

# How can we trust the Bible

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, good morning. I will try that one more time. Good morning. How are we doing today? Good to be together again. Particularly big welcome to you if you are new to us today.

Especially big welcome to you and those watching online also. Very big welcome to our service today. Let's pray and then we will continue.

God, we are thankful for a chance to come together again and chance for an opportunity to be in fellowship with one another, to have an opportunity for you to speak.

And God, I pray that that is exactly what happens today. God, that you will speak into our hearts and lives afresh. In your name I pray. Amen. Big thank you to, I think we've got some flowers here. Shirley Jones has provided those for us today. So a big thank you to Shirley for providing those for us this morning.

Today is one of our big questions days. So we're going to be thinking a little bit later. Andrew is going to be sharing a little bit later. How can we trust the Bible? So that's something to look forward to a little later in our service together.

[ 1 : 25 ] But before we continue, what I want us to do is I want you to turn to the person next to you. And I want you to ask them this question. What are you thankful for this week? What are you thankful for?

Or what are you thankful for today? Whatever it might be. What are you thankful for? So turn to the person next to you. Ask them that question. What are you thankful for?

What are you thankful for? Ask them that question. Thank you very much.

Definitely sounds like there is lots to be thankful for. So as God's thankful people, let's stand and let's sing together.

Strength will rise as we wear it upon the Lord. Let's stand together. Strength will rise as we wear it upon the Lord.

[ 3 : 26 ] We will reign forever. We will reign forever.

We will reign forever.

We will reign forever.

Strength will rise as we wear it upon the Lord. We will reign forever. We will reign forever. We will reign forever.

We will reign forever. We will reign forever.

[ 5 : 11 ] We will reign forever. We will reign forever.

We will reign forever. We will reign forever. We will reign forever.

We will reign forever. We will reign forever. We will reign forever. We will reign forever.

We will reign forever. We will reign forever. We will reign forever. We will reign forever. We will reign forever.

us the next step that we don't know what to take.

[ 6 : 31 ] Father, that you are the strength of our heart, the strength of our lives. We've got to pray that wherever we are at this morning, God, you will meet us. Give us your strength.

Speak into our hearts and lives, I pray. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 10 : 27 ] Amen. Amen. Please, please take a seat. As part of our opportunity as we come together to worship, we also have, as part of our worship, our giving as part of our worship, and there are many opportunities as members of his body here to give in that way and to worship in that way.

If you're not already paying online, there is opportunities to do that. If you check out the website, there's also a machine by the welcome space if that's something that you would like to do.

But let's give thanks for our offerings. Let's give thanks for the gifts of his people to the ministry and the mission here in this place. God, we are so thankful for the gifts that are given.

We are so thankful for the gifts of your people. And as we as we give what is yours back to you, God, I pray that you will bless it and God, that you will use it to extend your kingdom in this place, in this community, in your name, we pray.

Amen. Our children and your people are going to be heading off now into their various programs and also our WOW group, our WOW Extra is happening today.

[11:57] So, there are members of WOW that will be heading off as well during this part of our service. So, let me pray for our children, young people, their leaders and our WOW group as they head off into their activities now.

Father, we are so thankful for this group and the various groups that we have that minister and work with our children and young people and God, our WOW leaders as well.

God, speak through them, use them to your glory and I pray that all that he's said and done is to draw people and build that solid foundation of you in their lives. God, speak into lives today, I pray, through all the various groups that we have.

In your name, we pray. Amen. So, please, children, young people and WOW, this is your chance to head off out. If you've not already signed in your children and young people, parents, can you make sure you do that just through the door here so we know they're here.

That would be great. Thank you so much and we're going to continue on our service as they do that with another song, Boldly I Approach. So, let's stand and let's sing together. Let's sing together.

[13:10] Where even angels face you to stand In life, in life, he did love Before the throne of God He holds, he holds With angels, God, and heaven Be to his everlasting heart

When your damnation fills my heart And Satan tempts me to Jesus' hand I hear the voice that scatters me The praise I am, the glory is here The praise of all who fights for me And shields my soul eternally Hold me, I approach your throne Blame this now, I'm running home

By your blood I grab And welcomed as your own Be to the arms of majesty The blue light Raises the sun For beauty and the sun has won And just to this love is the sound His perfect song, his righteous A thousand years A thousand words Are not enough to sing his praise He is here And I'm running home

Hold me, I approach your home With this now, I'm running home I am running home I am running home Welcome as your own Be to the arms of majesty It seems the heart of celebration Now we've been raised on confirmation Oh, praise God Praise God For the days of all my sins

This is the heart of celebration Oh, praise God Oh, praise God Oh, praise God Praise God Who made the hand to all my sins Hold me, I approach your throne May this now, I'm running home By your blood I come Welcome as your own Be to the arms of majesty Okay, we're going to move into a time to spotlight one of the ministries that takes place in and around our church family and that is our job club and our job club is, I think it's four years this week am I right?

