

New Testament Reliability – Can you trust the Bible? sermonaudio.com

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Wretched TV Moderator. Hello, and welcome to a very special episode of "Blossom." This is Mayim Bialik. Actually this is Dr. James White who is with us in studio with a group of a few of our friends to discuss something that is exceedingly important especially these days. College campuses, maybe your child goes off to school and gets told you can't trust the Bible, we see it on some tv shows, certainly people like Bill Maher would be happy to tell us you can't trust the Bible. Well, we are here to tell you you can trust the Bible. Actually I'm not here to do it, this fellow is, Dr. James. White. Take it away, Dr. James White.

Dr. James White. Thank you very much. Well, that is the situation today and I'm very thankful to have the opportunity of addressing you and talking about this extremely vital topic and that is, look, you all have Bibles in your hands, you open them up, you turn to Paul's epistle to the Romans, for example, how do you know that that's what Paul wrote almost 2,000 years ago? How can you have confidence that there wasn't a church council somewhere that came along and said, you know, we want to insert the doctrine of the deity of Christ, or this particular political group wanted to do this thing with the text and this group over here wanting to do something else, how do you know that when you read Paul's letter to the Romans that that's what he sent to the Romans, or when you read the gospel of John, that that's what the Apostle John wrote? These are the questions and unfortunately today there's a tremendous onslaught against us specifically coming from those people who are going to assert that we cannot know that what we have today is what was originally written.

As you know, naturalistic materialism rules the day in academia. If you cannot put it under a microscope, if you cannot measure it, if it is not a part of just the natural realm, then you can't really discuss it, you can't bring it into discussion. Of course, we believe that the New Testament is inspired, that it really has its origins, as far as its real substance, outside of the natural realm but it enters into the natural realm and is communicated to us over a period of time, it is transmitted over a period of time, but we all know, hopefully, the Bible did not float down out of heaven on a nice silk pillow with leather covers and thumb indexing, certainly though I was raised in a Christian family, I sort of figured that's how it was, that's always how I had seen the Bible, but there was a process and what we're being told is that process corrupted the text of Scripture. In fact, in the academy today if you go to the universities, you can't even bring that kind of a discussion up; you're not even allowed to discuss the idea that there is a supernatural

element to things. Instead we have to presuppose the existence of naturalistic materialism and Christian claims are simply relegated to the arena of myth. You can have your mythology, everybody else has their mythology, your mythology can't be any better than anybody else's mythology.

So as a result, scholars spin the evidence, particularly in media appearances, believing scholars are not the first people that are called by CNN to discuss some new theory that's come along, which have you ever noticed the theories tend to come along, I don't know, sometime around Easter and Christmas for some reason. Have you ever noticed that? It's a very strange thing. But remember a few years ago the tomb story came out. They found the tomb of Jesus and every spring and then every winter we get the same thing, someone rereads some type of theory that supposedly demonstrates that what we believe as Christians just isn't true. And so the people they go to are unbelievers. For example, people like John Dominic Crossan, one of the co-founders of the Jesus Seminar. You know, Dr. Crossan is a wonderful man, in fact, he's my favorite heretic. Now I've told him that and he even signed an email to me once, "Dom, your favorite heretic." So he's just one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet but he doesn't even believe in a personal God or an afterlife or anything like that, they'll go to these scholars that are extremely skeptical or they'll go to people like Bart Ehrman. Now Bart Ehrman is the favorite go-to guy in the world today because he's an apostate, and that's not an insult, it's a description. An apostate is a person who once made a profession of faith, no longer makes that profession of faith. And Bart Ehrman is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College and Princeton Theological Seminary but he calls himself a happy agnostic. Now I've met Bart, we debated once and I know he's an agnostic but the happy part I wasn't really all the certain about. We'll talk a little bit more about him but his books and his materials are being used all across the spectrum, especially in secular universities as the given understanding of where the Bible came from, why we really can't trust it, etc. etc.

So these scholars will come along and they will emphasize, especially Bart Ehrman, that all we have are copies of copies of copies of copies of the New Testament and the idea is, well, you know, if you're making a handwritten copy, if I passed out just the first two chapters of the gospel of Mark to the front row here and I had you make a handwritten copy and pass your copy, not what you copied but your copy to the next row, and then we did it all the way back, when we got to the back there would be differences between what I handed out and what was copied, and that's just the first two chapters of Mark. If you go through all 16 chapters of Mark, then you're going to have more differences and the idea is, well, the first generation picks up differences, the second generation picks up differences, you get more and more and more errors as you go along this line of transmission. And so since the first copies that we have come from, depending on the book of the New Testament and we'll be looking at this, 100-150 years after the time they were first written, well, what happened during that timeframe. That's the type of issue that Bart Ehrman is raising and that's the type of issue that, unfortunately, then his readers are presenting to our young people as they go to university.

Now many of the people who are reading him, many of the people teaching the local community college, don't really know what Bart Ehrman knows, in fact, Bart Ehrman is

frequently exaggerated by his followers, as we will see, but the reality is that that's the kind of information that's being thrown out, and let's be honest with ourselves, we haven't done a really a good job within the church preparing our young people for this, in fact, we haven't done a really good job even in our seminaries preparing most of our ministers for this. Most ministers will admit that even if they took a fair amount of Greek in their seminary training, that they get a little nervous when someone comes up and starts asking questions about, "Well, my ESV says this but my neighbor's New King James version says this." Or have you all noticed those little notes at the bottom of your page that say, "Some manuscripts say this"? Now it's really hard to read them but there's a lot of folks that once they see them and they see those little notes that say, "Some manuscripts say this and some manuscripts say that," in your more honest moments, in your honest moments will you admit that sort of bothers you, that sort of causes you a little bit of concern that one translation would have a verse and another translation does not have the verse? And many ministers have gone through seminary and they don't feel overly confident responding to those particular questions either, and because of that, then we generally don't do a real good job in our preaching or in our teaching of preparing our young people to go out there and encounter this onslaught of people saying you can't trust what the Bible says. You know, in my grandparent's generation, that wasn't all that big of an issue but, folks, things have changed and they've changed rapidly and we need to realize we are in a culture now, in all Western cultures, where Christianity is under attack. There is no place we can hide. We can't insulate our people, isolate our people. We have to take these things straight on and that's what I want to try to prepare us to do this evening.

Now I've got a question: how many variants do you think exist in what's called the New Testament manuscript tradition? Let me define that for you. The New Testament manuscript tradition are all the handwritten copies of any New Testament book. Now that can be Matthew through Revelation or that can be a little teeny tiny fragment of papyri from 150 years after the writing of the New Testament and everything in between. Now we have about approximately 5,700 manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek either fragmentary or whole copies, about 5,700 ranging from about the earliest right now that we can really sort of prove is about 125 AD to all the way past the time of the invention of printing because, believer it or not, just like there were people who thought the iPad was going to go nowhere, ha, ha, there were people who thought printing was going to go nowhere too. And so it took time for presses to be built, people to learn how to do, you know, the typesetting and stuff like that, and so handwriting was still the primary way of producing books even long after Gutenberg came along and invented the printing press in Western culture. So all those manuscripts, you put them all together and we catalog them and things like that, about 5,700 handwritten manuscripts.

Now there's about 138,200 words in the New Testament in the original language of the New Testament which is Greek. About 138,200 words approximately. Now how many variants, now let me define a variant real quickly. A variant is any difference between manuscripts. So if a manuscript has the word "and" and you've got 10 manuscripts that have "and" and 10 manuscripts that don't, that's a variant. If a scribe spells John with two "n's" rather than just one, that's a variant. If a verse is there and not there, that's a variant.

So it can be down to the spelling of a word or whether a verse or even a block of text is there. The two largest New Testament manuscript variants, the two biggest ones, are the longer ending of Mark, Mark 16:9-20, 12 verses, and the story of the woman taken in adultery called the Pericope Adulterae, John 7:53-8:11. Those are the two biggest ones, all the rest are either a verse or a line or a word or "and" or "the" or something along those lines. So how many variants do you think there might be in the New Testament manuscript tradition?

Now sometimes when I get to this point, I can tell that people are bothered by the answer. I need to bother you first so I can unbother you by putting it in context. You see, what happens is unbelievers present these facts without a context and that's their primary weapon. Bart Ehrman loves to talk about the woman taken in adultery; Dan Wallace calls it his favorite story that's not in the Bible, and people are troubled by that. We need to know what the issues are and once we know what they are and can put them in a context, then they're no longer a problem. We recognize what the real issues are and we, in essence, are taking the weapons away from those who are seeking to damage our faith. We need to be talking about these things in the context of faith and preparing our people to then take the answers out in the context of non-faith seeking to be used by the Lord in leading people to Christ. So that's the issue.

So how many variants do you think exist? Well, I normally ask folks, and because of our context here I'm not going to ask you to put up a hand and ask a question and have to give an answer, but some people I've had say 10, 12, 100. I would say a safe estimate would be at the high end about 400,000, 400,000 variants in the New Testament manuscript tradition. Now that's a big number and, in fact, when you think about it, in the Nestle-Aland 27th edition of the Greek New Testament there's 138,162 words, in the new Nestle-Aland 28th there's a few more than that. If you think about that, that is about and, in fact, many people put it this way, that's about three variants per word. Now I have seen people, atheists, some of my Muslim apologist friends, who will just present that and they'll leave it hanging in the air that we basically have three options for every word in the New Testament. That's not what it means. That's not even close to what it means but that's the way they present it, saying, "See, there's this many variants. That means we really can't have any confidence whatsoever." In fact, if you look at it graphically, there's a number of words and then the number of variants that looks like the number of variants greatly dwarfs the number of words of the New Testament. And there are going to be many people who just present that and leave it there and let's be honest, how many of us as believers would be able to give a response to that presentation? You say, "Well, that's just for scholars to do." Not anymore. That's what I'm saying. Not anymore. In my grandparent's age, sure. Not anymore. Because of the internet, because of the way we communicate, we all need to know the answers to these kinds of things. We need to know these facts and know how in reality what we're looking at here is part of the evidence for the reliability of this text. But until you hear the whole story, it can be hard to understand.

