

The Bible an Authentic Book

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 May 2016

Preacher: Brian Edwards

[0 : 0 0] was of the the material I'm using but Barry has given us a good clue of something that I wanted to say anyway and that is that there's a huge amount of detail that I'll be giving as I gave yesterday I'll be giving this evening and in a way I I would say to you please don't worry about that there's a sense in which what I want to do is create an impression that is backed up by fact so so long as you understand what I'm saying and that might be a moot point anyway so long as you understand what I'm saying it doesn't matter if you don't remember because you'll get a big picture and then at the end I'll tell you what you can do to restore all the knowledge that's gone out of your mind quite easily so you're there before me so do do bear that in mind it I don't expect people to remember it all and and and I wouldn't remember all that I'm saying this evening just like that but you'll get the picture and that's what I want I want you to get a a picture of some some areas that actually will be new to you and I'm going to be saying to you listen you can go away and now start reading your Bible with a new pair of glasses because you'll be looking for some of these things in the Bible and they'll mean much more to you than they did before and the other thing I want to say is that there is a certain degree of overlap in some of these talks so that there will be some things you say yeah yeah he said that last night well I'll be saying it slightly differently but if things pop up that you've already seen well be encouraged because that meant you were at least awake for that little bit of last night so our subject this evening is the Bible as an authentic book genuine reliable trustworthy and how does it show itself to be that that's what we're looking at this is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down we know that his testimony is true Jesus did many other things as well if every one of them were written down I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written so reads John chapter 21 now there are two claims here first that the gospel records are true and an accurate account of the life death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and then secondly that there's so much more in the three years of Jesus public ministry that we are not old and I estimate that we have no more than one thousandth part and if you want to know in question time I can tell you how I come to that conclusion we have no more than one thousandth part of his teaching and actions in his three years of ministry John's claim reflects the verse originally penned believe it or not by a Jewish poet around the year AD 1050 and found scribbled on the wall of an asylum Rosie and I took the opportunity of the sunshine today and we walked on the cliffs above runswick and I sang to Rosie but I'll spare you that the words of this lovely poem could we with ink the ocean fill and with the skies of parchment made where every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry nor could the whole contain the scroll though stretched from sky to sky isn't that beautiful I wouldn't mind being able to scratch that on the wall anywhere for people to read if the Bible is a reliable and authentic book it will show all the hallmarks of being so I want to begin by talking about the evidence of witnesses which is something people often overlook Simon Greenleaf was one of the founders of the

Harvard Law School in the United States of America he like many others after him and some of you will know the names of them many of you here will have read who moved the stone by Frank Morrison 1930s book that is so don't indicate whether you've read it or not he set out to disprove the resurrection of Christ just as Frank Morrison did in the event like others after him Simon Greenleaf persuaded himself that the gospel records were authentic eyewitness accounts of the most momentous life death and resurrection in human history and he published his conclusions he wrote a great law book treatise of law which actually still used by law students today and he wrote his conclusions under the title the trustworthiness of the gospel and I'm going to run through a summary of it because I think it's very important and this is what we should apply when we come to the records of the Bible old or new testament first of all he said documents ancient or modern have the right to be taken as a true and correct record unless or until proven otherwise a witness is presumed credible until the contrary is shown thirdly the number of independence is not whether it is possible that the testimony may be false but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true the character of the author of a document is to be considered trustworthy unless or until it is proven otherwise a witness is presumed credible until the contrary is shown thirdly the number of independent witnesses confirms the greater likelihood of the accuracy of their report and remember we have four gospels and five independent records of the resurrection fourthly the agreement of their evidence significantly enhances the truth of their record and that's an important point the agreement of their evidence significantly enhances the accuracy of their record and fifthly the reliability of the reliability of a report is confirmed by the degree to which details match known events and circumstances that's what we were looking at last night and we'll be looking at that again a little bit in a different way this evening that the known events and circumstances that are there in the Bible that's why it's great that the Bible is a book of history because you can check it out and we can check it against things we know from other evidence was around at that time now we can and we must apply all of these tests all of these tests when we come to the Bible and if people would only do that they would never have a problem with the authority and accuracy of the biblical record so let me begin in a little bit more detail in an area that I did deal with last night literacy in the first century there are many good reasons to claim that the four gospels were complete and circulating before the close of the first century I haven't time this evening to demonstrate that but there only ever were four gospels and they were accepted universally by the church and no others there were a few pseudo gospels I can answer that if you want at question time but there were four gospels that were accepted by the churches across the Roman Empire contrary to popular imagination the records of the life of Christ did not circulate only as oral traditions sometime until sometime in the second century that's yesterday's news there was nothing unusual in the usual as I if I may repeat what I said yesterday during the first century and earlier in a whole speech being accurately remembered and recorded the art of memorizing was incredibly well advanced in an age that had little means of storing information the modern scholar is not somebody who knows the answer he just knows where to find the answer the Greek historian Xenophon in the fourth and fifth century BC tells of an educated Greek called