[18:44] Since the first, first one Is that right? The first The official launch So it's four weeks this week since the official launch of Job Club So we're going to have an opportunity to spotlight that particularly with it starting again next week So I'm going to invite Rachel and a couple of our job club coaches to come forward and share a little bit about that particular ministry Thank you So for those who don't know me I'm Rachel I'm part of the team that runs the job club here at the top and I'm delighted to have alongside me Anthony who's been part of the team right from the very start and has now been a coach for several years and also Carol who is our newest member of the team Bert has also now completed training as a coach and joins us in that capacity on our new course starting next week As Sandy said this week marks the fourth anniversary of the official launch of the Job Club back in 2022 and I am so thankful to God for all that he has done through this ministry over that period

Over the last four years we've seen lives rebuilt we've seen confidence unlocked and we've seen hope restored We've welcomed through our doors people of various faiths and none particularly Christians Muslims and Hindu and people of no faith at all and we've welcomed an incredible range of nationalities British Nigerian Pakistani Vincentian Italian Spanish Iranian Turkish Lebanese Indian Afghan Tunisian Sri Lankan and many more and the reason I give you that list is that I think you'll realize from some of those nationalities that some people are leaving very difficult situations in

their home country and are seeking to rebuild their lives here after the profound disruption and it's a really real privilege to walk alongside folk during that difficult journey so what is the job club well at simplest it is what it says on the tin it's a job club it's a club for people seeking work but the tin is so much bigger than that and I'd like to tell you a little more about what we do and how and why we do it so the job club runs in partnership with the national charity

Christians Against Poverty or CAP they provide our resources and our training and we're part of a national network of job clubs but each church delivers their job clubs slightly differently but perhaps with the same core offering so perhaps our central offering is the eight week steps to employment course and we're starting our 12th course this week we also offer individual coaching hence our coaches and community which is really important and such a valuable part of what we do and we have a great team of befrienders and we also have a wonderful team cooking and serving lunch which is a significant part of how we deliver and build community our job club doesn't just come to an end at the end of the eight week course our strap line which is up here is with you on your job seeking journey and we make clear to our guests that we will continue to walk with them for as long as they need us we're up front from the very start about the fact that we're Christians and that a key reason that we run the job club is to to share God's love and care in our community we don't put our guests under any pressure but we do offer to pray for people and very often that prayer is accepted and that's a joy and a privilege we take opportunities to share the gospel as appropriate and over lunch we offer not only food for the body but food for thought in the form of a personal testimony and short reflection by a member of the team loosely linked to the theme of the day and we have a great team with a wide range of life experience and it's amazing how often one individual's testimony will somehow speak to one member of the group and perhaps it'll be a different member of the group each week who will be touched by the testimony of a team member that's such a valuable part of what we do and on a personal note

I have learnt so much more about my brothers and sisters on the team just through hearing their testimonies and perhaps people talking about talking very vulnerably and openly about difficult periods of their life now our guests come from many walks of life many of them will never appear on the official unemployment figures they're not on benefits some come from relatively high earning households some have held senior management positions others may never have worked some have excellent postgraduate qualifications and others may have nothing on paper at all some are long term residents in this country and again some may be newly arrived and fleeing very difficult situations in their home countries many face additional challenges perhaps caring responsibilities perhaps disability or perhaps just the barrier of having been out of work for a very long time but whatever the individual circumstances it's tough being out of work for any length of time it's isolating we live in a society that tends to define people by what they do it's seen as part of your identity and even here in church so often our first question to somebody new is what do you do?

it's easy for retired people to define themselves by their former profession so being out of work for any length of time can lead to a real sense of loss of self-worth loss of confidence and perhaps loss of identity so our focus in the job club is not just writing CVs and cover letters and helping people fill in applications our focus is on the individual on getting to know them well getting to know what makes them tick getting to know their struggles and aspirations getting to know their strengths building confidence and encouraging people week by week but we want every individual to know that they matter to God we want every individual to know that they have God-given strengths and qualities which are valuable not just to an employer but to the community and we want each individual to know that they are unique and that God has a plan for their life we want to bring [ 27 : 25 ] God into the heart of everything we do in the job club one of the remarkable things we've found course by course is how much people grow in confidence over the eight week course we see people visibly walking taller again and again I was really encouraged last week by an email from the job centre from a manager there referring to one of our guests who had found a job after attending job club sessions but the email said how much that individual had grown in confidence in attending their appointments at the job centre and you need that confidence I think in order even to start applying for jobs but she asked me to pass on her thanks to our wonderful team for the wonderful support that they offer so team please be encouraged and thanked so now you've heard a little more about what we do and how and why we do it if you'd like to explore opportunities to be involved please do speak to one of us or to

Andrew to Andy or to Sheena and we'd love to talk to you more please do pray for us as we start our new course this week we do still have places on our course on your seat you will have found a leaflet advertising the course probably probably almost all of us will know somebody who is out of work at this time you may be out of work yourself and if the idea of joining the job club appeals please do speak to us but if you know someone out of work why not just pass that leaflet on it might open doors for them and if you don't know anyone right now why not hang on to that leaflet and it may be useful at a future point you can tell people what the church does and it may be that they will be interested in joining our next course and last but not least

