crime took place in Ferguson, and some people said, well, the kid was just minding his own business and a cop shot him, but then others who were closer to the situation who actually saw things says, no, there was a scuffle there. There is much more complicated than that. You wanna find out which witnesses actually saw what they're talking about, actually know something, are competent, and honest.

That is to say, not really motivated by any ulterior motive to twist the story. A lot of people assume that the Gospels can't be trusted because since they were written by Christians, those Christians would have a motive to twist the story. Why? What would

they have to gain? The apostles didn't gain anything by being Christians except salvation and persecution.

They didn't make money off it. Their lives were in danger from the time they became Christians on, until almost all of them died as martyrs for their faith. What could possibly have motivated them to tell a story that wasn't true that got them into so much trouble? The only reason people would tell a story like that is if they really believed it was true and they were gonna say it, no matter how much trouble it got her into.

And that is certainly the impression we have when we read the lives of these men and see what they wrote. I think a lot of people, when they think of church leaders writing Christian propaganda, as they think the Gospels fall into the category of Christian propaganda from the first century, they forget that they're thinking of the church as some monstrosity in Europe with pointed-headed clerics and so forth and a really wealthy, politically powerful institution trying to impose its superstitions on a gullible public. This is what many people actually in their minds are thinking of when they say, well, we can't believe the Gospels are written by the church.

When they think of the church, they're thinking of something that was much, much, much later than the apostles' time. The church for the first 300 years didn't have any political power, any wealth. They were chased from town to town and their leaders were hunted down and fed to the lions.

For 300 years, it was at the beginning of that period that they wrote the Gospels. There was nothing that they had to gain by convincing people that Jesus was somebody that he wasn't. In fact, if what they were saying wasn't true, there's no reason to understand why they themselves would believe it or put up with the troubles that came with believing it.

You know, these men have every evidence of being credible, honest, and they were there. If we're trying to decide, is a story true that I've heard, is it coming from an eyewitness? Is it coming from someone who really knows what happened and someone who really isn't gonna try to fool me about this? They're honest and they don't have any reason to trick me about it. That's a very important test.

And if we test the Gospels by that, for example, or frankly, many of the other books of the Bible that are historical in nature, I think we generally will find there's no reason to doubt them. The second thing is, if no motive can be ascribed to the witnesses other than to report what is true. This is one way.

If I'm reading a news story and the story is written by someone who's, you know, an Obama supporter, let us say, and doesn't like some Republican and he's reporting some scandal about a Republican, I think, well, that could be true. Republicans sometimes have scandals, but this guy is such a strong Obama supporter, he might report scandals

whether they were there or not. He might have motives.

Now, if it's coming from a conservative, somebody who's actually maybe, you know, sympathetic toward the person that the scandal is about, but he still reports it, well, he doesn't, I can't think of any reason why he'd report it unless it's just because it's true. You know, when you're trying to read history or news or whatever, people reporting things, you need to ask, does this person have anything to gain by fooling me about this? If not, then they have more credibility. A third thing is if the material is corroborated by external sources of similar reliability.

In other words, if you have only one witness, eh, no matter how good the witness is, you might think, well, maybe he heard wrong, maybe he saw wrong, people do make mistakes. But if you have quite a few witnesses about the same thing, independently of each other, and they all corroborate it, well, then that, of course, adds to the credibility of the report, especially if there are people in many cases who have not had time or occasion to get together and collude about saying what they all want to say. In the case of the Bible, many of the historical things in the Bible are corroborated by external pagan sources.

Many Christians and non-Christians certainly are not aware of the high degree to which archeological findings have corroborated things the Bible said about the location of cities and who was the leader and who was the governor and so forth. The things that the Bible has said in a very matter-of-fact way, because the writers knew it was true, have been corroborated by historical investigation and archeologies. We'll see more about this later.

But if the material is corroborated by other sources of reliability, then that's another reason to believe it's true. And fourthly, if there's no evidence to discredit the accounts. Now, this is a very important thing.

When the unbeliever is trying to convince you that you have to prove to them beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus rose from the dead, don't be intimidated. You have four witnesses to it in the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, early witnesses. At least two of them saw him after he rose from the dead.

The other two traveled with people who saw him. That's pretty good. Now, some people say, well, that's just not good enough for me.

