

# Why should we believe?

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[ 0 : 00 ] At his trial before Pilate, Jesus said that his followers were on the side of truth.! To which Pilate replied, What is truth?

I think Pilate was no idiot.! That can accommodate itself to political need.

Politicians rarely tell actual lies, because you're too easily caught out if you tell lies. But you can always adapt the truth a bit to fit the situation and to fit the need.

That's exactly what Pilate was going to do then. But it's a fair question actually, isn't it? What is truth? Is there any absolute truth at all?

The title I was given by Phil for this talk is Why We Should Believe, which is a fair enough title. Certainly my starting point was I prepared it.

[ 1 : 12 ] But as I looked at this text, I felt you could just as equally say, it's why do we not believe? John actually at various places in his Gospel addresses the question of why we don't believe.

I mean, as we've been reminding ourselves every week, he's set out to convince us that Jesus is the promised Messiah. But not everybody does believe that.

And I say at various places in his Gospel, he approaches this question from various viewpoints. Here the approach is rather analytical.

It's almost as if, John almost feels as if he's taken on an impossible task. That believing is essentially impossible.

And that he's asked the question of why we don't believe. And indeed why we should believe. Does it even make sense to believe? And we must be aware of the context of this passage.

[ 2 : 21 ] We haven't actually read the passage before, but we looked at it in detail last week. Jesus has been explaining to his rather sceptical hearers that he and the Father are at one.

That everything he's teaching is what the Father has given him. And that the context was when I'm working on the Sabbath.

And Jesus said the Father is working and I'm working too. But of course the Pharisees didn't like that at all. And after this John is going to tell us about two more signs.

We get the fourth and fifth signs in fact. The feeding of the 5,000 and the walking on the water. After which we get a further passage of teaching. I just shoehorned in here.

We have this little section on the problem of knowledge itself. And it addresses questions of importance to all of us. How do we actually know things at all?

[ 3 : 45 ] Can we know that what we think we know is true? And even really does it make sense to talk about truth at all?

That's not an easy question. I mean philosophers and thinkers have been considering this for at least 500 years before Jesus himself talked about it. It was back at least to Plato and Socrates and probably further.

This sort of question. And philosophers and thinkers are still considering it today. And still haven't come up with a totally satisfactory answer. But it's not just a thing we can leave to academics and philosophers.

Because actually we come up against it every day of our lives, don't we? Very little of our world view what we know is formed by direct experience.

We do know a little. I mean if I stub my foot on a rock, I know it will hurt. And I know that by direct experience because I've done it before.

[ 4 : 48 ] But the vast majority of what we know is learned from other people. And that's the nub of the problem. If we think about some everyday examples.

We've all had this phone call or something like it haven't we? Hello, is that Stephen Ellacott? I'm calling from the fraud department at your bank.

We've all had phone calls like that I'm sure. And if you have any sense we immediately flag up a warning.

Is this a genuine call? Or is it actually a scammer trying to get our hands on hard earned cash? Some of these scams are very clever. They fool us in all sorts of clever ways.

On the other hand, we shouldn't take what we are told at face value. But on the other hand if we don't believe anything we are told, how can we know anything at all?

[ 5 : 54 ] What about the war in Ukraine? Is it a war or is it a special military operation? Is it an unjustified empire building invasion of a sovereign nation?

Or is it the defence of the rights of Russian speaking Ukrainians from racist persecution? In a region that was traditionally part of Russia anyway. Whose truth do you choose to believe?

It's been said that the truth is the first casualty in any war. I got into quite an interesting discussion during the pandemic actually. There's a sort of local social media platform called Nextdoor, which is to share news among communities if you've not come across it.

And at one point I got into a discussion with some anti-vaxxers on this platform. And I made the point that in the end it comes down to who you are prepared to trust.

And one of them objected to that and said, well surely we can make up our own mind using our own intelligence. But I pointed out that you just can't do that. Why?

[ 7 : 10 ] Because we simply don't have access to the war data. None of us have actually done the experiments, done the test, to see if the vaccine is safe or not, to see if it works or not. We have to rely on those who tell us.

In a sense we don't have any choice. So who are you going to trust? Who are you going to call? You might say, is our mantra in science we trust?

Or is it big pharma is the very devil? We are going to trust. We are going to trust. We are going to trust. We are going to trust. As I said, these are 21st century problems.