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank our wonderful team for their faithful service over the last four years and that's not just our wonderful coaches our team of befrienders and those serving on the front lines but those serving quietly and faithfully behind the scenes preparing and serving lunch for us you were all such a significant part of what we do and we couldn't do it without you one of our guests commented that the soup was clearly made with love and I think love is a key ingredient of everything we do in the job club perhaps as we live out God's word and specifically 1 John 3:18 let us love with words let us love not with words or speech but with actions and in truth thank you let me pray for you father we're so thankful for our job club team and father we are so thankful for the ministry that has been going on for the last three or four years

God we're so thankful for the faithfulness of the leaders involved to walk this journey with each person each guest who comes along God we do pray in particular with huge thanks for the last few years of your promises being fulfilled and your answers to prayer happening God all the different aspects of you working through the team here and God I pray particularly for next week we pray for the people to sign up to take that step into beginning their job seeking journey and walking alongside the team here as they support them God we pray for people even now who might be not sure whether to sign up or not but God we pray that they take that step they have the confidence to walk through the door and God we do pray for each one of these leaflets that is in the room right now God put on our minds I pray people who that we can pass that to whether they're neighbours friends people in the family that we know who are maybe looking at starting their job seeking journey afresh or they're still going through that and need maybe just a little bit more support or just wanting to know a refresher on what to do next

God I pray that you will show us clearly the people who we can pass these forms to and God give us those opportunities to pass that on to people in these next few days that they will then get involved and be a part of yeah the job seeking journey and the job club as they they work through and they work alongside each person day by day God equip them use them to your glory I pray in your name amen thanks so much team thank you I'm going to now invite Mike to come forward and continue our prayers with our intercession so let's pray together thanks Mike thank you last week I seem to remember praying on your behalf for lots of situations that were happening in the world most of them if not all of them I just don't understand but we read Psalm 73 together this morning my wife and I and one of the verses in it was the psalmist just couldn't understand what was happening in the world how it seems that the those that were against God seem to be flourishing and those that were for God seem to be suffering and then he said I didn't understand until I came into the sanctuary when I came into the sanctuary I understood I don't know what that means to you but being part of a family being part of what God is directing us each individually and all the things that are going in our own lives today I thought it'd be good if we could just bring our stuff to [34:14] God so would you pray with me heavenly father we have sung boldly I approach and we wouldn't dare come anywhere close to you if it wasn't for the love of Jesus and your love for us that allowed him to go to the cross and to put us right with you so this morning we come before you as your children lovingly saying father hear our prayer father God you know the prayers of each one of us here you know those that are seeking jobs Lord and want to change perhaps they're in a job that doesn't give them the freedom or the benefits or the luxury to be able to worship you freely we pray for them father there are those that are going through all sorts of physical illnesses and we thank you that you healed so many when

Jesus was walking on earth he healed so many with all sorts of things things that we couldn't believe could be healed just by a word but Jesus did and you said come to me all you who are weak and heavy laden and you give us rest come for healing and you bring healing so today Lord we bring ourselves to you each one of us and ask for that healing that we need we intercede to you Lord for ourselves that we might serve you more faithfully that you we might honor you better we

pray for spiritual growth Lord sometimes we drift sometimes we wonder what we're doing and why we're doing it and whether there's any purpose in it remind us Lord that you went to the cross for us Jesus didn't shirk that he took it all he took our pain he took our sicknesses and dealt with it and one day we know that we will be free you promised an eternity with you where there will be no death no pain no sorrow no tears we can't imagine it living in this world where there's so much of all those things there are perhaps relationships

Lord that need repairing and we want to bring them to you those who once knew your love who drifted away Lord we ask that you bring them back those who have heard the gospel so many times and are just hesitant to say I surrender to you Lord may today be that day that they surrender their lives to you we want to thank you for the good things that have happened I want to thank you that Lena's prayers have been answered that she's actually a British citizen as from now praise you God that's an answer to prayer we want to thank you for all the answers to prayers that we've brought to you over the years some we've forgotten all about we think of this particular building and what it looked like two years ago and what it looks like today and how you've provided father God listen to the

Holy Spirit as he brings our prayers to you and interprets them to you in a way that you understand and in the way that we want to bring them to you we thank you that Jesus is at your right hand in succeeding for us too what a privilege what a privilege that we can bring everything to you in prayer so many areas that I haven't prayed for for each one here today Lord but you you hear the voices those prayers that are said quietly silently those prayers that can't be uttered even the miracles that are wanted but have been waiting for we pray father that the glory and the honour will go to you as you as we see these prayers answered maybe some are for today maybe some are for right now maybe there are those suffering Lord that just want to let go of what's holding them I pray father you'll take them deal with them and grant them peace I ask that each one here today will know your peace and your love and your joy hear our prayer father those that are said quietly and there are those that are not here that we know and love those of our families our friends our neighbors those that come to the job club those that come to the child contact center those that come to night shelter those Lord who come to the life groups house groups prayer groups we pray for the ministry of this church father we need leaders we pray for deacons in various areas where we lack deacons father God would you provide would you bring forward people who are able to take on those responsibilities in your name we pray for our pastors we pray for