I won't believe it till I need more than that. Well, I'm Mr. Unbeliever. Could you tell me what sources you have that say he didn't rise from the dead? From that period of time, we have four historical sources that all claim the same thing about him.

Do you have any sources that say he didn't? Not one? Well, then why should I believe that he didn't when there's not one source that says he didn't? And there are four

sources that say he did. I mean, all other things being equal, I will tend to go with those things that are witnessed by people who were there and say they saw it, rather than someone says, I was there and that didn't happen. Now, when the gospels were written, there were a lot of people still living who were there and could have said, I didn't see any of that.

I was there that day and that's not what happened. We don't have any record in the first centuries of the church of anyone who stood up and said, as the gospels were circulating, said, yeah, I'm gonna write a rebuttal to this because I was there and that didn't really happen. If someone did, then we'd have to think, well, now we've got conflicting stories, but we don't.

When all the evidence is on one side and there's not any evidence on the other side, it's starting to look pretty good for the side that's got the evidence. Now, of course, the reason that many people say, well, no, no, no, no, no, we need more than what you have to support the resurrection of Jesus is because, and this is what the famous atheists of our day are saying, they say the Bible makes extraordinary claims and extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. In other words, four eyewitnesses, that'd be enough in a court of law to prove a criminal did a crime, but is it enough to prove that a man rose from the dead? Because a man raised from the dead is an extraordinary claim and we need something more than regular evidence for that, they say.

Well, again, this is the presumption of naturalism. Let me just tell you, in case you're not aware, people are going to be inclined or disinclined to believe reports that contain miracles in them, like the New Testament Gospels and the Old Testament books. They will be disinclined to believe them if they hold to a philosophy called naturalism or materialism.

They will be more inclined to give them a fair hearing if they don't hold to those views. Now, what is naturalism or materialism? They're not exactly the same, but they pretty much, they're so close, I'll just describe them as one thing. A person who believes in naturalism believes there's only nature, there's no supernatural.

There's nothing above or outside of nature, just the laws of nature have to be able to explain everything. Materialism means there's nothing but the material world, but since the material world is governed by the laws of nature, naturalism and materialism are kind of the same thing. In any case, when somebody says, when you say a man rose from the dead, that's an extraordinary claim.

Well, it's an unusual claim, but it's not unique. I mean, it is unique to say that Jesus rose from the dead, that he rose in a way others did, but other people have risen from the dead. There's been many claims of that.

In fact, they didn't, I mean, they weren't like Jesus. Everything about his life proves that

he was different. But I mean, the report of people rising from the dead is not that unusual.

Around the world, there are many reports of people who were dead and came back. In fact, there's several movies have come out in recent times about people who've written books about that. I don't know if what they claim to have seen on the other side is reliable, but apparently you can check and see if they were dead, declared dead, no vital signs for a while, and then they came back.

It's not that extraordinary for someone to come back from the dead. What's really extraordinary is for a person to predict that he will. For a person to say, I'm gonna die in such and such a manner, I'm gonna be in the grave this many days, and then I'm gonna come back out again, and then do it.

That's extraordinary. But you see, what these people are having problems with is not the prediction, but the event, because they believe people don't rise from the dead because natural laws forbid it. Do they? Then how come so many people have been resuscitated? How come so many people can write books like this and say, check the medical records.

I was dead on arrival. I came back. Well, maybe we don't know as much about the natural laws as we think we do.

But even if we did, you don't have to be a naturalist. You don't have to explain everything in terms of nature and natural laws, unless you've already decided that's all there is. And that's exactly the position that the modern atheists and secularists is in.

They've already decided that there is nothing but nature. There's no supernatural. And they assume that this doesn't need to be defended.

But people who wanna say that supernatural things exist have to defend their view. Why? Why don't they have to defend theirs? They're the ones making the exclusive claims. You see, when someone says, I don't believe nothing is true unless science can prove it.

That's not a scientific statement. Science can't prove that statement. When did any scientist do an experiment that proved that only things that are proven by science can be true? Of course, that's not a scientific statement.

That's not even a logical statement. It's a bigoted statement. It's a prejudicial statement.

It's what we call a worldview. It's a worldview that they have in place without questioning. And they question everything else that they see through that grid.