So let's look at what they don't tell you. What they don't tell you: 99% of all variants I could not even explain to you in the English language because they do not impact the meaning or translation of the text. They have to do, for example, with word order and in

the Greek language word order is very different than it is in English. It has been well said that there are about 16 different ways that you could write something like, "Paul loves the church," or, "Jesus loves His people," in the Greek language as far as word order and utilization of different cases and tenses and all sorts of things like that. And so when you have variations along those lines that cannot be translated into other languages, then they're not impacting the actual meaning of the text itself. But what's more is there's all sorts of spelling issues. For example, I remember when I took first year Greek, one of the students in the Greek class we had really struggled with the concept of the movable nu. The movable nu is just based in the same thing as we have in English, you're not supposed to say "a apple," you're supposed to say "an apple." You're supposed to be that extra "n" in there when you have a word starting with a vowel afterwards, right? Well, some people don't quite get that and some scribes didn't quite get that and the same thing is true in Greek as well, and that is that there are those words you're supposed to have the movable nu and sometimes it's there, sometimes it's not; that accounts for literally thousands of variants of that 400,000.

And so 99% of them are simply inconsequential, they do not in any way impact the meaning of the text, so 1% of 400,000 is about 4,000 meaningful textual variants out of 138,162 words is about 2.9% or one meaningful variant every three pages, but only about half of these are viable. What does viable mean? Well, if you had a scribe who got up one morning and he didn't have his coffee, and he stepped on his cat on the way out to the scriptorium, and he forgot his glasses – well, okay, let's not use glasses, that's a little bit anachronistic – but he is having a bad day and so he's not paying attention to what he's copying and so in the process of copying a manuscript his mind wanders and he comes up with a reading that no one's ever seen before, and this is in the 14th century. If you find one manuscript in the 14th century that has a reading that no one's ever seen before, it's not viable, that means it doesn't go back to the early period, it could not be the original reading. In fact, we have one manuscript where one scribe had a really bad day because the text he was copying was written in two columns but he forgot it was written in two columns and so he just copied straight across and it was in the genealogy of Jesus and it really becomes weird because then God ends up with a father named Phares and it's really really strange, and this guy somehow didn't even notice this. I don't know how that happened but we still have the manuscript, we still have the evidence that there were scribes who sometimes just were not really aware of what in the world was going on and so that could happen.

So only about half or a little less than half of these are viable; they actually go back far enough, they have enough manuscript evidence behind them that they could possibly represent the original. So that comes up with about 1,500-2,000 viable New Testament textual variants. That is a very very different picture than what we were given before when you talk about 400,000 variants and more variants than there are words and all the rest of that kind of stuff. We're talking about 1,500-2,000 instead.

Now we still need to understand that the simple fact the more manuscripts you have for a work of antiquity, the more variants you're going to have. Think about it. If you only have one manuscript, how many variants do you have? None. Now a lot of us would sort

of like if that's the way it was. No manuscripts at all, we just have the one master manuscript. What's the real problem with that? You have to trust that whoever made that one manuscript got it absolutely right, and if you don't have anything else, if you don't have anything to check that by, you've got no way to get back to the original, you have no way of testing whether that one scribe was having a bad day or not. So having just one manuscript, bad thing. For any work of antiquity, the more manuscripts you have that you can compare, the better off you are and the better certainty you have of still possessing the original readings, but the downside to that is, the more manuscripts you have, the more variants you have. So while we have a large number of variants, it's just because the New Testament has more manuscripts than any other work of antiquity at all.

So it's just a logical thing. I really struggle. I try to explain this to my Muslim friends because they think, "Well, I've got the Koran and there's no variants." Well, there actually are, they're just not aware of them and, "You know, we've all got one Arabic text and we can all look at one Arabic text and that's superior to what you have," but the reality is it isn't. That's not superior, it's actually an inferior transmission methodology to what we have in the New Testament. So think about it. If there are more than 5,700 cataloged manuscripts of the New Testament the average length of which is at least on the low end 200 pages, it could be as much as 400 pages depending on how you count pages, that's at least at the very very low end 1.3 million pages of text and some would say upwards to 3 million pages of handwritten text. That's a lot of pages of text. Now when you think about it, 1,500-2,000 meaningful and viable variants over minimally 1.3 million pages of hand-copied text spanning approximately 1,500 years prior to the invention of printing is an amazingly small percentage of the texts reflecting an amazingly accurate transmission of the text, in fact, one might almost call it downright miraculous.

Now a number of years ago, I asked my computer to do something for me, and what I asked it to do was to compare the two extreme ends of the manuscript tradition. Now what scholars have done is they've identified streams within the manuscript tradition, you have what's called the Alexandrian text which most scholars believe is the most primitive and earliest, you have the Western text like in the Latin Vulgate and things like that, and you have what's called the Byzantine text which is the majority of manuscripts that come from around Byzantium, modern-day Istanbul or ancient Constantinople, and if you compare the printed texts that represent these two most extreme edges, that's what I had my computer do, well, how many differences are there? Well, here is Ephesians 1:1-14 and the little bit of green that you see there is where those printed editions differ from one another. Now you can see there's very little difference there and there is, now some of them are very important, you can barely see it right down the bottom lefthand corner there's a little bit of green and that's the difference between "hos" and "ho" at Ephesians 1:14, whether the Spirit, the pronoun that's used there is either a masculine or a neuter. I mean, that's an important textual variant and we study it and it's a part of looking at the text, but what you see is the vast majority of the text, there's absolutely no difference whatsoever. And most of the other differences are pronouns and things like that, that if you know Greek you realize very frequently are not going to make a big difference. One book that has a very interesting transmission history is the book of Hebrews. And notice

here's Hebrews 6:8-20, there are only three places where you have a variation here; the vast majority of the text every manuscript says the same thing.

Now that's not what was in most of your minds when I first gave you the 400,000 number but this is the reality, this is when you let the computer do the work and you can actually compare these things and you're actually able to see the state. But we need to explain, well, all right, but where did the 1,500-2,000 come from? That number needs to be understood. Now up until the last two decades, the vast majority of scholarship would have said that the vast majority of variants were simply scribal errors, especially with the advent of Bart Ehrman and others; they have developed more of a theory of scribes being more active in specifically seeking to make changes. One of my great concerns about this is that many of them, they're no longer looking for the original readings, they're now exegeting the variants as if they can somehow climb into the minds of the scribes and see, "Well, why did they put it this way?" And things like that, and while there may be some interesting things that can be derived from that, I think it's primarily a dead end but that's an issue we can't really get into today.

Scribal errors, even from Bart Ehrman's perspective, are still the reason for the vast majority of the differences that we find in the manuscripts of the New Testament and so many of these errors involve common scribal errors, mistakes that we continue to make to this very day. Now the younger folks in the audience might not remember what this was like, but when I was in school I wrote my term papers on an IBM Selectric. Oh, yes, yes. And it was a trial. It was a trial because do you remember not only Wite-Out and correction tape? My daughter is laughing at me. But you also might remember what would happen when you would forget to put a footnote at the bottom of the page. Do you remember how you had to remember to put that in? And you're typing away and you're doing so well and then you realize you forgot the footnote and do you know what you do at that point? You take the piece of paper out and you crumble it up and you throw it out and you start all over again. Yes, mankind did somehow manage to survive this particular period of its history.

So you would actually have to put a book next to you and instead of doing cut-and-paste, you had to copy it yourself, and even in our day with glasses and lights and air conditioning and IBM Selectric, you could make mistakes and one of the mistakes you might make is you might look over and you might be copying a certain word and you might see a common ending like "tion" or "ing" and so you'd type the word and you'd look back and you'd see "ing" and you continue on except that "ing" was on the next line down. And hopefully you'd proofread and you'd catch it, but then again you'd take the paper out and you'd start all over again.

Well, that has happened for a very very long time. I'd like to give you an example from the New Testament where scribes had the same problem long before an IBM Selectric and that is 1 John 3:1. 1 John 3:1 in the King James says,

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Some of you might even know that as it's sung in a little praise hymn type thing or something like that. Now compare that with the New American Standard,

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Now for the gentlemen in the audience who are color blind, "and such we are" is in red and it's not in the King James version of the Bible.

Now unfortunately there are people who utilize the differences between manuscripts as a foundation for causing division and for preaching long sermons, and if I was an anti-King James guy, I could go, "See, do you know what this means? This shows that those nasty Anglican translators of the King James didn't like adoption as sons of God and so they took it out." Well, that's ridiculous. The reason the King James doesn't have it is because the manuscripts that they were translating from did not have that particular phrase, and the reason the New American Standard has it and the ESV has it and the Holman Christian, the NIV, and so on and so forth have it, is because the manuscripts they're using contain the phrase. But why is there a difference? Well, this is a standard error that I just illustrated for you just a moment ago called homoioteleuton which is just a fancy Latin way of saying similar endings. Similar endings. We will have a quiz on this at the end of the presentation, so you do need to memorize that particular term.