And yet the underlying problem has been around for millennia. The more our attitude is required to change, the more important the topic is, the more evidence we demand.

Statisticians call this confirmation bias. We tend only to accept evidence that fits in with our existing opinion.

[ 8 : 18 ] Some changes are not too difficult. Switching from a laptop to an iPad just requires a bit of change of way of doing things but it's not a major change. Just an extension of what we already know.

But some changes are rather more challenging than that. Are we going to change from a society that depends on, well originally on gold and then on cash to a totally cashless society where money is just an electronic thing.

That requires a bit more persuasion. It's a bit more challenging, isn't it? Whether we want to make that change. But the conceptual jump these Pharisees are being asked to make was something bigger even than that, wasn't it?

They might have been prepared to welcome Jesus as one of them if he'd just come along with some new insights. In fact, when he was a boy, they had done just that.

We read in Luke 2, 46-47, his parents were looking for him and it said after three days they found him in the temple courts sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

[ 9 : 31 ] Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When he first turned up as a boy, they thought, here is one of us.

Here is somebody who goes with our way of thinking. But that wasn't true, that turned out to be not true at all. What Jesus is requiring of them now is a conversion.

If you want to use the religious term. Paradigm shift if you want to use the philosophical term. A whole new way of looking at life, the universe and everything.

The truth is what Jesus is asking them to make. And it didn't take them long to change their opinion, did it? John 5, 18, we read, For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him.

Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. That was just too much for them to swallow. It wasn't the Jews didn't understand what Jesus was claiming.

[ 10 : 43 ] They understood it only too well. They just couldn't accept it. So there is a problem here that needs to be addressed.

And in typical fashion, John likes to throw us a curve ball, doesn't he? What are the elephants in the room? We've just been reading of Jesus' claims about himself.

But can you believe in such a claim that somebody makes about himself? Clearly that's not a very sensible approach, is it? So Jesus tackles that head on.

If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. That's what the Greek actually says. Some versions of the, some translations change it to say, if I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid, or is not deemed valid, or deemed true, or something like that.

It doesn't actually say that in the Greek. It says quite clearly, if I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. But of course Jesus is not accusing himself of lying.

[12:00] What he's doing here is putting these words in their mouth. He's saying that you, you can't expect us to believe what I say about myself.

That's what he's saying. And in a sense, that's a fair point. As Jesus goes on to, go on to talk about. It's an objection not without weight.

To accept what people claim about themselves without examining that claim carefully, is obviously not wise. So it's not surprising here that the approach is, the discussion is quite careful and analytical.

And Jesus points out, actually there are two sides to this question, first of all. Firstly, how does Jesus himself know that he's not merely mad? Might be a reasonable question to ask.

Have you got a problem there? I'll carry on. How does Jesus himself know that he's not merely mad?

[13:17] And Jesus answers this, doesn't he? In verses 31, 34 and 41. How does Jesus know himself that he's not deceived? But of course his main thrust here is, how can the rest of us know?

How can his listeners know? How can the Pharisees know? How can the rest of us know whether what Jesus is claiming is actually true? As I said, the analytical style of this argument is rather Greek.

But it's worth pointing out that the presentation in fact is thoroughly Hebrew. It starts in fact in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 19, 15.

One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offence he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

That obviously refers specifically to criminal cases, but it had come to be more of a principle in, I think, in Jewish thought that you shouldn't believe one witness. You need at least two and preferably three or more witnesses.

[14:29] That passage in Deuteronomy goes on to warn against perjury. Against lying, in other words. Bearing false witness. Two or three witnesses.

Even if we hope to just get to the legal question of belief beyond reasonable doubt. Of course we can never establish anything in that sense, but totally beyond doubt.

Beyond reasonable doubt. Can we be clear? We need two or three witnesses. The argument is structured in a typical Hebrew way of a typical Hebrew sandwich.

Those who like technical terms, it's called a chiasm. It's a typically Hebrew way of presenting an argument. So it starts with, will you believe me, verse 31.

Then it talks about the first witness, who is John the Baptist in verses 32 to 35. Then it talks about the key witness, the father. It's a Greek thing to put the, sorry, it's a Hebrew thing to put the key point in the middle.