Nicolaus who could repeat by heart the whole of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey that's 24,000 lines if you know anything about Alexander Solzhenitsyn you'll know that he could do something similar as well wrote a book in prison and then stored it on memory for when he came out even an oral passing on of information could be presumed to be accurate more people could read than is normally accepted and understood by most people today and remember the the disciples the disciples the disciples the first Christians were schooled in the belief that the written word was final and authoritative they had the high a high respect for the scroll of the Torah the Hebrew Scriptures they would naturally expect a written record of the life of their Savior Jesus Christ we know that the students of rabbis and philosophers kept notes of the instruction they received books were widely read in the first century history's agricultural practice verse satire satire philosophy biography more people could read than was once thought and more people owned books or scrolls than we once assumed the Ethiopian in Acts 8 was reading from his own personal scroll of the prophet Isaiah and there was a high degree of literacy every Jewish boy was expected to be able to read and no one would be surprised when Zechariah requested a writing tablet Luke chapter 1 civil servants and others used use notebooks for their work Matthews the centurion the estate workers in the parable of Luke 6 they were all able to read and write nobody thought that was unusual and remember if you were here yesterday you'll know this but forgive me for repeating it note books were an early form of books made out of parchment sheets of or thin very thin layers of wood fastened together with rings the Greek language borrowed the Latin for this they called it the membrane and this is exactly the word that is used in 2 Timothy 4 and verse 13 the word parchments there is the word membrane it's not a Greek word at all and here is a first century notebook people were using notebooks and Paul was using a notebook all over Palestine texts and graffiti have turned up in Aramaian Nabataean Greek Hebrew Latin including marriage and divorce documents food lists orders for merchandise complaints about the wrong delivery of merchandise soldiers pay slips legal documents even graffiti not infrequently text books and not infrequently text books were in more than one language when Mount Vesuvius in erupted and engulfed Pompeii in AD 79 its legacy was to preserve a snapshot of first century Greek and Roman life writing appears everywhere all over the walls literally thousands of inscriptions political advertising love notes and even the erotic have all been found scratched onto the walls a local baker you see him and his lovely wife here a local baker ensured that everyone would be impressed with his education by displaying a beautiful picture of himself and his wife holding a scroll and a writing tablet we have been educated we can read and write now there's no suggestion that the Gospels were written on the hoof as I said last night as the disciples accompanied Jesus but it would be natural to expect some listeners to note down the teaching and parables of this remarkable rabbi they were doing it all the time this would be fully in keeping with what we know of the literacy and note taking of first century Palestine there's no reason why the Gospel writers didn't have access to written written records even their own no reason at all secondly the evidence of eyewitnesses

I want to run through some of the many episodes in the Gospels that bear the marks of an eyewitness account it'll be pointing you in the direction and when you're reading the scriptures for yourself from here on you'll say hey hang on isn't that also an evidence of an eyewitness account you see John claims to be an eyewitness to the events this is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down we know that his testimony is true and John emphasizes the fact that he was a personal witness to all that Christ did and taught during his three years of public ministry Luke similarly Luke doesn't claim to have been an eyewitness but his emphasis remember is upon the painstaking care with which he sourced his material I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning so that you may know the certainty of these things you have been taught and we've either got to accept the truth of that statement remember Simon Greenleaf we either accept the truth of that statement or else we are dealing with a blatant liar and forger of the first order for which evidence must be produced it's the responsibility remember of the critic to show wherever and whenever they reneged on their faith in Christ or the moral standards they upheld go on the attack when people tell you that the Bible is not a history book and it's full of mistakes ask them to give you a few and ask them if they read the Bible to start with and then ask them to demonstrate the reasons why they're saying what they're saying remember most of these men died for their passionate belief in the perfect life and literal resurrection of Jesus Christ remember again and again the correct legal requirement is that the character of the author of a document is to be considered trustworthy unless or until it is proven to be otherwise now I want to give you a few obvious examples of eyewitness accounts listen to this one this is Philip's introduction of

[13 : 32] Philip you remember found Nathanael and this is his introduction of Jesus Christ to Nathanael listen carefully Philip found Nathanael and told him we have found the one Moses wrote about in the law and about whom the prophets also wrote Jesus of Nazareth son of Joseph Nazareth?

can anything good come from there? Nathanael asked now assuming this was written in the second century as the critics used to believe why would they have written like that?

in the second by the second century everyone knew that Nazareth wasn't even mentioned in the Old Testament so why suggest Jesus comes from Nazareth? Bethlehem is the Old Testament prophecy and everybody knew that so you would say I have found the one Moses wrote about in the law and about whom the prophets spoke Jesus of Bethlehem and then the son of Joseph look by the second century the church universally was believing that Jesus was not the son of Joseph he was the son of God so why call him the son of Joseph?

why not go straight to the heart of the matter and call him son of God? I'll tell you why because Philip didn't introduce Jesus to Nathanael in the second century he introduced him before the year 30 AD and this is exactly what he said take this one John 8 Jesus writing in the sand now I know there's a textual problem as to whether John 8 should be in the Gospels at all or in that place in the Gospels I don't have a problem with it and for this reason as one there are other reasons and I'll give you those if you want afterwards but this is one of them and actually it's interesting that C.S. Lewis the great Ulster literary critic pointed this out himself in his book What Are We to Make of Jesus?