If something looks like it's supernatural, I can't believe that because only natural things are true. Well, how do you know that? What evidence do you have that only natural

things are true? How does anyone know that? It's a prejudice that they begin with. Now see, we can begin without that prejudice or without even the opposite prejudice.

We don't even have to start our investigation believing that there is a supernatural. We just start out open-minded. Maybe there is, maybe there's not.

Before I was a Christian, maybe I couldn't know whether there's a supernatural or not, but let's be open-minded. Let's look at the evidence. If the evidence says there is, then I'll go with it.

If the evidence says there isn't, then what possible evidence could show there isn't a supernatural? How do you prove that something doesn't exist? Proving a universal negative is sort of impossible. And people like Richard Dawkins say, well, you know, the flying spaghetti monster on Mars, you know, you don't have to prove that that doesn't exist. You know it doesn't exist.

Well, I don't actually know that it doesn't exist, but I strongly suspect it does not. But then I've never met an intelligent person who believed they'd seen one. I've never met an intelligent person who said the flying spaghetti monster exists.

I've never known an adult who believed in the Easter bunnies. Richard Dawkins gives that too. I don't believe in God.

I don't believe in the Easter bunny either. Well, that's not exactly exact parallel here because the smartest people who've ever lived throughout all of history have usually believed there's a God or gods or goddesses. I mean, the vast majority of people on earth have never been atheists.

Atheism is a very modern viewpoint. The Greeks and the Romans were polytheists. So were the Canaanites and other pagans.

The people of India believe in many gods. Jews and Christians and Muslims believe only one God. But that makes like 98% of the population of the world believe that there's something that's out there.

And you've got this 2% or 3% who say, no, there isn't, and they're called atheists. Well, it seems like they're in the minority sufficiently to maybe the burden of proof should be on them. If 90 something percent of the people who've ever lived who are intelligent, educated and uneducated, old and young, people of every society have claimed that they have seen supernatural things and they believe there's a God, maybe it's the atheist who's making an extraordinary claim.

Maybe he's the one who needs extraordinary evidence because there's nothing extraordinary about believing in God. It's only politically incorrect, but that's not an intellectual objection and those who say there is no supernatural and therefore I can't

trust the gospels because, well, why because? Because they report miracles. Jesus opened the eyes of the blind.

He healed lepers with a touch. He raised the dead and he himself rose from the dead. I have never seen any of those things happen, therefore they don't happen.

Well, that's pretty ridiculous. How many things have happened in history you never saw? All of them except the ones that happen in your lifetime. In fact, you never saw it doesn't mean it didn't happen.

And if there's people all over the world who've claimed that they've seen miracles, not just Christians, Hindus, all kinds of people believe in that supernatural things happen. Okay, if this is such a widespread belief, maybe the person who says that they don't happen is in the weak position and needs to really come up with some extraordinary evidence. Do they have it? No, because you can't come up with any evidence.

That the supernatural does not exist. Most you can say is, I don't know anyone who's ever seen a miracle, therefore they don't happen. Well, nobody claimed they happen all the time.

The Bible certainly doesn't claim that, you know, if the Bible is true, you'll see miracles all the time. Some people, some Christians like to think so, but that's not, the Bible doesn't make that claim. Miracles are done when God wants to do them and he doesn't always want to do them.

And I suspect that in the Bible times, the vast majority of people in the Old Testament never saw a miracle. All those many miracles in the Old Testament happened around the time of the Exodus or the time of Elijah and Elisha. And the other thousands of years, people didn't see miracles much.

The Bible doesn't say that miracles are something that happens so often that if they're real, we should have seen a few. Most people, even if the Bible is true, would not be expected to have seen miracles, but some did. And the ones who did said so, at least some of them.

And for someone to say, well, I don't trust them. Well, okay, don't trust them if you don't want to, but do you have a good reason not to? Are these men incompetent? They were there. Are they dishonest? Do they have a motive for lying to you? Not that can be discerned.

Is there evidence against what they said? Not a bit. Not one piece of evidence can ever be found that suggests that Jesus didn't walk on water. All that can be said is, I've never seen a man walk on water, therefore Jesus didn't.