[15:41] It's a Western way of presenting an argument, we tend to put the clinching point at the end, don't we? But it's a Hebrew thing to put the clinching point in the middle. So then we get the third witness, the scriptures.

And particularly Moses in this case. But the scriptures generally, 39 to 46. And then the argument goes back to where it started. Can you believe me?

Is belief possible? It's a very Hebrew form of argument. We might ask, why does he choose these three witnesses? And again, if we wanted to sort of pin it down as why it's these three particular things, we might put it this way.

John the Baptist represents contemporary knowledge, doesn't he? He was around at the time, or at least he had only just been killed. His testimony was well known. John and Jesus knew each other, they were related.

So John also, in fact, serves as a character witness. John was a recognised prophet. So he was a sensible person to appeal to.

[16:53] And the scriptures give them a claim, it's historical context, doesn't it? Always, when you're asked to believe something, asking what context does this make sense?

If you get one of these calls from the bank, ask yourself, does this make sense in the context? That's a crucial question always to ask. Such a claim has to have meaning in the Jewish understanding of the one God.

When Jesus is talking about being one with the Father, who is the Father who he's talking about, has to make context, make sense in the context of the Jewish understanding of the one God.

Of course, today, we may not all even share that perception, that John was a prophet and that the scriptures talk of all the one God.

So perhaps it's even more difficult for us today, but we can still listen to the argument and listen to what the witnesses have to say. We can still examine the case to see if it makes sense.

[18:00] And as I said, in Jewish structure, the clinching argument is the one in the centre. What is the solid evidence? As we might say today, what is the forensic evidence?

Is there any actual data that establishes the case? This, Jesus says, is the weightiest testimony in verse 36.

Well, I guess most of us here are actually Westerners, not Greeks or ancient Greeks or Hebrews. So I thought perhaps we'd rephrase the argument in the Western style and see if we can pick out the main points of it.

So first of all, what is the question that is being discussed? And what is it? It's that Jesus has made claims about himself. And is there any evidence for these claims?

Is it plausible? Is it believable? Can we actually believe these claims that Jesus has made? And so we have these three witnesses. And I'll put them in a different order. Let's say the first witness we'll say is the scriptures.

[19:17] The second is John the Baptist. And the third is the father himself. I suppose if you like that's in chronological order. So what about the scriptures first of all? The error that the Pharisees have made is that the old covenant is the old covenant of the Pharisees. The old covenant of the Pharisees have made and the old covenant of the Pharisees have made. The first is the old covenant of the Pharisees have made.

The first is the Baptist. And the third is the father himself. The third is the father himself. I suppose if you like that's in chronological order. So what about the scriptures first of all?

Well there are two issues here I think. The error that the Pharisees have made is that the old covenant is about rules.

Certainly the books of Moses do contain a lot of laws. But that's never the point. Deuteronomy 6 verse 4 to 6 is quite well known.

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

[20:21] In fact it's interesting to get your computer out and check on the number of references to the word love in Deuteronomy. You'd be quite surprised I think if you do. I was. It's full of references to love.

Another one is Deuteronomy 10, 12 to 13. And now O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you? But to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.

So if you go and have a look in Deuteronomy you'll find there are several more along much the same lines. The commands were not meant as an examination.

The laws were laws for wise living. And in fact the Pharisees were not really keeping the commands they made such a fuss over, because they had forgotten about the love part.

As Jesus points out in verse 42 of our passage. Nothing wrong actually with having rules. I mean families have rules don't they?

[21:36] But do families have rules in order to, so that we don't have to bother about excluding, about loving each other? Of course not. The families are there to provide a guideline to stop the love being damaged, don't they?

If you have the rules to exclude love, if you have the rules of a game to exclude what we, that old fashioned concept of sportsmanship, then you've actually missed the point.

The rules that were there in the Old Testament were to help people to love God and to love their neighbours as themselves. Not as a substitute for love.

But that's what the Pharisees had made it. They made it into an examination. You tick enough boxes, you know, 60% and you pass. Except they expected 99%.

But due to honour is made it clear that it's the love part that made them holy, that would set them apart really, not the rules. Not that they lived by rules. Other countries had rules and laws, some were better than others.

[ 22 : 46 ] But what really set them apart was the love for the Lord. Or that was what they were supposed to anyway. So the first error that the Pharisees had made was that they had forgotten about the love part.