1950 and he points this out you remember the account the woman is brought she stood in front of Jesus and they said what are you going to do about her? we know what Moses said what are you going to do?

[15 : 40] and what do we read next? Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger in the sand and Lewis says what did he write? we have no idea and if you were John writing the record of it what would you have done afterwards?

you'd have zipped up the front to try and read what he wrote but it was in the sand it would have been scuffed over not there maybe John said to Jesus excuse me Lord what did you write? did you write? and Jesus said you'd love to know wouldn't you John?

and that's all we know why did John say it? well he said it he wrote it because that's exactly what happened he's got no more explanation of what happened there than you and I have but he wrote it that is the mark of an eyewitness account and Lewis says he says as a literary historian and he can say that I can't I'm perfectly convinced that whatever else the gospels are they are not legends I've read a great deal of legend and I'm quite clear they are not the same sort of thing the art of inventing little irrelevant details to make an imaginary scene more convincing is a purely modern art that's JK Rowling Harry Potter stuff it's not first century fiction they didn't write like that and what about the blind man at Bethsaida have you ever thought of this?

the account in Mark is interesting I've jumped on it haven't I? ok well I'll go on and then go back the account in Mark 8.22 is interesting for a number of reasons Mark is well known for his detail and there are some very unusual features in this healing of this blind man why do we need to know that Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village why do we need to know that detail?

and why did Jesus spit on the man's eyes something never recorded of any of his other miracles? and unlike Jesus healing miracles on all other occasions why was this man healed in two stages?

[17 : 34] looks a bit of a failure if you think about it now there's no certain answer to any of these questions except they are details that would hardly have been invented it happened that way so Mark recorded it it's as simple as that or go back one John's relationship to the high priest have you ever thought of this?

Simon Peter and another disciples were following Jesus because this disciple was known to the high priest that's John he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard but Peter had to wait outside the door the other disciple who was known to the high priest is repeated so there's no doubt about it spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in who was John?

a Galilean fisherman now I'm not in any way trying to put down fishermen but it wasn't the highest order in society how was a Galilean fisherman known to the high priest?

why invent it? it raises problems and solves none the story of Peter's denial doesn't even need that insert why is it there? because it happens to be true but we don't know the detail of what the relationship was the inclusion you see of so many personal names in the Gospels and Acts is evidence of eyewitness accounts for example the reference to Joseph and Nicodemus as members of the Jewish parliament, Luke 23 would be a dangerous insertion if it never existed because even decades after the event such a claim could easily be checked in the Jewish records what nonsense this is there never were such people by that name in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish parliament and you could check it out Luke mentions as we said last night no fewer than 117 living people by name in his Gospel and Acts and you could check them out he wanted you to he was happy for you to and as you go through the New Testament and read it and read the Gospels you can find the same sort of things yourselves hunt for them, find them keep a new pair of glasses on to look for them and then think of the sermons of Jesus the Gospel, in the Gospels we discover differences between one account and another of the things Jesus taught, right?

you've been challenged on that more than once I'm sure however, remember this like any preacher of good news Jesus almost certainly dealt with the same subject even illustrating with the same parables on more than one occasion and with slight variations even when the Gospel writers record the same sermon on the same occasion we must never assume that what we have in our Bible is necessarily the full text of what Jesus actually said he often spent the whole day teaching and all we've got is a summary that you can read in 15 minutes or less and there would have been a great deal of repetition as the crowd came and went any open air preacher knows this he's repeating himself with slight differences as the crowds come and go and on the assumption of his almost daily teaching over the three years of public ministry we have only, as I said earlier, about one thousandth part of all that Jesus said and did critics can't have it both ways listen the differences are clear evidence that the Gospel writers were compiling their work independently of each other so the critics suggest the differences are errors conveniently overlooking the fact that the wide agreement of agreement in detail is yet therefore even more impressive on the other hand where the Gospel writers agree in actual detail the critics assume they were all using the same source and therefore they weren't independent but if they were all using the same source why would they knowingly introduce differences the fallacy and the prejudice of all that is obvious critics can't have it both ways think about that and then what about authentic service?

[21 : 45] authentic silence you know sometimes what the Bible doesn't say is evidence of its authentic character I'll give you just two examples the first is obvious there's no reference in the New Testament Gospels or letters to the destruction of Jerusalem that most cataclysmic happening in Israel in the year AD 70 General Titus who later became Emperor destroyed the city and became known as the Golden Boy of Rome because he clobbered the Jews Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple yet there is no postscript in any of the Gospels to say that it had been fulfilled the end of the Jewish ceremonial system is a major theme of the letter to the Hebrews and the total destruction of the temple would have been an irresistible evidence of that would it not?

this complete silence interestingly was a major factor in convincing the liberal New Testament scholar John A.T. Robinson and I won't ask you to put your hand up but most of you here will remember honest to God that the whole nation was talking about and hardly anybody had ever read that was John A.T. Robinson he was a liberal critic and he died a few years ago but he decided to set himself the task of checking out the claims that the whole New Testament was written 100 and 150 years after the close of the disciples, the apostles and a thorough careful study of the subject 1976 he published a book called Redating the New Testament it's a fascinating book to read he goes through every book of the New Testament and his conclusion is more conservative than most conservative evangelicals need to be he was convinced the entire New Testament from Matthew to Revelation was complete before the year A.T. 70 he said this may not be my last word on the subject as a matter of fact it was because he died a few years later but that's very interesting and it was this particular lack of evidence of course a lack of evidence that the Christians have been talking about for years and it's nice when the liberals catch up what about the anti-climax of Acts?