Andrew and Andy particularly for your wisdom for them as they lead your church here for the deacons and elders grant them your joy and your peace as they serve bring all these prayers to you Lord in Jesus name and look forward to seeing how you're going to work through them for your honor and for your glory in Jesus name amen thanks so much for that Mike before we hear from God's word we're going to sing together and let's stand and let's sing cornerstone Christ alone let's stand together together I hope you still don't nothing else

[ 40 : 47 ] Than Jesus' blood and righteousness I dare not trust to see His name But only just in Jesus' name My hope is built on nothing else Than Jesus' blood and righteousness I dare not trust to see His name But only just in Jesus' name Christ alone, hold us down We pray strong and save His love

Through the storm He is loved all the whole When darkness seems to hide His face I rest on His changing grace In every heart and soul He gave My anchor holds the different way My anchor holds the different way Christ alone, hold us strong We pray strong and save His love

Through the storm He is loved, Lord of all Christ alone, hold us strong We pray strong and save His love Through the storm He is Lord, Lord of all He is loved, Lord of all When He shall come With trumpet sound Oh, may I then in Him be found Just in His righteousness alone Hopeless and behold

Amen Before Andrew comes to bring our message We have Mary to give a Bible reading Thanks, Mary Good morning You'll find this reading on page 1025 in the Bibles This reading is from Luke chapter 1 And it's just reading the first four verses Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things That have been fulfilled amongst us Just as they were handed down to us By those who were the first

Who from the first were eyewitnesses And servants of the word Therefore, since I myself Have carefully investigated everything from the beginning It seemed good also to me To write an orderly account For you, most excellent Theophilus So that you may know The certainty of the things you

have been taught Amen Well, thanks Mary for that reading Good morning, everybody Welcome to Union Baptist Church For those of you that don't know me My name is Andrew And one of the pastors here this morning So we're taking a break from our series of 1 Corinthians [ 46 : 02 ] To look at another big question As Andy said And the aim with this series That we're dipping into occasionally Is to address some common big questions That people ask Now, the biggest question The biggest unanswered question In my household Over the Christmas and New Year period Was why do Cabris include eclairs In their tubs of heroes?

Why is that? It just seems so wrong to me All the rest of them Are brilliant miniature chocolate bars They're chocolate bars But the éclair is not a chocolate bar It's a sweet It's more like It belongs more in the boiled sweet category And it's really hard to chew And it gets stuck in your teeth Why on earth do they include that In the heroes?

I don't know In case that wasn't the biggest question On your mind What we're actually going to do Is address some of the big questions That often get asked Of the Christian faith So if you're here today As somebody who isn't a believer Or is still exploring I hope this will be helpful to you And if you're here as someone Who is a believer I hope that it will be helpful In conversations that you may have With your friends About your faith So the big question That we're looking at today Is this How can I trust the Bible?

Now as Christians Our faith is all based on this book But how do we know That what's in here Hasn't been made up? Now a few centuries ago I would have likely been booted out of church For even asking that question But fortunately that's not the case nowadays Which is helpful Because it's a good question That deserves to be looked into And deserves an answer Now today I'm going to talk particularly Because time is short I'm going to talk particularly about the gospel So that's the part of the New Testament Part of the Bible That gives biographies of Jesus' life But another time we'll talk about questions Around the rest of the Bible And please do let me know Your own questions So that we can hopefully address them In future talks Now when it comes to the gospels A lot of people have expressed doubts About the text being tampered with Since it was written About the potential for events To get distorted Before they were even written down And about the actual content And whether it's fictional

Whether it's just made up So I'm going to talk about The following questions Number one Has the text been altered Since it was first written Number two Were the gospels made up Number three How soon after the event Were they written And number four How else can we verify the gospels So let's dive into the first question How has the text been altered Since they were first written Now the Bible Was obviously first written Before the advent of the printing press And even before the advent of paper So it's helpful for us to know The kind of materials That it would have been written on By hand That would have been papyrus So papyrus is a reed That grows in the Nile Valley And the reeds would have been laid out Kind of in a crisscross format Layered on top of each other And glued together A bit like plywood That we have And dried out in the sun Now many documents written on papyrus Have been discovered In North Africa And the Middle East Papyrus is quite brittle

[ 49 : 19 ] So often fragments have been found Rather than the entire documents Now the other more expensive material Used for these documents Was parchment Which was made from animal skins So essentially leather So the papyrus and parchment copies That we have of the Bibles Of the Bible Are not the original So to answer the question Of are they reliable copies We need to apply the same kind of tests That get applied to other historical documents That seems like a reasonable thing to do Doesn't it But in other words How do academics decide That things like Caesar's Gallic Wars And other historical accounts Are reliable Well what they do is They examine the number of copies Of early texts That we have available to us today And the time gap Between the original document When that was written And the earliest copy That we have And basically The more manuscripts that we have And the earlier they are The less doubt there's going to be About the original For example There are over 200 ancient manuscripts Or fragments of manuscripts Of Plato's tetralogies

Which was written about 400 BC The earliest fragments of these Come from the 3rd century AD Now for the Bible There are over 5,100 manuscripts!