Well, that's not evidence, that's prejudice. And these intellectual atheists ought to be,

have something a little more than prejudice to go on if they want to be respected. The truth of the matter is, if we come to the Gospels as we come to any other straightforward historical documents from the past and apply the same tests of credibility to them, we will have no more reason to doubt them than we have to doubt any of the histories written in ancient times before.

Now, no doubt some histories are not true that have been written about people, but if they're not true, it's because they were written by someone who's either incompetent or dishonest. We can't, I'm not in the habit of saying that about writers I don't know. I do know though that the writers who wrote the Gospels died for their faith, so they really believed it.

It sounds like they were honest. And they were either witnesses of these things or lived with the witnesses, so it sounds like they were competent. So really, if we apply all the tests to the Gospels, I'm talking about the Gospels here, we've got the rest of the Bible to consider.

But if we apply all the tests of the Gospels that we apply to any historical document of any kind, they measure up really, really well. Do you know, we don't have any eyewitness accounts of Alexander the Great or Attila the Hun. Or Julius Caesar.

No eyewitnesses. We have none of the accounts of eyewitnesses. We have four eyewitness accounts of Jesus.

We've got more evidence for the details of Jesus' life from people who were actually there than we have about virtually any other ancient historical figure that we have no doubts about. So if we bring doubts to our acceptance of the Gospel, we have to admit we're doing it with a prejudice. Because we don't have doubts about Alexander the Great and these other guys.

So why would we have doubts about Jesus? Because we want to. Because we want to have doubts. Because we don't want it to be true.

Because we have a prejudice that we're bringing to the investigation that it can't be true if it has this element, the supernatural. The people have free will and they can make those kind of decisions as they want to. I don't forbid them to.

I just won't respect them. Because they're being bigots. Bigotry is like the opposite of being intellectual and reasonable.

The reason I focus on the Gospels as much as I did at this point is because the Gospels are where we get our information about Jesus. And really, Jesus is where we get our information about everything else. So let's think about Jesus for a moment.

On the assumption that we have reasonably reliable records in the Gospels of the life of

Jesus, then we can find out what Jesus said and what he did from people who heard him say and do it. And when we do, we find that he said that he was the truth. He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And no one comes to the Father but through me. He said on several occasions, I came down from heaven. He said to his critics, you're from below.

I'm from above. I came down from my father. I bear witness of the truth, he said to Pilate.

For this reason I came, to bear witness to the truth. Do you know Jesus said in the old King James, verily I say unto you, more than 50 times. Do you know what the word verily means? Modern translation sometimes rendered this, I tell you the truth.

Verity means truth. Veritas in the Latin means truth. Verily means truthfully.

I'm telling you the truth. And so Jesus, if he is who he said he is, and he gave some pretty good evidences of it, said that he's telling the truth. He can be the source of all other truth for us.

Even truth about the Old Testament. Even truth about the writings of the apostles. What Jesus said becomes the touchstone for whether something is true or not.

Unless, like I said, we take some uniquely unreasonable approach to crediting the gospels. Because if you take the gospels of serious history, we read that Jesus worked miracles that no man could work. And that he himself predicted things that no man could predict, including his own death and resurrection, which he carried out and fulfilled.

And the witnesses say it happened. But I can choose to not believe them, but I won't ever have a good reason for not believing them. Just my own prejudices.

So I'm not such a prejudiced person. And I am an open-minded person. I have not seen miracles in my life that I could verify, suspended the laws of nature briefly.

Now I may have experienced some, but I don't know. There may be miracles I don't know about. I did have a diagnosis of celiac when I was a little kid, which is a lifelong genetic condition, which doctors say I don't have now.

My parents did pray for me to be healed. Maybe that was a miracle. But I'm not here to claim that I've seen miracles.

I don't necessarily expect to see a lot of miracles. Maybe that's, some people, that's why you don't see them. You know, according to your faith, be it unto you.

But the point I'm making is I don't need to see miracles in order to be open-minded about them. I can be open-minded because I'm just an honest guy without an agenda. If I

were a non-Christian, I would be as honest as I am today.

And I'd be looking at the evidence and I'd say, well, I don't know if there's supernatural or not, but I'm open to it if the evidence points that direction. But the naturalist is not open to it. He's narrow-minded.