you've thought of this haven't you? don't you find the close of the Acts of the Apostles frustrating? I said yesterday Acts doesn't close it just stops anyone, all film directors are very concerned to have what they call a good closer every film has got to end on a good note so you go away thinking about that one but you don't with the Acts of the Apostles the dramatic and exciting events of the life of Paul are brought to a sudden and unexpected end it just stops Paul is on trial for his life before the Emperor Nero and with a stated desire to continue with his evangelism by visiting Spain he's left for two years, quote, in his own rented house in Rome entertaining his friends and preaching but what happened next?

it is inconceivable that anyone making up this account in the late 1st or 2nd century would not have finished the story Paul as a heroic martyr is exactly what the church needed but they don't get it we're pretty sure Paul died under the condemnation of Nero but we don't have the hard evidence in the Bible the only evidence we could thoroughly trust and since there's no evidence that the end of Acts has been lost you can't make that claim well it was there but somebody's knocked it out somewhere along the line no, no, nobody ever claims that well, they will but without any evidence, of course the best explanation is that that is as far as events have progressed when Luke wrote Acts simple, isn't it?

it was completed before the death of Paul placing the Gospel of Acts and the Gospel of Luke and Acts prior to AD 67 which is the year Paul probably was killed it could have been earlier in AD 64 what other reasonable explanation can be offered?

[25 : 52] authentic silence look for some more what about authentic letters? no one can read the New Testament letters with an unbiased mind without the conviction that they are reading real correspondence from real men to real churches composed of real people with real issues in real time history what about the personal greetings?

you know the New Testament letters are full of personal references in all the known pseudepigraphy that's the false writings around this time and there is some claiming to be from the hand of the apostle and elsewhere again if you want to put that into your memory bank for questions we can have a look at that later of all the pseudepigraphy in the first two or three centuries there is nothing like the New Testament letters nothing literature of this period never invented lists of imaginary people simply to make the work appear authentic the closing greetings of Paul's letter to the Church of Rome are sent to 26 people by name almost half of them women and all of them are given specific greetings isn't that lovely?

the personal details are either the work of a master forger and supreme liar or they're evidence of an authentic letter which is the most reasonable to accept in addition Paul commends Phoebe to the Church and includes Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, Quartus who each insisted on sending their greetings with Paul's to those 27 people in the 26 people in the Church in Rome a total of 35 named people would never be invented and never were by the false writings of a few decades later I think that may have been my mobile that sent me could you get rid of it please?

thank you thank you incidentally, and again we saw this last night Erastus you'll remember is introduced do you remember that? where are we?

for those of you who weren't here yesterday Erastus is introduced by Paul as the city treasurer at Corinth a claim that would be very easy to verify he would be in the public records in fact it has been verified he is in the public records his name was discovered in 1929 outside the theatre at Corinth inscribed on a marble pavement that he had laid at his own expense however the authentic nature of the New Testament letters goes far beyond the greetings that top and tail most of the letters think of the issues that are involved all the letters of Paul are dealing with specific issues facing the churches you know that don't you?

[28 : 37] the Galatians are being led astray by false teaching the Colossians are in danger of being sidetracked by empty philosophy the Corinthians are among much else weak in discipline and divided by factions the Ephesians need to learn the lesson of unity and the Thessalonians have a problem with the death and the return of Christ Paul didn't just sit there and think I know I'll write a letter to the Thessalonians there was always a reason for him writing Paul's comment about having to face off Peter have you ever thought about this one?

when he's writing to the Galatians chapter 2 you remember how he said he had to even confront Peter whose commitment to the gospel of faith alone for salvation had temporarily slipped and the fact that even Barnabas had been led astray that would never have been invented by a later writer when Peter was held in such high esteem nobody would have written that in the first, second or third century because Peter was held in such high esteem nobody would want to make up the story that Peter had actually slipped in his understanding of justification by faith alone that is evidence of an authentic letter from Paul written at the time of a vital theological issue for the infant church it's connected with Acts 15 and the council in Jerusalem and then the cross references where Paul continues the correspondence of an earlier letter 1 Corinthians 5 Paul dealt firmly with the Corinthian tolerance of an immoral member his commands were eventually heeded the man who had been disciplined came to repentance and the church didn't know now what to do with him and Paul writes to Corinthians among other reasons to encourage them to a pastoral restoration of the repentant man it's a beautiful slip over between 1 and 2 Corinthians watch for it similarly in 2 Thessalonians