In the Greek language In support of the New Testament And the earliest ones Come from the 2nd century AD So when we compare The New Testament manuscripts To other historical works It actually scores very highly In comparison to others That we accept as being historical Now I've got

a diagram here And on this diagram The length that shows Four different historical documents Including the New Testament At the bottom The line from the left to the right Shows the time gap Between when the document was written To the latest copy That we The earliest copy that we have That's the time gap And then the size of the circle On the right Is proportional to how many copies Of those manuscripts That we have So as you can see The Gospels The New Testament Scores very highly Because of the huge number Of early manuscripts That we have available Over 5,000 And the relatively short time lag Compared to other documents Between when the original document Was written And the earliest manuscripts That we have

So it scores very much higher Than many well-known Historic documents Which are studied In schools and universities And for which Their integrity Is never questioned Now Even if we've established The text Is true to the original Can you just turn me down A little bit I'm getting a little bit Of ringing in my ears Thanks Mark Should we trust What it actually says How do we know Whether it's fact Or fiction Now when we come To look at any Historical document We need to know First of all What genre It is to be able To understand it Now while some people Have argued That the gospels Could be fictional Like novels The reality is That realistic prose fiction Didn't exist Before the 18th century Now today We're very used To the novel As a form of literature In which it reads As realistic narrative But that style Of writing Simply didn't exist In the time When the gospels Were written So we're left With the possibilities For the gospels

That they're Either legends Or myths Which are quite Recognisable In their style Or that they are Historical documents And written to be Historical documents Now Luke's Own introduction That Mary read to us Helps us to see That it was in fact Written as a historical Document So I'd like to invite you To look with me At that reading That was read to us In Luke So there should be A bible near you And I do encourage you To pick one up And have a look So you can have a look At this for yourself If you can't reach a bible Can you just wave your hands And one of our Stewarding team Thanks Andy If you can go around And grab some bibles Thank you Brad We'll get bibles to you So if you turn with me To page 1025 That's the passage That we're looking at So Luke Is one of the gospels And we're looking at The first chapter Of Luke On page 1025 And one of the reasons That we have bibles In the church Is you don't have To take my word for it You can have a look At yourself For yourself

[ 53 : 34 ] And verify That what I'm talking about Matches what is here In the bible So in Luke chapter 1 Luke tells us In these first four verses The verse numbers Are the small numbers Written in the text there Just to guide us through Luke tells us In these first four verses That his gospel Was written In four stages So firstly There were eyewitnesses Who testified To what they saw So in verse 2 It says Just as they were Handed down to us By those Who from the first Were eyewitnesses And servants of the word Now secondly The eyewitness accounts Were handed down And I'll come on To that later And number 3 He says Other accounts Had already been Written down Before he wrote As it says In verse 1 There were early accounts That had already Been written down But last of all Luke says In verse 3 That he checked them out He made a thorough Investigation Of everything Now like any kind of writer Would have checked them out

He would have checked out The written records That he had To make sure That the eyewitness reports Didn't contradict them Now I think If we Maybe just think For some examples About stories That we've heard About real things Happening in the world And in our local area In the news this week And I think of a story On the news on Thursday About landslides In New Zealand Falling really heavy Rain there And this stuck in my mind Because Andy had actually Told me that morning That he'd had a call With one of his friends In New Zealand Where he used to live About telling him About the really bad weather They'd been having there And in the evening In the BBC news I saw this news report About the landslide And clearly they'd got Some information from A government press release Something that had Already been written But then they went And interviewed eyewitnesses And there was a guy Who had been in a swimming pool In a holiday park At the bottom of the mountain And he had to move Very quickly When he saw A holiday trailer A massive big caravan Carried by the landslide About to engulf The swimming pool And they interviewed him So they put together Things that had already Been written And eyewitness reports And this is how Luke Pieced together the gospel He took accounts Written by others And he spoke to eyewitnesses And he put it together He's not saying I wrote a legend He's saying I made every effort To make sure That what I wrote to you What I'm writing Is absolutely accurate Historical And orderly And a logical account So Luke tells us That he's presenting

Eyewitness accounts And if you read Luke And other gospels You'll find plenty Of incidental details Which have no relevance To the plot But the only reason They're there Is because that was What was reported By the eyewitnesses By the real people Who saw it So we'll move on To the third question How soon after the event Were the gospels written?