So what happens is here is the information. Now this is a modern Greek text and you can get this for your phone and your iPad and your computer. It's amazing the amount of information that's available to us any longer. But this is what scholars look at and actually if you can read a little Greek, on the third line right toward the end you see the phrase "kai esmen," there's a little red square next to the word "kai" and that's the phrase "and we are," and if you look down at the bottom in green on the righthand side there's a little square and then KL04969 then a squiggly M for the majority text, what that's telling us is that that phrase, "and we are," is not found in those particular manuscripts and it includes the majority, the majority of manuscripts, the majority of Greek manuscripts, but those all come from after 1000 AD. But that still doesn't really answer the question as to why a scribe would have made that particular kind of mistake. Ancient writers, we know, made the same mistakes we do in regards to homoioteleuton and unfortunately this only comes across in English right now due to the iPad, but what they did is they would actually write in all capital letters, for the first 800 years of the history of the text they would write in all capital letters, no spaces between words and almost no punctuation. For the first 800 years of writing the New Testament, all capitals, no spaces between words, and almost no punctuation whatsoever. And so you would have just long line of letters and we can see what happened here and that is that when it said "called, klethomen" in Greek, that ended with mu-epsilon-nu, and then the very next words were "kai esmen" which ends with mu-

epsilon-nu. An early scribe writes kletho-mu-epsilon-nu, his eye goes back, he sees mu-epsilon-nu at the end of esmen, he goes on and inadvertently "and we are" is deleted.

Common scribal error of sight and then once New Testament manuscripts started being copied in scriptoriums, we have a guy up at the front and he's reading and you have a group of people writing, which you can make more copies that way, then you have errors of hearing. For example, we can tell that back then the difference between, and I was taught what's called Erasmian pronunciation so I would say hamone(ph) and hameen(ph) just sounded like eemeen(ph) to them. And so unless you were listening very carefully, stop, ask which one it was, a person's mind could wander a little bit and there would be errors of hearing that also creep in, especially with words that had the same pronunciation.

Well, since we know what those errors are and since we don't just have one copy of 1 John, we can compare them, then we're able to see these kinds of standard scribal errors, but do you see what the problem would be if we only had one copy and that was done by someone who committed the error of homoioteleuton? We'd lose the phrase "and we are." We wouldn't know that that was originally there. But because we have many copies from many different places, then that provides us with a variant, yes, but it also provides us the original and that's what a lot of people miss is they don't understand how ancient documents were transmitted over time and how important it is to have a wide and rich textual manuscript tradition, okay?

So that's how you can see how that happened. Now the majority of those 5,700+ Greek manuscripts date from after 1000 AD comprising the majority texts. The earlier texts are called papyri texts written in uncial or majuscule text, all capitals, and the papyri, you know, papyri wasn't meant to last for 2,000 years. I mean, I'm looking at the books that I bought when I was in seminary and the pages are turning yellow and stuff like that and, yeah, that was a long time ago, at least according to my kids, but for most of us that really wasn't all that long ago, and so papyri which is made by taking the leaves of the papyrus plant and putting them at 90 degree angles, pressing them together, that really wasn't meant to last for 2,000 years. It's amazing that we have as many papyri as we have that have, in fact, lasted for 2,000 years. As I said, uncial text, all capital forms, no spacing, no punctuation.

Here is a graphic that sort of shows you the distribution of manuscripts over time. So down at the bottom, 2nd century, 3rd century, 4th century, up to the 16th century, you can see that the majority of manuscripts come from after the 10th century which makes sense. I mean, you know, think of Europe and places like that. We've had things called like wars. You know World War I, World War II, not good for manuscripts. They don't handle bombing well, fires, things like that. But you've also got things like bugs and mold and all sorts of things like that that can take their toll over the time on manuscripts so it makes sense.

There's also other things that need to be seen here. Notice the blue is the papyri. Green are the uncial texts that were written on vellum which is animal skin but very thin animal

skin, and the uncial texts were written in all capitals and you see they sort of fade out by the 10th century because people started going, "You know, large letters, small letters, spaces, easier to read," and so that way of writing became predominant.

But there's also something else to remember about history here, and that is what happened between 632 and 732. This is where you need to know a little something about history because, you see, very early on the Western church primarily switched over to Latin and so Greek was primarily in North Africa and in Israel and up into Constantinople and Greece and things like that. But then what happened between 632 and 732? It's called the century of Islamic expansion. Mohammad dies in 632, the Islamic expansion is stopped in Europe at the Battle of Torres, Charles Martel, 732. So for 100 years and Islam spreads all across what had been Christian lands all across North Africa, Spain, Portugal, and all the way up through the Holy Lands and all the way up into the borders of Byzantium and Constantinople. Islam's not really good for the production of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and so the production of those manuscripts is impacted by the rise of Islam and the primary place left where Greek manuscripts were being produced is Constantinople or ancient Byzantium which is why the vast majority of these are Byzantine manuscripts because after a certain period of history that's the only place that would be producing manuscripts in the first place.

So you can see the distribution. Now I've found that Christians like to see some of these manuscripts. It's one thing to see the footnotes down at the bottom of the page but I've found that Christians like to see some of these things, so let's take a look at one here. This is Rylands 457 also known as P52. Now I love P52. It is right now the earliest agreed upon fragment of the New Testament that we possess. There is rumblings right now that we now have some earlier papyri fragments that are soon to be published but we don't know when but until they're published we can examine them, can't say. This was discovered amongst a box of papyri that had been brought to London, you know, the British went all over the place, stole everybody else's treasures and dragged them back to London during the Colonial period. And a guy was rifling through some boxes and he pulled this out and he started translating it and said, "This is from the Bible." And they sent it to four of the greatest papyrologists alive at that time and three of them dated it to 125. Now when you date a papyri, what you do is you compare it to other manuscripts where you know what the date is as to the writing styles, and so it's always within 25 years one way or the other so it's a 50 year window. So if you date it to 125, it can be as early as 100 or as late as 150, and so three of the four dated it to 125 and the fourth dated it to 95, the first century, which is amazing. I'll show you how amazing that is a little bit later on.

What's really cool about P52, if you had gone to seminary back in Germany in, oh, the 1870s, you would have been told that the gospel of John was written around 170 AD. Why? Well, because it has such a high Christology, it has such a high view of Jesus that it couldn't have been written by anybody who actually knew Jesus because we all know Jesus wasn't like that, you see, and so it had to have developed and evolved long long long after that. That would have been the assured results of scholarship, you see. That's what I love about P52. It comes along and guess what P52 is from? It's from the gospel of

John. In fact, this is John 18:31-34 on the front half, and 37-38 on the back. In fact, what I really love is it has the very words of Jesus when he says, "The one who is of the truth hears My voice," is on the earliest papyri fragment we have of the New Testament. I think that's awesome. I think there's been an angel assigned to this little piece of paper for 2,000 years. He was so glad when that guy finally in the basement said, "Hey," and he's like, "Good, can I do something else now, Lord?" And it's great. [laughter] It's wonderful.

So now one thing you don't know about me, none of you in this room could tell at all about me that I'm a little geekish, especially my style, but not only that, I actually make my own ties and here I am in my debate with Bart Ehrman and if you look at my tie, that's P52. Now it's blown up because P52 is only about the size of a credit card so it's blown up, but you can read all of it and there I am giving Bart Ehrman his own P52 tie. Now I don't know what Bart Ehrman does with his P52 tie. I think maybe he wears it once a semester just to talk about the crazy fundamentalist that he debated once. I don't know. Maybe he burned it in effigy once. I don't know. But there I am giving Bart Ehrman his own P52 tie and that's one of the few times during the debate that he actually smiled. So there I am with P52.

Now this next one I am not going to interpret for you. This is one of the earliest fragments we have of the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation. Now you can see how the page sort of was and how much of it's missing, is gone. Notice the straight part right there in the middle? What do you think that indicates? It was probably folded over at some place. You want to tear a piece of paper and you don't have scissors what do you do? You fold it over, it breaks the fibers in the paper. That's probably what happened right there. So you can see this was once a full page but this is all we have left.

Now we only have like two early papyri manuscripts of the book of Revelation. In fact, guess which book of the New Testament we have the fewest manuscripts of? The book of Revelation. It has the most interesting and unusual transmission in history because if you know the history, there are a lot of people that didn't accept Revelation as canon of Scripture in those early centuries so it's going to have a different transmission history than you're going to have, for example, of the gospels which were universally accepted by everybody from the very start. I don't care how many people tell you, "Oh, well, there were all of these Gnostic gospels," and stuff like that, none of them came in the first century. There weren't a bunch of Christians going, "I love the gospel of Thomas." No, those are a bunch of weird Gnostics in Egypt, that was, you know, that's just not the case.

So anyway, I want to blow something up here and I want to show you something. This is from Revelation 13 and what's in Revelation 13? Well, folks, what's the number of the beast? Everybody knows the number of the beast. We could stop a biker going by outside and go, "What's the number of the beast?" And go, "It's right here." [laughter] "No, it's right here." You know, 666, everybody knows the number of the beast, right? A little bit of a problem. In the earliest manuscripts we have of the book of Revelation it's not 666, it's 616. I will give one theory that Dr. Dan Wallace of Dallas Seminary has propounded I think is incredibly insightful. It's incredibly insightful. He says 666 is the number of the

beast and 616 is the number of the neighbor of the beast. [laughter] I'll let you think about that and we'll move on from there.