Paul cleared up some of the misunderstandings that arose from his letter his first letter to them the two cross over quite clearly and he's often referring to previous visits or letters that he's already sent this is the third time I'm writing to you he says to the Corinth how many more times before you get it sorted the Apostle Paul is constantly crossing over hey, and what about the comings and goings in the letters I find this fascinating just follow them through there are frequent references to fellow workers the church the church Phoebe will arrive in Rome Tychicus will be sent to Ephesus shortly oh and Timothy to Philippi there are references to all of these Romans Ephesians Philippians I'm not giving you the references Epaphroditus so willingly spared by the Philippians to assist Paul will be coming back soon to them don't worry he's on his way back to demonstrate that he's fully recovered from his near fatal illness over which the church has been so concerned in one Thessalonians

Paul is glad to have received an encouragement encouraging report from Timothy who has just returned from them and in his first letter to Timothy the young man is urged to stay on in Ephesus where he can be most useful when Paul wrote his next letter to Timothy it's packed with the movements of Christian workers he requests Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible bringing Mark as well he urgently adds that do your best to get here before winter you wouldn't slip that bit of irrelevant stuff in if you were making it up and this is why Paul requests his cloak that's clever isn't it for a forger which he left with Carpus in Troas why bother about where he left it and with whom and his scrolls and notebooks remember the membrane Demas has abandoned the gospel altogether and has slipped off to Thessalonica Paul has had to contend with Alexander the metal worker who did me great deal of harm Crescens and Titus and Tychicus have moved on to Galatia Dalmatia and Ephesus respectively

Erastus stayed at Corinth poor Trophimus had to be left behind in Miletus because he was too ill to travel and of all the leaders only Luke is still with him however Paul wasn't entirely alone because he could send greetings from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudio and all the brothers greetings are to be sent by the way to Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus none of that would be made up it's real live stuff and it makes it so exciting to read and there's so much more like this and if time allowed we could follow the movements of Priscilla and Aquila you ever tried that?

[33 : 16] poor Aquila Priscilla never mind Aquila but Priscilla must have longed for a route somewhere they start off in Pontus they go to Rome you'll find them back in Corinth and then they go to Ephesus and then they're to Rome again and then they go to Ephesus she must have been longing for a settled home and everywhere they went they're setting up shop and they're setting up a school to train other people and a home for hospitality they're a brilliant couple Priscilla and Aquila now all of this is evidence of reliable first century right it meshes together like a beautiful jigsaw you need a bit of work to dig it out and put it all together like any jigsaw but it's all there and there isn't a piece missing either well there are a few bits that we're not quite sure where Paul was because he's all over the place no amount of clever forgery could fit the details of people, places and problems into such a collection of letters without glaring errors creeping in these details fit perfectly with the known movements of Paul and his companions recorded in the book of Acts and then what about that authentic signature of Paul you know Paul had to warn the young churches against those he called false apostles who were circulating letters bearing his name

Paul warned the Thessalonians against reports or letters supposed to have come from us 2 Thessalonians 2 and for this reason on at least 4 occasions the Apostle Paul took over the stylus from his secretary and he signed off a letter in his own personal signature there's 4 occasions where he says see this is how I sign off in fact it would appear that this was his common practice because to the Thessalonians he comments this is the distinguishing mark in all my letters this is how I write now to assume these letters are all forgeries we must accept that the addition of Paul's signature was a masterly stroke of genius on the part of the forger of all four letters in order to fool the early Christians he had to insert this in every one of the letters supposedly from the hand of Paul and as a matter of interest in addition if we're going to accept these letters as forgery we must believe in the remarkable skill of the forger to refer in Galatians 6.11 to the large handwriting presumably reflective of Paul's poor eyesight enough of the New Testament you've got time for the old?

you may leave now if you wish I want to speak about the authentic honesty in the Old Testament many critical scholars suggest that much of the Old Testament I mentioned this yesterday from Genesis to Chronicles was invented by scribes in the 5th or 6th century BC to bolster the morale of the Jews in exile by giving them a made up story of the history of Israel and if so I have to say the scribes made a very poor job of it remember?

they're making up the history of Israel the people of Israel it's the 5th century and they're BC and they're in Persian exile and they're downhearted got every reason to be and they want to give the I know what we'll do we'll create a lovely history of their great ancestors and that will encourage them so they write about the patriarchs who are revealed as men of weakness Moses lost his temper the Israelites in the wilderness were a rabble of disobedient grumblers twelve tribes in Judges often cruel, sordid and little better than the nations around them Saul was a disaster as the first king of Israel the hero David brought discredit on the nation by adultery and murder besides if the story of David is a legend we would expect that he would be the king responsible for building the temple not in the event his son and not even his eldest son Solomon wasn't the eldest that broke all the rules to start with but even the wise and powerful Solomon committed apostasy towards the end of his life now that was hardly a catalogue of glory to inspire the people in exile right?

you would never have made that up the honesty of Old Testament narratives is unique in ancient writing all that is bad is faithfully recorded military losses, moral failures they're all there in the Old Testament by contrast in the ancient world it was rare for bad things and military defeats to be recorded in the nation's history just occasionally but very rarely and not the big solid dollop of it that you get in the Old Testament Rosie and I in our daily Bible reading reading through the Bible reading through them we just finished Judges and boy were we glad to get into Ruth it was a breath of fresh air and we had to sit there and ask ourselves the question why is Judges there?