It was a commonly held view Until the middle Of the 20th century That the gospel accounts Weren't written down Until over 100 years After the events Took place However More recent research And archaeology studies Have shown That the gospels Were all actually written Within the lifetimes Of the eyewitnesses To the events The earliest Being written About 50 AD And the latest Which was John's gospel Written around 90 AD The next common objection Is how the information Was handed down From eyewitnesses To the gospel writers And I touched on this Recently In our carol service The common objection States that the message Could have been distorted Or exaggerated As accounts of Jesus Were passed from one person To another Like in a real life game Of Chinese whispers If you've ever played That game Where things get distorted As it gets passed Along the chain But oral accounts Of Jesus Didn't start With a single source And they were not Whispered along A single chain They were shared In synagogues And homes And marketplaces And there were Thousands of witnesses Of Jesus preaching And miracles And what he did And we also now know That the way rabbis taught Was that they would Give their disciples An account And make them Memorise it Rigidly This was the way That accounts Were handed down Through rigid memorisation Now this is a concept We've kind of lost In our culture Today Because we have Smartphones And we have Google So we don't actually Really need to remember Very much at all So just a quick survey How many phone numbers Do you think you know Off by heart Just hold up The number of fingers I think for me I think it's about Four Yeah I'm seeing Yeah One or two Up to four Yeah Yeah Not very many Now That's really interesting Think back If you're older Than 30 or 40 Think back to over 30 or 40 years ago If you've been around For that long I'm guessing There would have been A lot more information That you memorised At that time And I'm guessing That at that time When you were younger You probably knew About 20 or more

[ 58 : 29 ] Phone numbers I think I did When I was growing up Before I had a Before I had a mobile phone That's information That we don't need To memorise anymore Because we have Other gadgets That do that In the time of Jesus Obviously there were No phones But most people If you think about it Didn't even have the means To write things down They would have been Much more attuned To memorising accounts And passing them on Accurately Now the gospels Were written down Before the eyewitnesses Died out Recording events That they remembered clearly And it's really interesting When you read through The gospels That specific names Are given So in Luke's gospel He specifically mentions Bartimaeus The man healed from blindness Caiaphas The high priest Joseph of Arimathea Who provided the tomb Cleopas the disciple Who walked with Jesus After the resurrection And so on It's as if Luke Was saying to his Early readers You can go and ask These people These are real people Who exist You can go and check This out For yourself Now number four

How else can we verify The gospels There are other things That give us confidence That these are eyewitness accounts The authors of the four gospels Were not all writing Their accounts In the country Where the events took place Luke actually wrote His gospel in Greece Now imagine trying To write an account Of events For a documentary When you have No access to the internet And you haven't visited All the places Where the events Took place It would be difficult To get the incidental Details right Wouldn't it Unless you had Accurate and reliable Eyewitnesses Now we can check Whether Luke And the gospel writers Got incidental Cultural And geographical And social details Right One way is by looking At the names That were used In the gospels A German researcher Published a study Of the popularity of names In the first century Roman Judea And the percentage Of names Appearing in the gospels And the book of Acts Match very closely With the data on names For that period Outside of the New Testament

So the names Are consistent Places as well The gospel writers Are accurate When it comes to place names Luke in his gospel Mentioned names 16 towns And he also talks About information About the traveling times Between places And the proximity Between those places And bodies of water Other geographical features These can all be verified Now the fact That the four gospel writers Draw on different Eyewitness accounts In describing the same events Means that you get Incidental details Which fit together Like pieces Of a jigsaw puzzle Now for example Just to explain How this sort of thing works I'm just going to present A hypothetical situation The hypothetical

situation Is that Andy here Has been accused Of eating Jane's chocolate bar Which was left On her desk Here in the hub As difficult as you might Find it to believe that Just go with me This is a hypothetical situation Now imagine that we have Two local eyewitnesses Vicky and Rachel Who were in the hub At the time Now in their witness statements

Vicky says It was on Thursday morning It was raining outside Andy came in And took the chocolate bar On Jane's desk Now in Rachel's witness statement She says that she saw Andy approach The reception desk Step around an umbrella Which was drying there And take the chocolate bar Now Andy's incredulous About this I can see He may well claim That he's been framed By his co-workers But the fact that Rachel and Vicky Have given different accounts And not exactly the same accounts Makes them more reliable Makes them more credible Now when we look at The detail of the accounts One said that it was Raining outside And one said that There was an umbrella In front of the desk Now both of these Pieces of information Fit together Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle Don't they So there are lots of examples Like that in the gospels Not of Andy stealing a chocolate bar Just to clarify That was a made up example It didn't happen But there's lots of things Where we find different pieces Of evidence In the different gospels