The command was not to keep the rules but to love the Lord with all their hearts and their neighbours as themselves. And they had also forgotten that the promise of the old covenant was not about rules, but it was about a person.

Or possibly more than one person, but it's certainly personal, relational. Isaac was going to be sacrificed, but a substitute was provided.

Why was Isaac saved? Because the descendant of Abraham, the descendant of Isaac, would bless the nations.

It was the seed, the descendant, not Abraham or Isaac themselves who would bless the nations. It was a person expected, a person or persons. Of course, if you think back to the Passover, a blood sacrifice was made.

[ 24 : 08 ] A lamb had to be sacrificed. But that was only a temporary solution. Those Israelites who were saved at that time died a few years later in the desert. The real sacrifice has not yet appeared.

And what did Moses himself say? Jesus says, doesn't he, that Moses wrote about me. Well, is that so? Well, one specific verse, again in Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 18, 15.

It says, the Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. Moses was not the last word. He never claimed to be.

And in fact, it then goes on to have all sorts of dire warnings about what would happen if you don't listen to him. Moses indeed wrote of Jesus.

The scriptures point to a person. They point to a king in the line of David. 2 Samuel 7, 16. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me.

[ 25 : 15 ] Your throne shall be established forever. On the face of it, a nonsensical promise. No dynasty lasts forever. And yet that was what was promised.

David would have a king forever in his line. Isaiah and Zechariah talk about the true servant.

The one who, unlike Israel, serves the Lord with his whole heart. Isaiah has a great deal to say about that. How the historical Israel should have been the servant, but it wasn't.

The Lord would send a true servant who would serve faithfully and justly. You may think of that in Zechariah as well in 3 verse 8.

But also, Zechariah, we find that we are looking for a high priest. It's clear as in the name in Zechariah that...

[ 26 : 20 ] Sorry, I should have changed the slide. I haven't got the references there. I should have changed to that slide.

Zechariah talks about the high priest at the time, at his time, it was Joshua.

It's called Joshua, Yeshua. In which of course we get the word Jesus. And it says that he and also the governor at the time were types of the pictures of the one who was to come.

Zechariah says that quite explicitly. They were looking for a high priest, but in fact not a high priest just in the line of Levi, of Aaron.

But a high priest who was also a king, as Psalm 110 verse 4 says. A high priest in the line of Melchizedek. A king, priest. And what about the last prophets of the old covenant in Malachi?

[ 27 : 30 ] There's talk in that of a covenant messenger. One who would come as a messenger of the new covenant. A new way to live. But one who would come as a messenger of hope, yes, but also of judgment.

The Old Testament ends, not with a blessing actually, but with a curse. It says the one who will come to turn the hearts of their sons to their fathers and so on.

And if not, then will strike the land with a curse. There is one who has come who would bring, who would turn the hearts of the people to their, back to their God.

But if not, then he would come with a curse and with judgment. The Pharisees talked to rules to make people holy.

They forced converts to become Jews. But the scriptures write of a descendant of Abraham who would bless the nations. And a king who would bring peace.

[ 28 : 37 ] Although, as Jesus himself warns, not yet. He says at one point, don't think I've come to bring peace. I've come to bring a sword. But in the end, he is the king who will bring peace. The king in the line of David who will establish peace forever.

So, the scriptures do indeed talk of Jesus. They tell us not to think in terms of rules, but in terms of a person. The one who was to come.

The prophet after Moses. The messenger of the covenant. In whom the Lord's soul delights. What about John the Baptist? Well, we've already looked at this.

So, I won't spend too much time on John the Baptist. But let me just remind you. The Pharisees did, as we've said, appear to acknowledge John as a prophet. And yet, he'd actually spoken against them and in favour of Jesus.

Matthew 3, 7-12 says, I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him except the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain, is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.

[ 29 : 52 ] And John called Jesus the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. And he wasn't too keen on the Pharisees either. He called them a generation of vipers.

Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come. Well, apparently somebody had warned them, but unfortunately they took no notice in the end. Most of them didn't.

As I said, John the Baptist and Jesus knew each other. They were relatives. But that was not the source of John's knowledge as to whom Jesus was. His prophetic insight came from God.

So that's the first two witnesses. The witness of the scriptures and the witness of John the Baptist. What about the witness of the Father?