He says the Christian's narrow-minded. The naturalist, the atheist is narrow-minded. He's saying only one set of data am I willing to even consider.

The other data that might be powerful that goes outside of my philosophical system, I'm not even going to consider that. I'll mock it. I'll ignore it.

I'll explain it away best I can, even counterintuitively. You know, I just have no respect for atheists who have seen the evidence and do this kind of thing with it. Here's the kind of things that people say to try to put down the Gospels.

Because we're going to depend on the Gospels for an awful lot in this lecture. I'm going to talk about Moses. I'm going to talk about the prophets.

I'm going to talk about the Old Testament. But we're going to use Jesus as our source because he's the one who knew more than anyone else and spoke the truth consistently. So whatever he says about them is what I'm going to accept.

But why should I accept him? Well, here's the things that you've heard maybe, or I've certainly heard from skeptics about the Gospels. First of all, they say the authors were believers wishing to convince others. Well, I agree.

They were believers and they did want to convince others. Just because someone believes something is true and wants to convince others doesn't mean they're wrong. The real issue is, did they really believe it and did they really have expert knowledge of it? I'd say I'm a pretty good expert at speaking about things I've seen if I was paying attention.

And they were qualified. Yeah, the fact that they're believers, I've already addressed. I don't really see that as a problem.

They say the Gospels were written a long time after the events that they allege, and therefore they couldn't remember them well. Well, most scholars believe that at least three of the Gospels were written within 40 years of the crucifixion of Christ. Three of the Gospels were probably written before 70 AD.

Jesus died in 30 AD, that's 40 years later. Now, some of you younger people here may not realize it, but old people can remember things that happened 40 years ago. My dad is going to be 90 next month, or the month after next.

And he can still tell me how he and my mom met, 66 years ago, or 67 years ago. They

just celebrated their 66th anniversary. He still remembers it, amazing.

67 years later, still remembers it. I doubt that he'll ever be able to forget it. You know why? Because things that are that important to people are hard to forget.

Now, I would suggest that nothing happened in relation to his courtship that were as remarkable or memorable as seeing people walk on water, or seeing dead people raised, or a leper cleansed instantly. I think it can be kind of hard to forget that, I would think, especially if it's defined your whole life. And if you've spent your whole life since then telling those stories to people, because that's what the apostles did, that was what they did.

They repeated the stories of Jesus that they had seen and heard. It gets really hard to forget what you've seen if you're repeating it all the time to people. But even if they had never repeated it once, I can remember things from, I'm 62 years old now, I can remember things from when I was four or five.

I haven't repeated them every day, but I still remember them vividly. So for people to say, well, it was written a long time later, he couldn't remember it all. Nonsense, that's just nonsense.

Thinking people should not let people get away with that, saying things like that. And yet Christians shrink when they hear this stuff, because the people who say it are so confident, and they think they're intellectual. Listen, any intellectual who believes they've got the goods to disprove the Bible, they either do not know, or they're not honest, I'll guarantee you that.

Listen to their arguments, they're all wrong. Richard Dawkins once said, if somebody tells you that something is true, and they can't give you very good evidence that that's true, I'd suggest you don't believe them. Well, that rule he made, can someone tell me what evidence there is for that rule? That it isn't true, right? I shouldn't believe Dawkins, because he said we shouldn't believe people unless they can give evidence.

Well, he can't give any evidence that we should do that. So his statement by his own standards is not true. See, these people are not thinkers, they are ideologues and haters in many cases.

I don't wanna call them haters, that's their tactic, they call us that. But let's face it, a lot of them hate God. And hate religion.

Not all of them, but Dawkins certainly does. Christopher Hitchens certainly does. Sam Harris certainly does.

Haters of God, haters of people who believe in God. And there's no question about that. But emotion and hatred and prejudice are not the best ways to discover the truth.

It's much better to be open-minded. And when you're open-minded and you listen to their arguments and say, wait a minute, that argument doesn't even make sense. The Gospels were written 40 years later.

By the way, Mark may have been written only 20 years after the events, but it doesn't matter. Let's put them all as late as 40 years. It was in the lifetime of the people who were there.