And they piece together Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle So for example Mark's gospel tells us That Jesus gave the nickname Sons of Thunder To two of his disciples Who were brothers And if we just read Mark's gospel We're kind of left wondering I wonder what all that was about Did they have issues Of flatulence Or what But in Luke That's not the case In Luke chapter 9 So we go to a different gospel We go to the gospel of Luke In chapter 9 The same two brothers Ask Jesus If they can call down Lightning On the Samaritans So we can see How these two pieces Of information Fit together Very likely It's like a jigsaw puzzle And there's more examples Of these kind of situations In the life group notes That our life groups Will be looking at During the week Now as well as this kind of Internal corroboration Between the gospels There's also a lot of consistency With external historical sources So a number of Historical writers Tacitus Who wrote in AD 115 Wrote that Christ was executed

[ 63 : 34 ] When Tiberius was emperor By order of Pontius Pilate Both of whom are mentioned In the gospels A Samaritan historian Called Thallus Wrote in AD 52 That there was an eclipse Of the sun On the day Jesus Was crucified Now this links With the darkness That came over the land Which is reported In Matthew, Mark And Luke's gospel Josephus You may have heard of A Jewish historian Writing in AD 80 Says that Jesus' disciples Reported that he had Appeared to them Three days after His crucifixion We see from this And other sources as well Further evidence That the gospels Are presenting An accurate historical account Of the life of Jesus Now as I was reading Around this topic last week I came across articles Written by Sir William Ramsey Who was knighted For his services To archaeology Now I got quite excited That I'd stumbled across A local connection In that one of our Local secondary schools Here in High Wycom Is named after Sir William Ramsey

Now rather despondently On further investigation It seems that the school Is named after another Sir William Ramsey Who got the Nobel Prize For chemistry However The archaeologist William Ramsey Not the one of the school Who was also knighted He did a lot of research Into the historical accuracy Of the gospel Of Luke And its sequel The book of Acts And he wrote this Further studies Further studies showed That the book Could bear the most Minute scrutiny As an authority For the facts Of the Aegean world And it was written With such judgment Skill Art and perception Of the truth As to be a model Of historical statement You may press The words of Luke In a degree Beyond any other historians And they stand The keenest scrutiny And the hardest treatment Now having looked At all these questions We've seen that In terms of the text We're basically dealing With the original We've seen that they contain Tons of eyewitness information Corroborated by other Historical sources And it's extremely unlikely That they would have been Hoaxes

But even getting to this point Some people will still say I can't admit That these documents Are really true And that's probably because Of the miracles Which are reported In the gospels And this is a difficult thing For some people To be able to To accept that There are miraculous things That happened As reported In the documents Of the gospels Now to take an example From science 70 or 80 years ago Newtonian physics Reigned in the western world And this was well understood And people understood That objects behave According to Absolute laws of nature Which cannot be violated But then Quantum theory Was discovered And this has become Accepted now By scientists And quantum theory States that particles Can be in multiple places At once Now it's a different Approach And it's a different Way of looking at things The motivation For denying The

possible existence Of the supernatural realm Often seems to be strong Even to the point Of demonstrating prejudice But if we approach The gospels With an open mind We'll see that Miracles recorded By people Who had nothing to gain By fabricating These accounts And that people Responded to The miracles As we would With surprise And with bewilderment Luke wrote In verse 4 Of his introduction To Theophilus So that you may know The certainty Of the things You have been taught If you have uncertainty About God And Jesus Here is an invitation To discover The truth Read the gospel For yourself We have some free ones Available for you To take today You can also talk To many people here Who will tell you That the message Of the Bible And coming to faith In Jesus Through reading the Bible Has transformed Their life But my invitation To you today If you're on this Journey of seeking The truth Is don't believe The Bible Because it's exciting Although it is Don't believe The Bible Because it's relevant And it will meet Your needs Even though it will Believe it Because it happened Believe it Because it's true And only if It's true Only if it actually Happened Will it meet Your needs But understand That to appreciate The truth Of the Bible You need to Appreciate the truth That it is about A man Jesus Who is God's son And through him We can know God Knowing historical facts Or details Does not mean That we know God The heart Of the Christian faith Is the revelation Of a personal God Through Jesus Who can be known And can be related to My own story Is of coming To know God Personally I know some facts About Jesus But there's more To it than that I have a relationship With him And you can too He died A most gruesome death By crucifixion But three days later He physically rose From the grave And now he says to us And this is written At the end of the Bible In Revelation 3 Verse 20 Here I am I stand at the door And knock If anyone hears my voice And opens the door I will come in

[ 68 : 37 ] And eat with him And he with me He's standing At the door Of our hearts With an invitation What's your next step On the journey To discovering the truth I'd like to invite you To do three things The first one Is to read a gospel Now we've got some here We've got a pile of these At the stage here In the welcome area Excuse me On the table Through there And on the table Out the back as well One is a gospel of Mark This is the shortest gospel It will take you about An hour to two hours To read Depending how quickly You read it That's the green one The blue one Is a gospel of Luke This will take Between two and three hours To read And that's the one We've been talking about today Do please Take one of these On your way out And read them today Or if you'd like to take one To pass on to a friend Please feel free To do that The second thing Is come along To our alpha course We've got a new one Starting on Wednesday morning