This is P72 from around AD 175-200. I saw this exact page in 1993 in Denver. I was up debating on the subject of Roman Catholicism and the pope was in town, which is why we were having those debates, and the Papal Treasures exhibit was in town and when I saw it, they had a part of P72 and I said, "We've gotta go." And we go walking in here, they've got gold crowns and tiaras and diamonds that I could care less. Right at the beginning of the tour, here this is under glass and I'm just standing there, "Oh, look at this." You can see the nomina sacra, the nomina sacra, for some Christians, we don't know why, we have no idea why but Christians developed a series of abbreviations, God, Jesus, Lord, Spirit, they'd abbreviate those words and put a line over them and if you look real carefully you can see a bunch of words and there's these little lines over them. Only Christians did that. We don't know why. But I started translating it and what I really like is this is actually you can see right at the top it says "Petrus epistolae," 2 Peter. This is the earliest manuscript we have that's the end of 1 Peter and the beginning of 2 Peter, the earliest manuscript we have from around 175-200 AD.

Now you look at it and you go, "Um, this guy did not win the handwriting competition in first grade." Lines aren't exactly straight, you know, that's not the most perfect cursive handwriting or whatever you've ever seen. This is probably just a believer. Obviously he had some education because not everybody could write back then. Obviously he had some education, probably what happened here is Christians when they would travel they would go into other churches and they'd fellowship. Christians love to have fellowship with one another and they probably brought out 1 & 2 Peter and started reading from it and this guy goes, "What's that? We've never heard that before. We don't have that in our church. Could I make a copy of that?" And I've always wondered, if our folks had to hand-copy their own copies of the Scriptures, how well would we do? How many would have only 1 & 2 Peter? Certainly wouldn't have many copies of Isaiah or Ezekiel, would we? Hm, probably not. It's hard to get folks just to show up for Sunday school, let alone have to copy their own Scriptures. But here's someone who loved the word so much that not only were they willing to hand write it but, remember, up until 313 Christianity was a religio illicita, an illegal religion, and many people lost their lives for possessing the Christian Scriptures and the Romans destroyed thousands of manuscripts of the Christian Scriptures.

So here's someone who loves the word so much they want to hand write it and risk their own lives in the process. I was almost in tears. But what's also really neat about it, is that if you know 2 Peter 1:1, you know that that is a reference to the deity of Christ and remember back when the "Da Vinci Code" came out and everybody is going, "Oh, the deity of Christ is invented by Constantine at the Council of Nicea in 325." This was written long before Constantine was a gleam in his daddy's eye and what do we have right here? "Our God and Savior Jesus Christ," called a Granville Sharp construction where God and Savior both apply to the one person Jesus Christ, here written long before Constantine ever came along, documentary evidence that Dan Brown owes us all a refund but I don't expect that in this lifetime anyways, maybe in eternity.

But here is this incredible text, P72, that I got to see, and then we have manuscripts like P75, incredibly important gospel manuscript that's actually the beginning of John. If you look and you can't from this distance, but if you look you can see at the beginning of the gospel of John here, incredibly accurate text, very closely related to the great uncials, especially Codex Vaticanus.

And then I really like this picture of this manuscript. This is P66 also from around the same time period. What I like about this is you can see what it looked like as a book. Normally you just see a page. Notice the damage to the outside pages and how it's more, obviously it's at the outside, the inside is going to be protected by the spine of the book and the other pages, but it's also more toward the bottom than the top for some reason. That kind of damage, you will see it in a moment on another manuscript, but this is also the beginning of John, John 1:1, and again just to prove Dan Brown didn't know what he was talking about, there's that final phrase "kai Theos en ho Logos, and the Word was God," found there at the end of John 1:1, another reference to the deity of Christ here in this very very ancient copy of the gospels.

And here, here is where I am going to have to ask for some audience participation by voting. Now every time I do this, I get dissed and I don't know why and I don't think it has anything to do with the ties at all, because what happens is I ask people to vote in this little poll that I take and at least a third of the people sit there and go, "I don't get it. No, you can't force me. No. No. I'm not guessing. No. Don't look at me." Vote, okay? When I ask you the question, vote.

This is P46 also from around AD 175-200, and what is P46? Well, let me blow this up for you, this is the earliest collection of Paul's epistles, okay? Extremely important obviously, I mean especially when you're talking about Romans and things like that, all right? I got to see this, the manuscript. It's on display, portions of it are on display in Dublin, Ireland just a few years ago. And I don't want to cause our camera guys too much of a problem here but I do want to relate to a story that happened there. They have them under very dim lights because they don't want, you know, they don't want to damage the papyri, but we're trying to read them and the light is really really dim. And we actually had, I had on my iPod Touch, I had in my Accordance program the papyri transcribed so we're trying to find, you know, make the correspondence and stuff and we're just straining so hard to see it, and then we realized, wait a minute, the light's coming from above so where is the light going to be best but direct reflection so it's going to be down below. So what I did is I got down on my hands and knees and started looking up, okay, it's much brighter. Okay, okay, I've got an omega... Well, we didn't realize is there are security cameras up there and I can just see the security guys, "Oh great, the Christians are worshiping the manuscripts again. Oh, man." [laughter] So you know, this security guy shows up and, "Excuse me but what are you doing?" And, "Well, we're reading the manuscripts." "Really, yeah, okay." You know, they didn't kick us out. We did explain it to them, especially when I could actually show him. And I saw this very page. I've actually seen this page of P46, the beginning of Philippians. I wanted to see the Carmen-Christi Philippians 2:5-11. They had the page there. They had it on the backside. I couldn't see it

as the backside... Anyways, clearly whoever put those pages out had no idea what they were doing.

Anyways, here's the poll. Here is the quiz. What book of the New Testament do we not know the author? Hebrews. Now a lot of people say Paul wrote Hebrews. Well, maybe. I'll tell you what my theory is, I think Paul preached Hebrews in Hebrew to the Jews and Luke wrote it down in Greek because it's Lukan vocabulary and Lukan writing style but Pauline theology. So that's my theory, all right? But here's the question: did whoever wrote this manuscript, did they think that Paul wrote Hebrews? Did they include Hebrews in the collection? So is Hebrews in P46? It's just a guess, how many of you think it is in the manuscript? How many of you think it isn't in the manuscript? Thank you. My daughter did vote. She almost didn't. She was tempted there for a moment. P46 is actually the second book right after Romans, I mean Hebrew is the second book right after Romans in P46 so it is included. All that tells you is that someone around the year 200 thought that Paul wrote it, clearly that doesn't mean he did but it was clearly associated with him in P46.

So aside from the 5,700 Greek texts, we have early translations, Latin, Coptic, Sahidic, Bohairic, these are extremely important. Sometimes they can't help us in determining a textual variant, sometimes they can. For example, whether a word was or was not in at least the Greek original that was being translated from initially, those translations can help us with things like that but then some grammatical things they really can't help us with that. We have more than 124 Greek manuscript witnesses within the first 300 years after the writing of the New Testament – now notice this last line – far more than any other work of antiquity. Far more than any other work of antiquity. If people are going to try to promulgate the idea that we can't know what the New Testament originally said, then they need to be honest and say, "We don't know anything about history. We don't know anything about what Tacitus said or Pliny said or any of the Greek historians. We don't know anything about history because we can't really know what they originally said." But do you know what? They generally don't say that. They generally don't express very openly their concerns about the accuracy of those works, they express their concerns primarily about the New Testament and I would say there are certain reasons why that is the case. In fact, we have 12 manuscripts from the second century, that is, within 100 years of the writing of the New Testament. These manuscripts contain portions of all four gospels, nine books of Paul, Acts, Hebrews and Revelation, comprising the majority of the books the New Testament possesses today. Again, no work of antiquity even comes close to this early attestation, and may I just mention in passing, we do not include the Koran in works of antiquity because it's a medieval work. I mean, you know, at the very earliest around 650 AD and so it's in the medieval period, it's not a work of antiquity so it's not involved in this particular comparison.

Now the thing about this, the average length of time between the writing of most works contemporaneous to the New Testament such as the historical works of Pliny, Suetonius, Tacitus, and their first extant copies is between 500 and 900 years. Do you know what that means? The average time span between when those books were written and the first manuscript copies we have of them is between 500-900 years. Now compare that with the

New Testament. We have 12 within 100 years, 124 within 300 years, and they're waiting until 500 years as their earliest or as late as 900 years for their earliest. That is a huge difference, a massive difference, and we just want people to be consistent at that point and want people to really understand.

Now, Lord willing, I've got a video clip for you here so you can hear what...you know, I consider Bart Ehrman to be the leading critic in the English language of the New Testament. We did a debate a number of years ago and a lot of folks didn't know why I was asking the questions I was asking him during the cross-examination, but if you know something about this field, then you know exactly why I was asking the questions that I was asking him. And he had made the claim on the "Unbelievable?" radio broadcast in London, a program I've been on a number of times, that there was an enormous amount of time between the writing of Paul, when Paul would write a letter like Galatians, and when we have the first copies of it, and I found that odd, enormous in comparison to anything else. And so I asked him a question and hopefully here's how he answered.

[video clip]

James White. On the "Unbelievable?" radio program in London, you discussed the length of time that exists between the writing of Paul's letter to the Galatians and the first extant copy of that being 150 years. You described this time period as enormous, that's a quote. Could you tell us what term you would use to describe the time period between, say, the original writings of Suetonius or Tacitus or Pliny and their first extant manuscript copies?

Bart Ehrman. Very enormous.

James White. So ginormous would be a good one?

Bart Ehrman. Ginormous.

James White. Ginorous, okay.

Bart Ehrman. I mean, ginormous doesn't cover it. The New Testament, we have much earlier attestation than for any other book from antiquity.

[end of video clip]

So there you have the leading critic of the New Testament admitting we have the earliest attestation from the New Testament of any work of antiquity whatsoever. I think if Bart Ehrman were to be simply asked what's the document with the earliest attestation? He'd say the New Testament. I would probably say which has the widest and best attestation? He'd say the New Testament. And yet people interpret his words, and I think he profits from this, as if we can't really know what the New Testament says when the reality is if you really pin him down in a scholarly context, what he's saying is there are certain verses that we're not exactly certain about but we know what the New Testament was

originally about. But that's not, unfortunately, what you end up seeing in most of those situations.