And if you had walked with Jesus for three years, you think you wouldn't remember at least 39 days worth of material? That's how many days of Jesus' life are recorded, about 39 days. You think from three and a half years walking with him, you couldn't remember the most remarkable aspects of 39 days? Maybe if you got Alzheimer's you couldn't, but most people could. Another objection is that the record of miracles makes them suspect or outright unreliable.

I've already commented on some of these things. It's true that there are many miracle reports that probably aren't true elsewhere than in the Bible. There are people who are very superstitious and there are people whose credibility may be questioned.

The writers of the Gospels are not of that number. For one thing, they were independent witnesses of many things that they saw and wrote separately in different continents. Some of the Gospels were written in Rome.

One was written in Palestine. One was written in Ephesus, Turkey. These guys weren't comparing notes when they wrote these things.

These are independent witnesses. And if they say 5,000 were fed, I'll believe it. Well, I mean, I don't have to believe it, but I don't have to disbelieve it.

That's a fact. I mean, there's no reason to disbelieve it just because it's a miracle. They say that the Gospels present a fiction based upon the Jewish expectations of the hope for Messiah.

This usually comes up when Christians say, well, Jesus fulfilled Messianic prophecy. The skeptic says, oh, you're so gullible. Don't you realize that Jesus knew and the Gospel writers knew what the prophet said about the Messiah and they either, either Jesus deliberately went through the scripted thing that the Messiah was supposed to do or the disciples making up fables about him made up things that were to make him fit with what the prophecies say? Well, the truth is Jesus did not fulfill the prophecies that the Jews expected the Messiah to fulfill.

They thought the Messiah was gonna be a military leader. They thought he was gonna be a political leader. They wanted him to deliver them from the Romans.

That's all the Jews wanted from a Messiah and Jesus didn't try any of those things. On

one occasion in John 6, 15, it says, the Jews came to try to take him forcibly and make him their king and he wouldn't do it. He wouldn't go there.

He didn't wanna be the kind of Messiah that they wanted him to be. He did not live his life in such a way as to try to convince people he was the Messiah. You know, Jesus never made a public declaration that he was the Messiah.

He told the woman of the well that privately, told the disciples that privately at Caesarea Philippi and Pilate in a private interview when Pilate said, are you the king of the Jews? He said, I am, but never in public. Once his enemies came, he said, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you're the Messiah, tell us plainly. He said, I've told you enough.

You don't believe me, so I'm not gonna tell you anymore. Jesus was not someone going around trying to convince people he was the Messiah. He just went around doing what it was his mission to do.

And afterwards, the disciples, who had originally had different expectations about the Messiah, realized, wait, what he did actually did fulfill these other prophecies that no one was thinking about the Messiah fulfilling. No one can say that Jesus calculated to make himself look like the Messiah in the Jewish eyes because he didn't do the things that the Jews wanted the Messiah to do, expect him to do. And he knew what they wanted, but he didn't go there.

There are some who say that the story of Jesus in the gospels is a myth, that Jesus never lived, but that we do find in the mythology of ancient pagan religions, many of the same features of the gospel stories. For example, Mithra and the Egyptian gods, Horus and Osiris and Krishna in India and Dionysus in Greece, these pagan gods, they have their mythologies that their cultures all held even before Christianity was around. And this is commonly said by some who've read this kind of material.

They say, Jesus didn't exist. He's just a composite of different features of different mythologies. They say, do you know that Horus and Mithra and Krishna, they all were said to be born of a virgin.

They walked on water. They turned water into wine. They had 12 disciples.

They were called the son of God. They were crucified and three days later, they rose again. And all this was before Christianity came along.

So when we see those things in the life of Jesus, it's quite obvious, it's just another myth of those types, borrowing from those other myths. There's a video on YouTube called Zeitgeist, Z-E-I-T-G-E-I-S-T, Zeitgeist, the German word means spirit of the age. Zeitgeist video basically makes these claims I just made, that all these pagan gods had the same story that Jesus had.

And therefore it's clear that the disciples just borrowed elements from these stories. The truth is, and anyone can prove this to himself if they want to, get an encyclopedia, look up Mithra, look up Krishna, look up Dionysus, look up these deities that supposedly had so much in common with Jesus. And you know what you find? I did this because people were asking me about this video Zeitgeist that was saying all these things.

I looked them up, I read them all, I studied them. None of those were born of a virgin in their mythology. Even in the myths, they never claimed they were born of a virgin.