As Jesus said, I have way to testimony than that of John. For the very work the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.

[ 30 : 52 ] And the Father who has sent me testifies concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he has sent.

Knowledge is communicated largely by words. That requires you to believe the speaker. And why should we believe the speaker? After all, anyone can claim to be sent from God, can't they?

Lots of people have. Some of them might actually believe it themselves. There have always been philosophers and rabbis and gurus and would-be messiahs.

As I said, a good question is, how does Jesus himself know that he is not simply insane? Deluded. His own family seemed to have feared at one point that he had lost his grip on reality.

We read of that in Matthew 12, where they sort of came to say, came to collect him as it were and checked that he was okay. So, the testimony of the Father is the work that Jesus is doing.

[ 31 : 59 ] And in particular, I suppose, the signs. That's certainly what John wants to emphasise, the signs. But as we've already said, the signs themselves were open to misinterpretation.

As we've started to look at the signs, we've noticed that most of them come with a challenging question or comment, don't they? Water into wine, Jesus says, Dear woman, why do you involve me?

My time has not yet come. What is the context of this? Does it make any sense? When the healing of the official's son, Jesus says, Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe.

John 4, 48. Do we have to have the signs? Shouldn't we believe God's word without the signs? But Jesus said, well, apparently you can't. So that's why we have the signs. Simply to the man at the pool, the paralytic at the pool, he was simply asked, do you want to get well?

[ 33 : 13 ] Seems like a silly question, doesn't it really? But that's the question Jesus asked. Do you really want to be well? Do you really want to be healed? Or are you actually happy to be looked after by everybody else and just lie here?

The feeling of the 5,000, which will, I guess, come to you next week. The question is, where do we buy bread for these people to eat? Who is going to provide these people with the food that they

need?

Where is it going to come from? It's not in John's Gospel, this one, but in the, when a man was let down from the roof to have, again, a man who was paralysed.

His friends lowered him through the roof to get him to Jesus. And what does Jesus say? Not first of all, get up and walk. He says, take heart, son, your sins are forgiven.

What is the point of this sign? Well, he goes on to say that, doesn't he, in Matthew. He says, well, okay, I will say, take up your mat and walk. But I'm doing that so that you know that I have right to forgive sins on earth.

[ 34 : 29 ] We need to ask what these signs actually mean. Of course, a modern skeptic attributes these signs to superstition.

People believed that sort of thing in those days. Because actually they didn't. I mean if they did, why did they make such fuss over them?

Miracles are by definition rare. It wouldn't be miracles if they weren't. If they had been commonplace things, why would they have caused such a stir?

Of course, others may have talked of gods and magic and signs and omens. But Jesus actually delivered. And he did it in public as well.

I think you can't, you really need to come to terms with that fact. Nobody at the time tried to claim these signs hadn't happened.

[ 35 : 32 ] I mean if they had, the Pharisees would have taken an entirely different tack, wouldn't they? They would have been delighted to prove that these signs were faked.

It didn't actually happen. But there were just too many witnesses to them. There were just too many people who had seen them. They just couldn't do it.

These things were public knowledge at the time. Thousands had seen them. It's not like these claims of ghosts or alien abductions where people under particular stress seem to see a particular thing.

But it's really not, it's not really verifiable. If you didn't believe in those signs, you could just go and ask the eyewitnesses at the time.

Pharisees themselves tried to deny them on one or two occasions. People just said, well, sorry, it's me. I was the one who was ill and now I'm healed.

[ 36 : 37 ] Can't deny that. These were done in the full light of day and in the presence of crowds. Because it was what they meant that was really controversial.

Only in fact in the context of the Old Testament, of the scriptures and the prophets, do these signs make sense. Only in the context of Jesus' own words, do these signs actually make sense.

But in that context, they do testify that the fathers are authenticating the work of the Son. They do convince us, help us to believe, that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

As I said, some of these questions go back at least 500 years before the time of Christ. Socrates, one of those kind of the grandfather of Greek philosophy.

He said that the unexamined life is not worth living. It's quite wrong actually, I think, to say that Greek philosophers did not achieve insights. They did.

[ 37 : 55 ] Even Paul quotes them on occasions. There are traces of Greek thoughts certainly in the teachings of John and even of Jesus himself in some ways.