So here's a graphic that a fellow down in Australia put together and the center point there is point of origin, and then the round yellow dots are the relative size of the number of manuscripts for a work we have, and then the distance from that center is how long you have to go before you have a manuscript of that particular work. So the biggest dot to the right is Homer and he's a good 500 years down the road and we've got about 600 manuscripts. Then you get farther out and you've got certain works like Plato and stuff, you've got like half a dozen to a dozen manuscripts and there's as much as 1,400 years of silence before the first copies. Now the big thing to the left is not the sun, that's the New Testament. That's the New Testament in all of its translations as well, and you'll notice how close it is to the point of origin and how massive it is as to the witness that it has. That gives you a graphical idea of the difference between what you have in all the other works of antiquity and what you have with the New Testament and it gives you an idea of going, "Wow, why are people so skeptical?" Because the real problem that New Testament scholars have is we've got so much to work with. That's the real issue. We have so many manuscripts to work with. The people in other areas that study something like, you know, the manuscripts of Plato wish they had what we have but they don't, they just don't have it.

Now remember the phone game? I think some people call it Chinese whispers. That's how, unfortunately, a lot of people today present the idea of the New Testament and even when I was talking about how scholars present it, well, you have one copy and there's errors in it, and then it's copied and those errors are multiplied, then that... That assumes a single line of transmission over time. Is that how the New Testament came to us? The answer is that it is not. Instead when you think about it, what you have in the New Testament is what I call multi-focality, multiple authors writing at multiple times to multiple audiences, all right? That means there's never, no one ever sat down and wrote the New Testament at one time and hence could control it. Paul's writing individual letters to churches. James is writing his letter. Peter is writing his letter. They're writing at different times, different places, not even everybody knew that they were doing this at the same time, there's no cooperation or any cellphones, no fax numbers, anything like that at all, all right? So books get written and then they get transferred to other places and they get copied, and then they get moved to other places, and eventually what happens is you start putting collections together, for example, P66, the gospels, P46, Paul, you start putting collections together and then eventually over time you have the entirety of the New Testament.

Well, what you need to understand about this is that there were multiple lines of transmission. The transmission of the text of the New Testament did not follow a phone game single line. Not only are written documents less liable to corruption than what's spoken and whispered in your ear because you've got something that's actual, physical, that you can look at, but the phone game involves a single line of transmission, the New Testament originated in multiple places, written by multiple authors, with books being sent to multiple locations and this results in multiple lines of transmission and that is

extremely extremely important. This multi-focality leads us to the final considerations that demonstrate the bankruptcy of the modern attacks on the text of the New Testament.

To make specific changes in a text like the New Testament which originally circulated as a group of texts, not as a single body, would require a centralized controlling authority. You'd have to have, you know, you've seen some of the movies where they have these rooms filled with monks and, you know, and they're copying stuff and they're determining which books are going to be in the Bible. Never happened. Never could have happened. It's all fiction. As often as people believe it, it doesn't matter, it's still all just a bunch of fiction. That's never how the canon was formed. That's never how the text in the New Testament was transmitted. Instead you had this... Christians want everybody to have a copy of the Bible. They want everybody to know about the gospel. So they did not restrict the copying of their manuscripts. They couldn't especially because the Romans said it was illegal to have them and if they were destroying manuscripts, the church had to be producing manuscripts or eventually the New Testament is going to be destroyed.

So you have this explosion of manuscripts all over the known world. That means there was never a time when anyone could have come along and said... Well, any of you old enough to remember Shirley MacLaine? Remember Shirley MacLaine? And she got off into that New Age stuff for a while and she did that movie, "Out on a Limb." And you know, she's walking along the seashore with her guru and he's teaching her to say, "I am God. I am God. I am God." And we're all sitting there at home going, "No, you're not. No, you're not. No, you're not." It was really weird and, you know, she'd go around saying, "Well, you know, the Bible used to teach reincarnation but they took it out at the Council of Constantinople." And we'd all go, "Right." Except most of us have no earthly idea when the Council of Constantinople was and we really couldn't give an answer beyond that anyways, could we? And so this, could that have happened? Could someone have taken a doctrine out or put a doctrine in? The answer is no, not a possibility in any way, shape or form because there was never a time when there was a group that had control over the text of the New Testament.

Now there was a time in the history of the Koran when that happened and this is a vitally important issue. I've debated this issue in London, going to be debating it in just a few weeks in South Africa. There was a time when a group, a committee, determined the text of the Koran and what happens when you have a group that can control the text, you have to trust they got it absolutely right. There's no controls. But you see, we keep finding earlier and earlier and earlier manuscripts and what do they tell us? That what we've had all along is, in fact, what the New Testament has always said.

So there was no group like that, could not have happened, Christianity was a persecuted religion made up mainly of the lower classes, there was no central authority could have ever gathered up all the texts and made wholesale changes. Such is impossible in the earliest days of transmission and given that we have such ancient texts now obviously could not have happened at a later point without giving clear evidence. So in other words, if someone had tried to make a big change and took out chapters and put in chapters, as we find earlier manuscripts those later manuscripts are going to stand out like a sore

thumb. But that's not what we found when we found earlier and earlier manuscripts of the New Testament so that did not happen in the history of the text. We can prove it, it's just simply an impossibility, it could not have happened.

This is extremely important apologetically, this is extremely important for us to communicate to our young people and to all of us, because it's this conspiracy theory idea that is so prevalent amongst many people not just because of Dan Brown but because of others, that, "Well, you know, we really can't know. You know, maybe this deity of Christ thing was inserted later on." It is an impossibility because there was never an organization that could make that kind of change in the text of the New Testament itself. But that means all allegations of purposeful corruption such as those made by Muslims, fall upon the mere considerations of the historical context and the data itself. The rapid widespread distribution of the New Testament manuscripts in the first two centuries precludes any purposeful centralized corruption but it also gives rise to the need to study the relatively small number of textual variants because they didn't make you take a manuscript copying class to make sure you were really good at it. You know, if you wanted to have a copy, you could make a copy. Well, you might make some mistakes because you weren't the best copyist in the world. Well, that's why we have textual variants.

So that's actually when we really understand it, that's actually just simply the side effect of the way that God used to preserve the New Testament; because it exploded all over the place, we can say with absolute confidence that there was no editing, changing, inserting or anything else going on, and we could detect it if anyone tried it. But the result is we have to look at the textual variants because, look, if you want to say, "I'm not going to believe God can give something until it can be done absolutely perfectly," do you know the earliest point in time God could have given his revelation? 1949. Do you know why? 1949 is when they invented the photocopier. Even printed books have errors in them. Remember the edition of the King James Version where the printer forgot the word "not" in the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"? You know, there are errors that take place in printing too because you've got to put the little letters into the thing to make the printing. All it does is mean the errors you make get a lot more copies. So it was not until 1949 if you want to make absolute perfection of transmission the standard that God could have given his revelation. I think God wanted to get around to it a little bit earlier than that.

Now real quickly, this leads to another important point: when scribes copied their text, they were very conservative, often incorporating marginal notes into the text since they could not be sure if the note was original or not. When I have more time what I love to do is I ask someone in the audience who has the NIV, "Could you read me John 5:4?" And they start looking and start looking, there is no John 5:4 in the NIV. It goes from 5:3 to 5:5. Now it's in little teeny tiny font at the bottom of the page but the verse has been taken out of the text because it is most probably a marginal note that someone had written in explanation. It's about the angel troubling the waters and it was a marginal note and a later scribe not knowing whether it should be there or not included it in the text. I mean, if you're copying in someone else's handwritten text and they're dead, you can't go back

to them and say, "Is this an explanation or is this supposed to be in here?" And so scribes tended to be very conservative. They'd include it, which means later manuscripts get bigger and bigger and bigger by up to like 3% once you get into the later manuscripts because they are including everything that's found there.

So they were very very conservative. Now that's extremely important. That's actually a very very good thing. That means they even preserved mistakes or silly readings. This may sound bad at first but consider what it really means, the New Testament text is tenacious. Tenacious. That means once a reading appears in it, it stays in it even if it's a bad reading. You go, "Why is that good?" Think with me for a moment: that's how we know the originals are still there because the text is tenacious. As long as it's been a reading, it's still there. And so when I'm looking at a variant and there's three or four options, one of them is the original. So when people say, "You think we've got everything Paul wrote?" Yup. "Can you identify every bit of it?" Well, in my critical text I've got all of it. Now there are some places where I have to go, "Well, it's possibly this or possibly that but the original is still there." That's the important part.

I heard an illustration once, I think it was Rob Bowman that used the illustration off the top of my head, and this is a very good illustration. It's like having a 10,000 piece jigsaw puzzle, now what's the worst thing that could happen to you when you put together a 10,000 piece jigsaw puzzle? The cat comes along one night and eats one of the pieces and you get 9,999 put together and then there's a hole in it. Isn't that the worst thing that could possibly happen? Does anyone make jigsaw puzzles anymore? I mean, I think computers really killed jigsaw puzzles but anyways... What we have in the New Testament is we have a 10,000 piece jigsaw puzzle and we have 10,100 pieces. Now isn't it better to have 10,100 pieces than to have 9,900 pieces? You see, the extra 100 pieces are the scribal additions over time and we have to work through them but, you see, the point is the 10,000 pieces that form the puzzle are all there. That's the vital issue. That's the important point to remember. No other work of antiquity can say that because the timeframes are too big, the number of manuscripts too small but the New Testament can. The New Testament can.