Alpha is a great place To ask these kind of questions And more About the Christian faith And to express your own beliefs As we explore that together In a really friendly Really welcoming environment We've got some flyers That look like this About the alpha course And you can sign up online And you'll share more information In the notices If you're not able to join us Our Wednesday course Is running Wednesday mornings And we'll be running Evening courses later in the year You can also sign up And register your interest For future courses The third thing We invite you to do Is to try praying The Bible tells us That God invites us To talk to him In prayer He hears us And he wants to reveal Himself to us I'm going to say a prayer now And I would encourage you To echo this prayer In your own mind And in your own heart If you want to meet The God that is revealed to us In the Bible Let's pray Dear God

Thank you for the message Revealed to us In the Bible Thank you that we can ask Questions of the Bible And that it stands up To scrutiny Help us as we continue To read and explore And ask questions Thank you that you invite us To get to know you To have a relationship With you God we want to know you Please reveal yourself To us And as we read As we continue to ask questions And as we seek you In Jesus name Amen Thanks so much Andrew I do take that opportunity To speak to somebody There are people with prayer hands Myself or Andrew Would love to continue That conversation With you as well Roger's just shown me I think something On Radio 4 at the moment About the history Of the Bible That's currently happening There's so many sources So many things That you can use

To have a look And by the way That chocolate bar Was really nice Unless I've met I do apologise We're going to stand And we're going to sing Our final song together Before we have our notices And final blessings So let's stand together And sing the splendour Of the King Splendour of the King Clothed in majesty Let all the earth rejoice Let all the earth rejoice He wraps himself in light

And darkness tries to hide And trembles at his voice How great is our God Stay with me How great is our God And all will see how great How great is our God Age to age he stands And time is in his hands Beginning and the end Beginning and the end The God that we have won Father, spirit, son [ 73 : 47 ] The light and the lamb The light and the lamb How great is our God Sing with me How great is our God And all will see how great The light and the lamb The light and the lamb The light and the lamb Made above all days You are worthy of all praise In my heart And all will see how great Is our God And all will see how great Is our God And all will see how great Your name above all me Jesus you are worthy of all praise

In my heart will sing How great is our love Then sings my soul My Savior God to thee How great thou art How great thou art Then sings my soul My Savior God to thee How great thou art How great thou art How great is our God

Sing with me how great is our God And all will see how great How great is our God How great is our God How great is our God How great is our God How great is our God How great is our God How great is our God How great is our God How great is our God

So please do take that opportunity There is an email gone out During the week Which has the link Which has the link to the sign up It's also got the full program For the whole weekend as well Loads of workshops Loads of workshops Teaching worship times Times of community Times of community Times to grow together Time to walk together Time to eat together Time to avoid dancing in Kayleys Like for me Everybody else feel free to enjoy That particular part of the program But there's lots of different aspects Of our time together So please do join us for that And then on Saturday morning as well A lovely opportunity again To be together And to share that whole weekend So we're looking forward to that So please yeah If you haven't got the sign up Or the link to that Please let us know And I think Are there paper copies as well Of the program?

Potentially If not If not We can get some of those printed But there are definitely copies online And secondly As has been mentioned In our spotlight We've got the job club Starting on Wednesday Again And these are very pretty pieces of paper But we don't want them littering the church When everybody's left Please do take them with you And pass them on to anybody that you know That might be interested in continuing Or starting afresh Their job seeking journey That may need that support And yeah Help as they work through that whole job seeking journey So that starts on Wednesday So please pray for that And as I say Please do take a form with you to pass on And then finally as Andrew mentioned There is our alpha course Starting It's a daytime alpha this time Our evening alpha course concludes on the same day In the evening And our next alpha begins on Wednesday morning

[ 79 : 23 ] So again Please join that And have that opportunity to continue that journey of learning And finding out the whole purpose and meaning of life So yeah Commend all of those to you As I said before Please do take that opportunity to talk with somebody Or if you need prayer Please do talk to somebody with their prayer hands Or myself, Andrew, anybody with a lanyard We'd love to spend that time with you in prayer and conversation Speaking of conversation We have our refreshments straight after our service Please do join us for that Don't rush off Part of building community as we gather together Is the time that we have together in the service So please do take that time to go and grab a coffee There is a coffee station at the back of the church there And also through the door here in our welcome space Yeah, so I'm going to conclude with some words from Jude Just want to acknowledge as well Our John in the fishbowl in the corner there

He's not had the opportunity to drum for quite a few years now So he's had that chance to come together and give it a go today So big thank you to John for stepping in there today And giving it a go again And getting used to what it's like in the fishbowl And not out in the normal So it's been great to have you as part of our service Thanks so much So let's continue by finishing Continue by finishing? I'm not sure that works But we're going to finish with this final blessing from the book of Jude Verses 24 and 25 This is our final prayer together To him who is able to keep you from stumbling And to present you before his glorious presence Without fault and with great joy To the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority Through Jesus Christ our Lord Before all ages now and forever more Amen Thank you Thank you.