[38 : 14] well if you want to know our answer you can ask Rosie afterwards if you're inventing a history of your nation why would you begin with them as slaves in Egypt? and why would you invent their constant rebellion and grumbling in the wilderness and their idol worship in the land of Canaan?

that wouldn't lift the morale of their descendants in exile and then hey look out for the authentic detail have you ever thought about this phrase to this day?

well it occurs around 50 times in the Bible to this day it can refer to a town name that was changed and is still in use a site of special religious significance a people whose status or location has changed or some event that is memorable in the history of Israel in every case the phrase implies that the place, the people, the marker is still there you can go find it and this is evidence of the record having been written close to the time there are at least seven markers for sites of significance in Israel that were still visible in the writers day I won't give you the references but there's Rachel's tomb the monument of the crossing of the Red Sea the pile of stones over Achan's grave the cave of the five entombed kings Gideon's altar at Ofra the rock commemorating the return of the ark and Absalom's monument to himself they're examples of a near contemporary recording of the events the reference in 1 Samuel 6.18 to the large rock on which the ark of the covenant was placed when it was returned by the Philistines quote is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh the details and directions are very specific anyone is invited to go down to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh and inspect it that would be around 1000 BC the same is said of the monument erected by Absalom in his own honour it is called Absalom's monument to this day to Samuel 18 if the books of Joshua and Samuel were invented by a scribe in the 6th century over 800 years after Joshua these piles of stones were most unlikely to have survived the inevitable time and weather erosion listed buildings were unknown then we know how quickly whole cities of the past were buried under the sands that vast city of Nineveh that we mentioned yesterday

I didn't give you the picture of it yesterday was destroyed by Babylon in 612 BC it was the palace without equal with 80 rooms library of 20,000 clay tablets seven miles of city walls all crumbled into the desert and within 200 years virtually nothing above ground was visible how do we know then how big it was because it was found by Austin Henry Laird in 1847 walk around a cemetery today you been up to your abbey?

of course you have seen the abbey church? can you read any of those? we walked around it yesterday and you could I love reading tombstones you learn a lot from reading tombstones not just macabre it's very instructive but you can't read any they've all been weathered you try reading 19th century inscriptions and then imagine how much will still be there in 800 years many of our wartime defences built across England between 1939 and 1945 have virtually disappeared under the ground after less than 80 years there are still the remains of pill boxes up there at Runswick only just about hanging on nearly gone 80 years do you think they'll still be there in 800?

[42 : 03] why would a scribal novelist invent monuments and claim that they are still visible when anyone could go there and check out the lie? and how could a scribe invent a verse like 1 Kings chapter 8 and verse 8 during the Persian exile in the 5th century it describes the poles of the Ark of the Covenant quote these poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary but not from the outside the holy place and they are still there to this day hey but hang on the temple was utterly destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC so they could not have been there when the people went into Persian exile which is at least over half a century later Rahab the woman who concealed the spies and was rewarded with her life and her family after the fall of Jericho has lived in Israel to this day now that's not a reference to her descendants but to Rahab herself what sense does that make half a millennium later?

well you can find the rest for yourself what about details of place names? now the interesting thing is of course that the journey through the wilderness in Numbers 33 50 place names are listed to recount the route taken through the wilderness by the 12 tribes must have made sense to somebody sometime and bits of it make sense today but there's no way we can identify all the places today because over the three centuries over the centuries rather place names changed just as I said yesterday our towns have changed their names since the Romans were here but the detailed list is evidence of an authentic account nobody sat there and thought up 50 different place names out of the top of their head that never existed just to make it look impressive that kind of thing just didn't happen besides we know where some of the places are we just don't know where they all are and what about the division of the land?

you know it goes on and on and on doesn't it? in the book of Joshua for example just take Joshua 15 and just take one of the 12 tribes the details of the boundary for the tribe of Judah just one tribe 36 place names describe the boundary for the tribal land and no fewer than 112 towns and villages are listed as belonging to this territory why would any writer invent all these names simply to make it appear authentic?

they didn't especially by the 5th century some of these place names as I said could not be located it would have been utterly meaningless that's not how they wrote but this is where the Old Testament religion of Israel is often attacked authentic religion you see it's assumed by many that Israel's religion evolved from those of her surrounding nations however if Israel's religion developed from her neighbours I'd like you to consider this and you can store these up and you can use them when people make this obvious well of course books have been written a book was recently published actually by a professor at a university to try and demonstrate how she borrowed her religion from all the nations well now tell me who introduced Israel to such a clear monotheistic religion when all the nations without exception of the ancient Near East boasted a multitude of gods although the gods weren't restricted to a geographical area they were however limited in their sphere of control the gods could be multiplied ad infinitum and there's no concept of a true or a false god among the pagan nations a traveller could worship the gods of the nation he was visiting and that wasn't disloyal to his gods back at home by contrast at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem

Solomon expressed his exalted view of Israel's God in a way beyond the understanding of the devotees of the pagan gods listen to him will God really dwell on earth with men?