So that's why the believing textual critic can preserve in even the most difficult variants because one of the readings is the original reading. Now let me give you one key theological example then we'll have some conversation. I like to work through a couple of examples so that you can see how this works out and this is a very important theological example. If you have your Bible, take a look at 1 Timothy 3:16, compare the King James Version and the New American Standard. The King James Version says,

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Compare the New American Standard,

16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

Now that is a theological difference. That's the difference between whether Jesus is called God or not called God, called "He who." That's big. Now by the way, the exact same situation in reverse is found in John 1:18, in other words, in John 1:18 the modern translation is Jesus is called God but he's not in the King James. So there are important textual variants that have to do with theological issues and we need to be aware of them. We should never be blindsided by these things. Read the notes at the bottom of the page. It's important. It really is important but we're just looking at this one.

Now I have heard entire sermons preached on this, about how all the godless men who worked on the New American Standard, and since I've been a critical consultant with the NASB I guess they included me, don't believe in the deity of Christ. Funny that I have defended the deity of Christ literally around the world against Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses and every other person along the line, but that's what they say because, "See, they took God out." You've got to be really careful when people use terminology like that.

What's the standard when you say something was taken out? The King James was not the first English translation and it wasn't the last English translation, and there are differences between the King James and the translations that came before it, Geneva, Bishop's Bible, Matthew's, etc. etc., so why does that become the standard? And when you say "took it out," the reality is, of course, the modern Greek texts do not have the word "God" at 1 Timothy 3:16. Now they have it in the notes, we all know it's there but it's not the main reading of the text and so that's not what's translated. But why would there be such an important theological difference between the two? Well, like I said, a lot of people really preach on this. The variants fairly evenly matched but in reality very strong attestation. Here it is, here it is on the screen. On the fourth line you can see "hos ephanerothe en sarki, who was manifest in the flesh." And then there is a textual critical mark next to it and Codex D, which is Codex Beza Contabrigiensis which is a really weird text which we don't have time to talk about, and some Latin manuscripts have a neuter. And then you have the word "theos" which is found in the corrected edition of Sinaiticus, the corrected edition of Alexandrinus, the corrected edition of C, the corrected edition of D, and the majority of manuscripts, but the text is the original Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, C, F, G, so on and so forth.

So there's the evidence but, again, we need to look at what it would have looked like originally to see the difference. The differences between "theos" and "hos," and "theos" in Greek would have been shrunk down to theta-sigma and theta is simply a circle with a line through the middle, in other words, they would have been almost identical letters, the difference is only a line above and in the middle of the letter, and remember you're writing on papyri and what is papyri made out of? Leaves. What do leaves have? Veins. It could be very very easy for someone for the variant to go either direction and so it's not

a matter of a conspiracy, it's not a matter of someone coming along and trying to delete the deity of Christ or something like that in any way, shape or form. But like I said, John 1:18 has the same issue in it. I'm going to skip over that for the moment and just get to the summary.

Let's summarize it. 400,000 variants, 99% of them absolutely inconsequential. Most thoroughly documented work of antiquity. Spread all over the world quickly. No controlling authority. Any later editing would stand out clearly in comparison with ancient manuscripts. And so while that was a fast run-through, hopefully it's given you at least, at least you now understand that having a robust, full, early manuscript tradition is vitally important to being able to say we know what an ancient document said, and of all the works of antiquity, the New Testament has that greatest level of evidence and purity of text, antiquity of the documents etc. etc. So realize most of the time when people, you know, you're probably not going to run into Bart Ehrman very often but you might run into people who read Bart Ehrman's books, they've never looked at this stuff and unfortunately most Christians haven't either, but the reality is when we start preaching the gospel, what do we always say? The Scriptures say, so we need to know what the Scriptures say and why we can trust it. The evidence is there. There's work to be done but we're called to be salt and light in a culture that is being soaked with unbelief and we're called to be light in the midst of that darkness, and so I hope this will help you to get started, at least, on that journey.

Moderator. You are a big thinker, I'm not. I go out into the....

Dr. James White. But you're much taller than I am.

Mod. ...and talk to the kids.

White. Oh, okay, all right.

Mod. When I talk to the kids, I want to try to recreate a conversation that I would have on a campus with the kids, bring it down to their attention span, have you seen it? It's like six seconds long, the videos are six seconds long and that's it. So make it pithy, mister. There's a lot of mistakes in the Bible.

White. Well, of course, you might believe that. My first question to someone would be have you read the Bible? Okay, and immediately the response could be no, so if someone says that to me, I'm assuming someone has told you that. First of all, I'd like to invite you to at least read one book of the Bible and see if you can see for yourself what some of these mistakes are. But secondly, I have read all the Bible and, in fact, I've taught both languages of the Bible.

Mod. Okay, stop. I haven't.

White. I know but I'm trying to say to you, if you say there's mistakes in the Bible, which Bible are you talking about? Do you even realize we're talking about an ancient work here, we're talking about a book that wasn't written in English? Are you really being fair with the Bible? What is your prejudice against the Bible? Has the Bible said something to you that you don't like? You see, you can go that direction pretty quickly to find out if the possibility is that the reason they're saying this is because maybe they have a religious background and they don't really like what the Christian message is and this objection isn't really an objection to the Bible. They're going to stop me pretty quickly if, in reality, they really do have an intellectual problem but let's admit it, for a lot of folks who you're talking about, there isn't an intellectual problem, they're using this as an excuse to not submit to the Lordship of Christ which they already know about.

And so when I say that, I'm simply saying you need to be fair. Why are you being, why are you subjecting the New Testament to a standard you don't subject any other work of antiquity to? They even know what another work of antiquity it is but the point is why are you being unfair? People are very sensitive to the accusation of being prejudiced or biased or unfair and it stops them in their track and their objection, and what I'm trying to say is you need to be fair and are you sure the sources that you're relying upon have been fair? Have you ever thought about that? And normally that will cause them to step back long enough for me to drag the six second attention span out a little bit longer and say the reality is the New Testament has more ancient attestation and a wider attestation than any other book of antiquity.

When you were in your history class, did you hear a professor always saying, "We don't really know what happened in Rome. You know, Suetonius, he said this but we really don't know." You didn't hear him saying that but the New Testament has a thousand times the manuscript evidence of the sources that he was accepting for what happened in ancient Rome. Why do you think that might be? Do you think maybe there might be a prejudice here? Do you think there might be something going on here? You've got to get them to step away from their unbelieving worldview for just a moment to start wondering, "Have I been fed a line? Have I been given something that's really biased?" That's been my experience in talking with folks like that.

Mod. If they do pursue that questioning there are mistakes in the Bible, what you just did, you memorized a couple of facts, you know, the Suetonius manuscripts whatever the Julius Caesar, the Gallic Wars, maybe memorizing one of those statistics would be helpful?

White. Right, right, it would be very very helpful to be able to do that. The fact of the matter is people can tell whether you're following a sort of preprogrammed presentation or whether you're really speaking from your heart, and that's why in talking with them I try to get to the personal level as quickly as I can on that level. But yes, being able to compare the New Testament to something like that, having some of those facts, or being simply able to ask, "Could you give me an example?" Now be careful, you might want to know what some of the standard alleged contradictions are in the text of the New Testament because there's just all sorts of them, you know, I have an entire chapter on my

book "Scripture Alone" of some of the standard objections like Mormons like to use and things like that. It's good to know some of those things.

But, yeah, most of the time they'll go, "Well, everybody knows that." They don't really have a specific objection and then you can say, well, look, I've examined a lot of alleged contradictions and what I have found is that in almost every single one of them the objection was based upon our ignorance of what the writer was saying. And then I try to make it personal. For example, if someone were to look at what you've written in your emails and text messages and things like that a thousand years from now not knowing what your life was like, don't you think they might misinterpret you? Don't you think they might think you contradicted yourself a lot? Now you might contradict yourself a lot but the point is they might accuse you of contradicting yourself when, if they had just known what your context was, they wouldn't have accused you of that. Try to make it something personal they can relate to.

Mod. How much of this do you think comes from the confusion we take our contemporary ideas about how we transmit information versus the system that used to exist and maybe helping them make that little leap?

White. Yes. Yes. That is really, that is a difficult thing to do, though. I mean, because, yes, they're so accustomed to cut-and-paste and the electronic and that's what they've grown up with that the idea that, for example, that Christians could exist for decades unaware of a book of Scripture because they live in another part of the world and there is a slow communication and you don't have fax machines and stuff like that, that is extremely important to try to be able to communicate to people but the way to do that is to say, now make sure you're not forcing on antiquity a standard that could only be relevant to us today. You've got to realize they didn't have the technology we had, and I like to throw in, which probably means they're a lot smarter than we are because they did more with less than we do today. I like to throw that in because, man, there is a massive amount of modern hubris amongst young people that all of us today, I mean, we look back at preceding generations and think because they didn't have an iPad they were idiots when the reality is we're not producing anything in comparison to what they produced literarily or culturally or anything else. So I like to throw that in there but, yeah, it's very important to try to explain the fact that it wasn't just a matter of Paul tapping out Romans and then just doing a mass email and that's how it got around. That's not how it worked.

Mod. Yeah, I think even Christians can be sometimes confused, a council sometimes would take decades. They didn't just jump on an airplane and all come together. It was a little bit more, it was just a different time and explaining the time difference can be helpful.

White. Right.

Mod. All right, you've been trying to demonstrate the reliability of the New Testament. Does the argument the proof that the Bible is reliable mean that it is inspired by God?