But the problem was that in the end their teaching just led to futility and self-contradiction. In the end they just landed up contradicting themselves.

Because it wasn't possible to know truth just through the sort of analysis that the Greek philosophers did. They hoped it was but they never really solved the problem.

The teaching just used futility and self-contradiction. Because it's independent of or even contrary to the true God.

Much of what Socrates said, of course, was opposed to the religion of the time and the Greek gods and it got him executed in the end as radicals usually do lend up.

[ 38 : 56 ] Ecclesiastes warns us, doesn't it? That the search for knowledge for its own sake is essentially a self-defeating one.

Knowledge requires a person. Knowledge requires in fact in the end divine insight. And this passage reminds us that belief is not a simple matter.

Critics tell us that faith is believing things in the face of evidence but of course it's not at all. In fact, faith requires scepticism.

So be sceptical about everything but particularly about your scepticism. We need to examine everything. That's what we're told to do. It's not believing in spite of the evidence as Dawkins and others have claimed.

Actually, faith is about disbelief in many ways. It's about not believing what you're told from taking the faith for face value. John invites us here to put aside what we thought we knew and to consider the three witnesses.

[ 40 : 15 ] There's something else in this passage, sorry, which is bang up to date. Jesus says to the Pharisees, you'll listen to someone if they come in their name and come along and justify themselves.

If you become one of us, then we'll listen to you. That's what it says. And isn't that bang up to date? Modern thinking is all about me. And even the marketing people know that. You never get, this is our M&S;, do you? You get, this is my M&S.;

Social media groups just reinforce things. One of the whole problems about the trans debate is a lot of it is about inclusion or exclusion from groups.

People who have been trans and then detrans find they've been excluded from, not just say, oh well, you've made your own mind up. They find themselves excluded from their support group and their statement, the group that they find themselves in.

[ 41 : 33 ] Which is what of course is what was happening, the Pharisees could see happening. They were seeing people taken away who previously had admired them and supported them.

And they were losing that support. That's exactly what the Pharisees found and that's exactly what's up to date. We all need, I suppose, groups to support each other.

We can't in a sense be disciples on our own. We need to be aware of the mutual admiration society. Society exists just to say how good we are and how good other people are who say that we're good.

In a sense, faith is impossible. Unexamined belief is not faith, it's fanaticism.

But as Jesus says, for those who are prepared to examine everything, to listen to the witnesses.

Verse 34, perhaps they might be saved. Perhaps we might be saved.

[ 42 : 36 ] If we listen to what the witnesses say. And let me make another point. There are those who would like to demythologise Christianity.

They've been around for a while now, probably about 100, 150 years. Personally, I actually grew up in a church that was somewhat along those lines. Not totally, but it had somewhat thoughts in those directions.

Get rid of the miracles and prophecies, they say, and then we might believe. Get rid of the irrational so that the true Jesus becomes clear.

But as many people have said, if you write a book about the real Jesus, it tells you a lot more about yourself than it does about the real Jesus. It tells people a lot more about yourself.

To those people, I'd say, get real. Get rational. Take away the prophecies and the signs, and the only rational conclusion is that Jesus was mad.

[ 43 : 39 ] Certainly not somebody whose teachings you want to take seriously. It just doesn't make sense. I mentioned Socrates.

Even before Socrates, Moses had lived, hadn't he, in that great ancient Egyptian civilisation.

And as he led the Israelites out of Egypt, he wrote pages and pages of laws and principles, and they were accompanied by great signs of God's favour. And yet it didn't do the, most of them, the Israelites much.

God did good in the end. It was mostly understood. There were those who had escaped Egypt, and they crossed the Red Sea, just in the end to die in the desert.

Because they would not believe what they'd even seen with their own eyes. They wouldn't believe.

So John is telling us here to trust the witnesses.

[ 44 : 42 ] Jesus' life was authenticated by the Father himself. And of course, as we've been singing earlier, it was a life culminating with the death and resurrection. So let's give Paul the last word.

Paul was well acquainted with both Greek and Jewish learning, as it's clear from the things he said and wrote. So let's give him the last word on this. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 22 to 24, And a few verses later he says, It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God.

That is our righteousness, our holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Let's not boast in our own knowledge or our own understanding. But let us boast in the Lord. Let us listen to the witnesses and follow him. In Jesus' name. Amen.