[45 : 58] the heavens even the highest heavens cannot contain you how much less this temple that I have built and there's more of the same how did Israel develop an understanding of the character of God so different from the gods of the nations let me tell you about them the gods were fallible emotional good and bad procreative and physical they could be incompetent and sometimes the worshippers had to remind them of that they could be crafty deceptive lustful even hungry they had needs that were met by their worshippers for this reason an idol was awakened in the morning washed clothed fed two sumptuous meals everyday while music was played in their presence and put to bed at night do you read that in the Old Testament?

the idea of the gods as just, faithful, wise, good, gracious wasn't dominant they acted as they did through no moral necessity what made Israel develop a total aversion to images of her God and consulting omens when idolatry and divination was everywhere among its neighbours you know, Deuteronomy 5, Deuteronomy 18 and why isn't there a single reference to the veneration of the scarab beetle I'll explain that in the Old Testament when its importance was ubiquitous, widespread across the ancient Near East and especially in Egypt where they had come from now the scarab beetle is known to us as the dung beetle he's the little beetle that rolls a ball of dung and puts his eggs inside it he's a clean up operation, he's the road sweeper actually he was on the news recently, you may have heard it they came up with this wonderful news item on Radio 4 that they discovered that the dung beetle actually can sit on top sits on top of his ball of dung and he orientates himself by the galaxies, by the stars they're absolutely right the only thing Andy Mackintosh had sent me an article on that a long time ago so I don't know why the BBC took time to catch up on it but that's the dung beetle now because he represented two things he represented the gods moving the sun across the skies during the day you know, he rolls his little ball of dung and he lays his eggs inside it so out of it comes new life vegetation from that, the seeds of that which the animals have been eating and his own grubs that come out of it so he represented all of that and he was worshipped, you've got them here there he is in a form that you often find it that is the dung beetle and little, I've got one of these at home actually little mock up of it and they're all over the place they were ubiquitous people used them as little talismans there's a great big one about this big in the British Museum all over the place, particularly in Egypt they were not even mentioned once in the Old Testament but they came out of Egypt

I wonder why why didn't Israel adopt a seven day week when they'd actually been used why did they adopt a seven day week when they'd been used to a ten day week in Egypt nothing similar to a Sabbath observance has ever been found in ancient Near East religion and when, where did Israel obtain the unique system of sacrifices that we read about in the Old Testament when this idea of total forgiveness was unknown to their neighbours you see they had no concept of forgiveness like David expressed in for example Psalm 32 or Psalm 51 oh there are pleas for the deity to turn away his or her anger and even an admission of guilt but no sense of having been totally completely forgiven the sacrifices were more to satisfy the gods than to cleanse from personal guilt and there are creation accounts from the ancient Near East but there are no accounts of an original human pair that became the ancestor of the human race and there's no concept of the human race created in the image of the Creator now you look at that lot and say did it really evolve from the neighbours?

I can tell you how this particular professor tries to get round the idea of monotheism if you want to in question time the most reasonable answer to all of these questions is that the laws and religion of Israel were revealed to Moses by God and reflect his plan for salvation from the very beginning contrast the laws of Moses with the 282 laws of Hammurabi now you may have never heard of Hammurabi there's no reason why you should have done he was a king of Babylon who lives somewhere between Abraham and Moses ah between Abraham and Moses so he predates Moses perhaps probably let's assume he does so that's where Moses got all his laws from he nicked them from Hammurabi that's the Hammurabi Stele there you can see it's in the Louvre Museum in France well there are a lot of laws on there and some of them are quite similar to Moses laws but there are a lot of big differences and here are some of them the laws of Hammurabi are addressed to many gods at least nine

Moses knows only one the laws of Hammurabi are are laws presented to his God Moses receives his from God in the laws of Hammurabi the exalted reputation and wisdom of the king is constantly in focus Moses receives no credit at all for the laws that he gives the laws of Hammurabi have no reference to the moral qualities of the gods they are amoral at best and immoral at worst the Mosaic laws are a reflection of the holiness of God there are clear rules for the punishment of crimes in the laws of Hammurabi that's true including the fact that if somebody is found stealing at a fire they're thrown into the fire and if a doctor fails to cure the patient he's put to death apart from that it's quite nice there are clear rules of punishment in the laws of Hammurabi but there is no provision of forgiveness remember since the gods are disinterested in morality for the Mosaic laws sin is primarily an affront to the character of a holy God there's nothing in ancient Near Eastern literature to compare with what we call the Decalogue the Ten Commandments for simplicity, conciseness and relevance look Israel did not borrow its religion from its neighbours they are very different so how did they get them?

[52 : 46] and the most satisfactory explanation is that which the Old Testament itself claims her religion was revealed by God through his servants the prophets I've got just one more section, authentic history I'll zip through this as quickly as I can just get the picture the world of the kings of Israel and Judah as the Old Testament account advances it becomes increasingly easy to fit biblical events into a precise time frame of the ancient Near East when we reach the history of the divided monarchy that is after Solomon the kings of Israel and Judah in our Bible the references to those kings in the records of the surrounding nations becomes more and more frequent the following kings of Israel are referred to by name in pagan inscriptions the dynasty of David is found in inscriptions of the kings of Syria and Moab the kings of Israel Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Jehoash, Menahem, Pekah, Hoshir are each mentioned in inscriptions by kings of Assyria