White. A lot of Christians recognize that if God has not preserved the New Testament, then our claims of inspiration face a real difficulty but we have to recognize the different category that I've been speaking of this evening. I believe in inerrancy. I believe that the Scriptures as given were theopneustos, God-breathed. Now that is a theological assertion about the nature of these documents. What I've been talking about today is how God has preserved those documents and how we can have a reliable trust in the translations that we have of those documents today. But just simply demonstrating that, well, the New Testament has the best manuscript tradition of any work of antiquity does not make it inspired because someone could come along and say, "Well, the Koran has the best manuscript integrity of any work of the medieval period so it's inspired." No, there's obviously a distinction between the two claims. They are very closely related because if we believe God has inspired it there's going to be an issue of preservation involved, but we have to distinguish between the two. And unfortunately I hear a lot of Christians confusing those two and when they're talking with someone and trying to talk about inspiration, they start talking about how many manuscripts we have and things like that which means it's not clear in their mind what the real evidence for inspiration is, which I think is far more, if you want to talk about inspiration, let's talk about having 40 authors, over 1,500 years, weaving the same beautiful threads of meaning and teaching through different languages and different times and coming together with what you've got in the Bible. That's inspiration, okay, but that's not the issue of the manuscripts themselves.

Mod. Do you tweak this sentence at all if I said, "I can demonstrate to you the Bible is reliable but that doesn't prove that it is inspired." Would you tweak that?

White. No, I think that's a good distinction to make, the only thing that I would, the next sentence would be, now obviously I would believe that God's providence in preserving it is a fulfillment of his promise to give his word to his people, but the inspiration speaks to the nature of the words, the preservation of those words is what brings them down to us today.

Mod. Which perhaps brings us to a controversy of the day: which one of the manuscript or manuscripts is the line that is most accurate? It is the King James Only controversy.

White. Yeah, yeah, well, one of the things I didn't have time to get into is the fact that when we started producing printed Greek New Testaments, the first printed and published Greek New Testament was by a man named Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus was a Dutch humanist scholar. He rushed his first edition to print because his printer, Johann Froben, knew that Cardinal Jimenez had already done a multi-volume called the Complutensian Polyglot, but back then you had to get papal approval before you printed anything and you didn't have fax machines and there was all sorts of red tape to go through, so they were sitting in the warehouse and so Erasmus' printer is an entrepreneur, shall we say, and so he's pushing him to get this thing done to get it out. As a result, as Erasmus himself said, his first edition was precipitated rather than edited, had a number of errors in it.

He went into the book of Revelation, I've got to tell this story now. He went into the book of Revelation, he could only find, he thought the library in Basel, Switzerland to have multiple copies, couldn't find a one. So he borrowed a commentary on Revelation from a friend and he had to extract the text of Revelation from the commentary, and he got to the last chapter and discovered that the last pages had fallen off. So what he did is he translated it from the Latin Vulgate into Greek for the last six verses of the book of Revelation. The amazing thing is, he came up with readings no one had ever seen in any manuscript before. That was in his first edition. That was in all five of his editions all the way through 1535, and to this very day the King James Version of the Bible has the weird readings that Erasmus came up with from the Latin in its readings in the text of the book of Revelation. To this very day because it was those five editions of Erasmus, the 1550 edition of Stephanus and the 1598 of Beza, those were the seven printed Greek texts that the King James translators used between 1604 and 1611 to produce the New Testament of the King James Version of the Bible. Erasmus only had between six and 12 manuscripts. We have 5,700.

So that text that was used for the King James became known as the Textus Receptus. In 1633 the Elzevir brothers put out an advertisement for their printed edition and they called it, back then Latin advertisements or advertisements were in Latin, if you can believe that, it really wouldn't work today very well, and Textus Receptus means "received text." And so for quite some time, from the 1600s until the late 1800s that was pretty much the text that was used even though it had a very small manuscript tradition behind it. Then as more and more manuscripts were found, you have the drive to create a critical edition of the Greek New Testament, we're using much earlier manuscripts. Erasmus wanted to use Vaticanus. He wouldn't have had any problem using Vaticanus but it was in Rome, he couldn't get to it. And so as we found earlier and earlier manuscripts, now our critical editions, which take into consideration not only the Greek manuscripts but all these other translations, have a much broader textual basis and so there are differences between that and the Textus Receptus.

So if anyone has a King James and, remember, if you had a King James today, you don't have a 1611 King James, you have a 1769 Blayney revision of the King James, and even then you've either got the Oxford or Cambridge and they're not identical to one another. That's based on the TR. The New King James is also based on the TR; some people think it's a translation of the Jordan text, it's not, it's a translation of the Textus Receptus. So they're going to have, for example, 1 John 5:7, the Comma Johanneum text that was not a part of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament until at least the 1400s, there's going to be those places that it's going to vary in its text from ESV, NASB, NIV, Holman Christian which are all based upon the modern eclectic text which has this much broader textual basis.

Mod. All right, let me just boil that down. King James Version of the Bible, Textus Receptus, the received text from a manuscript that was a fair distance between the time of Jesus.

White. Manuscripts that were about 1,200 years after Christ.

Mod. Okay, 1,200 years.

White. Yes.

Mod. Now since that time when the King James Version of the Bible came out, we've had more and more manuscripts added called the eclectic texts...

White. Which is drawing from the entirety of the spectrum and the other translations, Latin, so on and so forth.

Mod. And so some of the modern translations that we have today would be NASB, the ESV.

White. ESV, real popular.

Mod. Okay, now an argument that the King James Version folks would use, and I personally sympathize with it, I mean, I'm sympathetic toward it, why would God do that, why would he have people for two centuries thinking that the King James Version of the Bible is the most accurate translation and you folks come along with your little eclectic text business, why would God do that?

White. The funny thing is if they would read the introduction to the King James by the translators, their position would be refuted because the King James, why did the King James translators do what they did? The Geneva Bible was perfectly fine. In fact, the Pilgrims preferred the Geneva Bible to the King James Bible by a long shot because King James told the translators there were certain words they could not use. For example, they could not translate baptize as anything other than baptize and the church had to be church and not assembly and stuff like that. The Puritans, many of them did not like the King James because of that but there were English translations before the King James came along, not only that but that was the exact argument that was used against Erasmus because what was the Bible for 1,100 years for Western Christendom? It was the Latin Vulgate. How dare you come along and both change the Vulgate and give us a Greek rendering as well, how dare you do that. Simple tradition of use does not indicate godly approbation of that particular text or we'd have to go back to the Vulgate. And even when the Latin Vulgate was translated by Jerome, there was a near riot in Carthage because up until then they had used the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament and Jerome more accurately translated that the gourd that grew over Jonah's head was a castor oil plant, and when that was read in public they almost rioted. Why? Because they were used to the Greek Septuagint even though it never even crossed their mind, "Well, which one is more accurate?" It was, "This is what I'm used to."

And I understand that for a lot of folks, I grew up on the King James, I understand, you know, if that's what you've heard God speaking in, then something other than that sounds lesser and you're changing stuff. But if you just recognize the need to have an historical

perspective, then you realize the importance that the King James translators themselves talked about of having an accurate translation using the best sources.

Mod. You were talking about three major manuscripts, the Codex Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and you'll sometimes hear people say, "Ah, this is the good one, that's the bad one." Which is the good, which is the bad? What do we do with those?

White. Well, it's not specifically those manuscripts, it's the manuscript families that they represent. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are Alexandrian manuscripts, that means the text type they represent is associated primarily with Alexandria, Egypt. Alexandrinus, interestingly enough, is Byzantine in the gospels and then Alexandrian and other sources so it's a mixed text. The issue is those who defend the Byzantine manuscripts that came out of Byzantium, Constantinople, like I said, which underlie primarily the King James will vilify the Alexandrian mainly because of the fact that they're saying, "Well, our text is fuller. These were written by," frequently they're say, "by heretics. There are lots of heretics in Alexandria." Actually there's lots of heretics everywhere. In fact, the greatest offender of the deity of Christ was a man by the name of Athanasius who was the bishop of Alexandria so you really can't go that direction.

But it's almost always a traditional thing for them. They're basically saying that, you know, God blessed the Byzantine manuscript tradition. He didn't bless the Alexandrian. We've only discovered it recently, which isn't really true. But you know, the Reformers used the Byzantine. Well, they didn't know the differences between them so you can't call on them either. So it really comes down to we want to substantiate that particular tradition and so there's a vilification of the Alexandrian, not really an argument that it somehow is lesser on the deity of Christ or anything like that because it's not. Like I said, it is a Byzantine reading to say God at 1 Timothy 3:16 but it's an Alexandrian reading to say God at John 1:18.

So it's really you cannot identify a specific bias in regards to orthodoxy and this is very important, I want everyone to catch this: if you take the most Byzantine manuscript in the world and the most Alexandrian manuscript in the world, and apply the exact same rules of hermeneutics to both, you will not come up with a different belief. The only difference is if you use only Alexandrian manuscripts, the list of verses you're going to have in support of a particular doctrine is going to be somewhat different than if you used only a Byzantine but you're not going to come up with a different faith. And I have challenged every King James Only advocate to debate that very issue and they just won't do it. They just won't do it.

Mod. Today what do you see in your debates with Bart Ehrman and others, what are the three arrows that continue to get slung regarding the reliability of the New Testament?

White. Well, one would be, the toughest one for most people to deal with is the people who've really well read are going to try to introduce a type of hyper-skepticism. This is what Ehrman is now doing. Ehrman will admit we basically know what the New Testament looked like 100 years after it was written, there's really not any question from

him. He isn't into all the conspiracy stuff about inserting doctrines and all the rest of that kind of silliness. What he's saying is what could have happened in that 100 years, all right? And in fact, he was asked in a debate what type of evidence would you need to have to believe that the gospel of Mark that we have today is accurate? And amazingly he said if we had 10 copies of the gospel of Mark that were dated to within, I think he said like six weeks or a very short period of time of the original, then that would be enough for him. Obviously there's nothing in antiquity even close to that. There wasn't anybody running around with date stamps and stuff like that. I mean, it was just an absurdly, a level of skepticism that just has been utterly unknown.