That's just being made up by the critics. None of them had 12 disciples. None of them walked on water.

One of them made water into wine because he was the god of wine, Dionysus. The Romans called him Bacchus. None of them were crucified.

Most of them were never called the son of God. And none of them rose from the dead in the myths. That is, if you read the standard mythology that was taught in Parthia and in Egypt and in Greece and in India about these gods, none of them have any of those features, none of them.

Only the gospels do. In other words, though people say this, there's just no truth in it. And you can research it yourself and you should.

So you can nail them when they make this false accusation against the gospels. The gospels didn't make anything up. The gospels, unlike any mythologies of the pagans, tell a story of a man who actually walked on earth and had connection with known historical characters.

The gospel writers are careful to say this happened in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar when so-and-so was the governor here and so-and-so was the governor here. And Pontius Pilate was the procurator. And all these guys were reigning at that time.

And it was this year of his reign and so forth. And Jesus connects with people like Herod Antipas, Herod the Great is in the story, Pontius Pilate, and other people who are known from history. None of the mythological gods ever have any connection with real people.

They're just myths. The gods are not Olympus. They never have any contact with anyone who's a historical character.

They're made up stories. No one ever set them in any historical setting. The gospels, all of them, place Jesus in a historical setting true to life of its time.

They have no, there's no similarities of any kind between the gospel records of Jesus and the myths, although it's often popularly said there were. Couple more points and I'm going to give you a break. It is said the four gospels were selected from a much larger

number for political reasons or religious reasons.

Often it's said that Constantine did this. Constantine was the first Christian emperor and Rome, the Roman Empire became Christian when he became emperor or mostly Christian. And it is sometimes said, well, before the time of Constantine, there were hundreds of gospels out there.

The Gnostic gospels and the four gospels, hundreds of gospels. This is what it said, for example, in the Da Vinci Code. And that Constantine had a particular religious and political agenda.

He wanted a Jesus of a certain sort. And so he picked these four gospels and burned all the rest. And so we don't really know what Jesus was really like.

And perhaps these Gnostic gospels give a better picture of him, they say. Well, first of all, nothing about that is historically accurate. Constantine didn't make any selection of which gospels would be in the Bible.

That was decided 150 years or more before he was born. Irenaeus and Tatian, both were church fathers living around 170 AD, and both of them identified Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the four gospels that all Christians all over the world accepted, and no one accepted any others. Irenaeus said that in 170.

Tatian also exhibited that when he made his harmony of the four gospels. That was 150 years before Constantine was around. Constantine came much too late to make any decisions about which gospels were gonna be accepted by Christians.

They were already there. And the Gnostic gospels were already being rejected by the church in the second century. Constantine was the fourth century.

The Gnostic gospels were written in the second and third century, obviously after the apostles were dead. Yet they have the names of Philip, Mary, Peter, Thomas, Judas. You know, the Gnostic gospels written long after these people were dead didn't claim to be written by those people.

Obviously, the people who wrote them were liars. They claimed to be someone they weren't. Now, when the very opening line of a book says, this is Philip, the apostle of Jesus writing, and Philip's been dead for 50 years, you find out that the person who wrote that book is a liar.

His opening sentence is a lie, documentable lie. So why would you believe anything else he wrote? Now, the gospels in our Bible are all anonymous. None of the writers mentioned who they were.

They weren't claiming to be anybody. They just wrote because they were who they were.

Well, how do we know who they were? Because the church received those documents from them.

The church, it's not surprising the church would remember who gave them their authoritative stories of Jesus. And the church tells us it was Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John. The writers didn't say they were.

They didn't make any claims for themselves. The writers of the Gnostic gospels all claimed to be someone important, but none of them were. Now, sometimes people say, but Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John aren't really the authors.

The church just gave those names because they were famous people and they wanted it to seem credible. Well, you might say that about Matthew and John. John was certainly an important apostle.

Matthew, more of an obscure apostle. But Luke and Mark weren't even apostles at all. In fact, they're very obscure people.

Mark is hardly known to us in the Bible, and Luke isn't known to us at all in the Bible, except that he appears in two lists of people that were with Paul. These are very obscure names. If somebody was making up false attributions of authorship, they would have picked people more impressive than Mark or Luke.