Jehoram is mentioned by the king of Syria Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh by kings of Assyria and Jehoiakim by the king of Babylon lovely little story about Jehoiakim too from Babylon here are a few examples of the actual references where these inscriptions refer to the kings of Israel I won't delay on these because you saw these if you were here yesterday this is the one from Shalmaneser that refers to Ahab the Israelite and this is also the time of Shalmaneser that refers to Jehu the king of Israel in fact Tiglath-Pileser III, Tiglath-Pileser III or Pull as he is known in the Bible refers to the assassination of Pekah the king of Israel which is recorded in two kings and that was in the year 732 BC 27 foreign kings are mentioned in the biblical books of Kings and Chronicles and all but two of them can be identified from the records of surrounding nations in the Old Testament the following are named and precisely in the correct place and time known to history five pharaohs of Egypt, three kings of Assyria, the king of Moab, two kings of Syria, two kings of Babylon and four kings of Persia they are named, there are others referred to but not by name and then we have seal impressions, again you saw some of these, you saw this lot so I won't bother to go in any dear to with them the seals of, seal impressions of Ahaz and Hezekiah and Shebna have been found and in addition to that, you didn't see these last night, there are the bulle, the impressions of Gedaliah and Jehuchal you remember who they are? The two nasty guys who dropped Jeremiah into a well and the last one is the best of all because this is the seal of Berechiah and you all know who Berechiah is, you should do, he's mentioned, oh, 45 times in the book of Jeremiah and you'll find him in chapter 45 as well and Baruch or Berechiah was Jeremiah's secretary so we have the seal of Jeremiah's secretary, do you believe that?

Well, nobody's disputing it, in fact on one of them we even have a thumbprint do you know we might even have the thumbprint of Jeremiah's secretary? hear me, I didn't say we have, it's got to be somebody's thumbprint but I've no idea who it is, but it could be Jeremiah's in fact, the whole history, so much of the historical detail in the Bible is matched by what we know of the ancient Near East at that time if where the evidence can be tested, it is found to be accurate which it is again and again, then we have every right to claim that the detail which cannot yet be matched by contemporary records must be presumed to be accurate that is an essential legal approach to any document ancient or modern in fact, the whole history of the Old Testament is a preparation for the presence of the Messiah in Israel 2,000 years ago and the New Testament is of course the record of the fulfilment of this or as the Apostle Paul put it, when the time had fully come

God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons That's been a long haul and you've been very patient in listening and I'm sorry if I've been too long but I wasn't quite sure how long it would take me to get through this I'm going to mention a couple of books and one in particular and then I'll hand over to our chairman to chair any questions Could I draw first of all your attention to some of the children's books that these are activity books that accompany some of the travel guides The travel guides are the ones on the high-ride stand there at the top of it and I've got two particular ones here One is called Kings, Pharaohs and Bandits and the other is Romans, Gladiators and Games Now this goes through, this twins with the book there, the travel guide going through the British Museum but they do not have to have the adult book and they do not even have to be in the museum or even know there's a British Museum they will by the time they get to the end of this but what it does is it picks up some of the items you've seen describes what they are and their biblical reference and then there's activities for them to do

Now this, although written by Clive and myself was edited by two professional day school teachers one in Key Stage 2, the other in Key Stage 1 one's a head and the other's a deputy head so it fits in quite well to the national curriculum and I would commend those to you because we try to get kids, because we're in London to take them round the museum but they don't have to there's a lot of exciting stuff for them and our greatest Bible translator is William Tyndale you should know that because every time you pick up a copy of an English translation whichever one it is, you have a huge debt to the man who gave his life to translate the Bible there's his biography and one of the travel guides up there but this twins with it as well and if you want kids in the 7 to 11 age group to understand something of what it costs them to have a Bible they can read in English that's the book to get hold to them but the one I particularly want to mention this evening because it's the reason why you didn't need to take any notes tonight because you've got it all in here or most of it anyway it's called Authentic the Bible and Authentic Book and what I've really done is what is in a little bit more detail what you've got this evening but towards the back of the book we've done one or two other things as well there's a there's I don't know whether you have a program of reading through the whole Bible regularly there's no better way to do Bible reading than that and just to literally travel through the Bible you don't have to do it in a year there's nothing pious about reading the whole Bible in a year and that's a big chunk to read every day but this will take you through the whole Bible reading all of it once and some of the New Testament twice in 19 months and before every book that you start there's a brief description of what that particular book is about just a sentence or two to point you in the right direction and then following that there is an outline of the Old Testament plugging in some of the more outstanding prophetic passages that go with it and then there is an outline of the Acts of the Apostles putting in where the letters were written in that in Paul's travels and then to close it all

[60 : 34] I don't know whether you find that periodically you need to sharpen up your daily time with God what used to be called the quiet time or Austin folks called the still hour and sadly is a thing of the past among many evangelicals and day by day here is a way of helping you helping you beginning with adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication and intercession for others, persecuted Christians, missionary friends and so on you can fill in the bits yourself but each of them are prefaced by verses of scripture just to point you in the right direction so if your daily reading, a daily time with God needs freshening this may be exactly the book for you so I do commend this to you it's an eight pound book, I think it's being sold here for five pounds, five or six pounds I forget exactly what that'll do for me where are you Barry?

thank you, over to you