So that type of skepticism is the first thing. The second thing would be to prey on the fact that, you know, you can point to someone's Bible, this is what the Muslims do, and say, "Well, look, your Bible says right there some manuscripts don't say this, some manuscripts don't say that." So they will play on the fact that we are open about the history of our text. And then religiously a lot of the cults will try to use this as a means of sneaking their authority in and so the Mormons will do that and that's why you need modern day revelation, or you need the governing body, Jehovah's Witnesses know which one is which or whatever else it might be. So there can be an unbelieving direction or a religious utilization of these things as well.

Mod. Last thing, you mentioned that there might be some manuscripts that have recently been recovered that are within the first century. What's the rumor on that?

White. Well, last year Dan Wallace in a debate with Bart Ehrman announced that there had been a papyri find that would produce fragments of manuscripts of the gospels that are going to be dated to the first century which would make P52 no longer the earliest one and that these would be published by Brill in February of this year. Well, we're past February of this year and if you ask Dan what's going on, he says, "I've now signed a confidentiality agreement. I can't comment." So there's some sort of publishing issue. So we're all left going...

Mod. Now I heard maybe as early as 60, am I, did you.....

White. Well, not in that time period. The number of total papyri maybe but the ones that actually are second or first century was a smaller number but I had heard there was going to be at least, I think 18 that could be dated to between the first and the second century. Even when it happens, there is going to have to be a scholarly review of that material before we can really start confidently saying... I mean, P52 has been around for a while, you know, we've pretty much been through the mill with that one so we need to be very careful because even though the unbelievers are very quick to jump on anything for unbelief, we have to be a little bit more careful because we follow him who is the truth.

Mod. Right on. Somebody in the audience wants to know about your tactic with a college student to draw them out to try to see what it is that makes them opposed to the New Testament reliability. Have you ever done that with Bart Ehrman?

White. No, and in fact, most of the time with the people you're debating you have very little opportunity of personal interaction. I did try to have some personal interaction with Bart Ehrman but he just was not a very friendly man to me. John Dominic Crossan was so that would be very different. We did have a fair amount of personal interaction and I'm trying to make that more part of my interaction with Muslims. I just had some debates in Dublin, Ireland with a Muslim apologist and the fact that we had lunch that day and talked about our lives and we were able to really communicate with one another, I think made for the debate that night at Trinity College in Dublin to be one of the best that we had had. There was much more, I think, personal respect between us. And so it depends on the opportunity but some folks that are in opposition to the faith just don't want to have any type of interaction with us at all. They've come to their conclusions, they're just there to do their spiel.

Mod. Let's talk about Bart Ehrman for a minute because he is the billy club that is used by many people these days. Several times you've said he's not happy, he's unfriendly.

White. I've listened to Bart Ehrman speak in so many different contexts. I mean, he hardly knew who I was, didn't really care who I was. I listened to classes that he taught. I listened to debates he had done. I read his doctrinal dissertation, for crying out loud.

Mod. You studied him.

White. I studied him and I just do not encounter someone there who is really at peace. He doesn't strike me as a really overly happy individual and I've talked with people who knew him, Phil Johnson knew him at Moody Bible Institute, for example, they were students together there together, and you know, he says it was not the textual stuff that caused him to lose his faith, it was actually the issue of the problem of evil. A lot of Christians ignore that. But when you really read his book on God's problem, the problem of evil, it's really a very poor work on that subject. It does not show much of a knowledge at all of Christian theology in regards to theodicy and the justification of God and the existence of evil and things like that. So my experience with him really indicated to me that, you know, certainly someone to pray for but he doesn't seem to be really passionate about what he's doing.

Mod. But he could slap down as kind of the a-ha card. He went to Moody. He went to where did he get....?

White. Moody, Wheaton, Princeton for both Masters and Ph.D.

Mod. I forgot Princeton. Moody and...

White. But he studied under Metzger at Princeton.

Mod. Okay.

White. He was Metzger's last doctrinal student.

Mod. Interesting. So clearly a guy who was really a Christian and now he's not, a-ha.

White. Yeah, well, that's a theological issue and just simply, you know, I would say that you can learn more today in Princeton cemetery than in Princeton Seminary. No, it's true. Have you ever been to Princeton cemetery? It's fascinating: Warfield, Edwards, oh, just reading the headstones is an education at Princeton cemetery. But I'm not sure which is which, maybe Princeton Seminary has become Princeton cemetery. I'm not sure. But being as it may, that's a theological issue, the fact that someone, you know, you're assuming that if I just knew what Bart Ehrman knows that I would leave Christianity. Well, I do know what Bart Ehrman knows and I interpret the facts very very differently and I find a tremendous bias in his book, and the funny thing is we had originally agreed to debate does textual variation preclude the possibility of inspiration of the Scriptures. We got just a few weeks out and he said, "I never agreed to that." Well, he had. "I never agreed to that." We had to call it misquoting Jesus because even though he makes the theological assertion that the existence of variation means the Bible cannot be inspired, he will not defend that assertion because he knows it's indefensible because it basically means that the Bible could not have been inspired until 1949 because he knows that any work of antiquity contains textual variation.

It's funny, I kept trying to get him to comment on the Koran. Here is the James A. Gray distinguished professor of religion, head of the department of religion of the University of North Carolina, "I don't know anything about the Koran." Yeah, he finally was more honest in a video clip that I've seen a number of times where someone said, "When are you going to write your book on the Koran?" And the only thing he would say is, "When I stop valuing my life."

Mod. Somebody in the audience wants to know are you stating that one of the strongest arguments for New Testament reliability is the multi-focality presentation?

White. Well, I think to understand the entire history of the transmission of the text of the New Testament you have to recognize its origins, and it did not originate as a single document, it originated during a period of persecution, it originated from the pens of multiple individuals. Even those individuals, we know Paul, for example, writes some epistles while he's free and some while he's in prison. He's writing from one location, he's writing to another location. These are multiple writers, writing to multiple audiences, at multiple times, and that means there is never this ability to control and to edit. Obviously to me the greatest danger in argumentation against the New Testament is the idea that it could have been edited wholesale so as to insert or delete doctrines. That, to me, is the far more grave accusation. And so when you recognize how the New Testament came about and how it was originally distributed, that's an impossibility. The issue of textual variation, even Bart Ehrman will admit we're just playing around right now. We know what was originally written. We know that it was about Jesus and we know it was about the salvation through the cross and we know all the rest of that stuff. There might be a verse here or a verse there where he says we're not certain but the message, the overall message really is not impacted by that. The issue is can we know what was originally

written and if there was this type of wholesale editing, then we wouldn't be able to know that.

So, yes, obviously recognizing the nature of the writing in the New Testament is fundamental to laying a foundation for recognizing the bankruptcy of the arguments against it and most people, again, even most Christians, I grew up in a Christian family and yet it's just very natural to think that the Bible's always been like this. It's always had a leather cover and gold-edged pages and thumb indexing and everything else. That's not how it came to be and once we understand the fact that the book of Romans was once a roll of papyri in a leather pouch with a guy walking streets to go to Rome who never discovered deodorant, then we realize that it actually happened in real life, you know? And really what we're doing is we're taking the biggest weapons against the New Testament are ignorance, and so what we're doing is we're taking those weapons away so what they're left with is normally picayune stuff, not real stuff.

Mod. Great last question from the audience whether it's with a student or for adults, what should be the big, the one takeaway that you would like everybody to have?

White. Well, especially for students, I want to communicate to them the fact that if everyone would be fair with the data in regards to specific subjects we were addressing tonight, if everyone would be fair with the data, that they would have to conclude that we can know what the New Testament originally taught, we can know what it teaches about the gospel. This is the consistent message all the way through the New Testament, and that all of this skepticism that is out there is unfounded. That's the main thing that I would want them to understand is that we can know what the gospel is. The gospel message is not just my opinion, it's not just based upon a couple of texts that we're not sure about, that there is no question about what the message of the gospel and the teaching of Jesus Christ was. At the same time, because we live in a society so soaked with this ultra-skepticism, I think even for Christians we need to recognize that we have evidence here of God's providence, we have evidence here of the interface of the supernatural with the natural realm, that that inspiration of Scripture has also had the result in the fact that God has preserved that. It's just we need to see that he did it in a way that is not exactly how we would have expected it and very frequently seeing how God has done things in a way that we don't expect it is a wonderful thing for us to know. But we as believers, I think one of the reasons that there's so much weak non-gospel out there is because many of our ministers are trained in schools where they graduate without confidence that God has spoken. You can't say "Thus saith the Lord" if you don't think "Thus saith the Lord" is possible anymore. And every denomination that has simply jumped off the cliff into oblivion started with doubts about the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. And so for me, this is a gospel issue because as much as I defend justification by faith and the atonement and the resurrection, all of that comes back to what we have in Scripture. It's always coming back to that point and that's why the enemy is always attacking there and that's why we have to be very very firm there, just as firm there as at any other point along the line.

Mod. All right. And if I could just add to that as we close, close your ears right now because this is going to be real nice about you, I think a lot of times too a lot of people don't realize that we've got some smarts in evangelical Christianity, that there's actually some people who work hard and study it. This happens to be one of them with us tonight and exceedingly grateful. Thanks for all of your work and thank you for tonight.