They would have picked, like the Gnostic gospel writers did two centuries later, Peter or Philip, someone who is important. Anyway, the evidence is not favorable. The evidence is not favorable toward the critics on this.

Everything about the Bible and its original claims are still believed by honest intellectuals who look at the evidence. One argument is the gospels disagree with each other. They do on some issues say things differently.

Sometimes they put events in different orders. Sometimes they paraphrase. That's true.

You'll find if you compare the same story in two or more of the gospels very many times, the details are a little different or they're in a different order or something like that. It's very commonplace. Critics have been pointing that out for centuries.

But that doesn't mean they aren't telling the truth. It's obvious that some of the details, we may not know whether the details are more like the way he said it or the way like he said it, but the event is the same event and the basic story is the same. So we have four different accounts of the resurrection morning and who saw Jesus and so forth.

And all four gospels give different kind of lists of who saw him when and so forth. Well, what we have there is proof that they didn't collude to lie to us. There's no reason why they weren't all right.

All four accounts can be true. These are independent witnesses. And you know what? They all say Jesus rose from the dead and that people saw him afterwards.

When you got witnesses like that, if they don't agree on every detail, at least that shows that they didn't get together and practice collusion and try to deceive people. They just told the story as they remembered it and they end up confirming each other. Although, you know, if two witnesses in court get up and they haven't heard each other and they're testifying about a crime or something, if they say exactly the same thing as each other, the court throws it out.

They know witnesses don't do that. If they say exactly the same thing as each other, they know that there's been collusion, it's dishonest. Real witnesses don't do that.

Real witnesses don't remember everything exactly the same or in the same order or whatever. And so the four gospels really, as far as I'm concerned, the evidence from within them, and I've read them many times is just the sort that you'd expect from true accounts. It is sometimes said the gospels have changed through time.

People like to give the example of the game of telephone at a party, 10 people are in a line in chairs and someone whispers something into one's ear and they whisper it to each other. And then the guy at the end says it and it's totally different than the original. I guess it changes a little bit.

But, and they say, that's how the Bible is. Well, not really. You know, the value of the game of telephone is that the person who first gave the message in the first year is still there to hear the after and he can tell how much it's changed.

If we don't have the originals, then we don't have any evidence that it's changed at all. For all we know, it may be very, very, very much like the originals. True, we don't have the original manuscripts.

We have copies, like 8,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament, about 5,000 in Greek, about 3,000 in Latin. They can be compared with each other and they are very much the same. They have some differences, but for the most part, they are the same.

And all the textual critics I'm aware of say they haven't changed much. But people will bulldoze you with that. You know, Bart Ehrman's a very famous anti-Christian writer, New York Times bestseller.

He wrote *Misquoting Jesus* and some other anti-Christian books. His big thing was he was an evangelical Christian. He went to Moody Bible Institute, he went to Wheaton, went off to Princeton, and he says, when he went to Princeton, he learned that we don't have the original manuscripts and that the manuscripts we have don't all agree with each other word for word and therefore, we can't know what the Bible says.

So his faith went out the window. He's now an agnostic. I think, how did you get through Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton and into Princeton before you found that out? I knew that in high school.

I knew in high school that we don't have the original manuscripts and we only have copies of copies. That's not a problem. That's true of all the ancient books we have from antiquity.

We don't have the original writings of Shakespeare. We don't have the original writings of any of the Latin or the Greek historians. We have a few manuscripts of them and they're usually not even very near the time of the original writing, but we don't have any problem with that because scholars know that things don't change that much when people are really trying to preserve them.

And the manuscript evidence for the Bible is so strong. We have a little scrap of John's gospel that dates from 127 AD. That's just a generation after John wrote it, perhaps.

It's only a scrap. It only has a few words on it, but it can be compared with the manuscripts of that same portion of John all the way through to more modern times. And those words are the same.

Textual scholars have said, we're able to know what the original reading was, about 97%. There's about 3% there that we're not sure sometimes, but it's not important stuff. It's almost all misspelled words.

One manuscript misspells a name that another one spells correctly. That's not going to change the meaning of anything. The manuscript evidence is very sound.

We have no reason to doubt that we have the gospels essentially as they were written.

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