

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

**ISN'T THE BIBLE INTERPERETED TO FIT AN AGENDA?**

**DECONSTRUCT | RECONSTRUCT**

**AARON BROCKETT | AUGUST 6, 2023**

Alright. What's up Traders Point Family? Good to see you. Good to be back with you. Missed you guys.

And really quickly, can we just celebrate and appreciate our campus pastors who just brought such a great word over the last month. Didn't they do an amazing job? They really did.

I'm really grateful for all of them as well as our whole staff. And not just our staff but all of our ministry team leaders and those of you who serve around here as difference makers.

It's not lost on me the fact that there are people who will never make it up on this platform who are just as responsible, if not more so, for the incredible things that God is doing around here. So, I'm just really, really grateful to be a part of it.

Did you know that in the last four weekends we've had 500 people step up and say, "I want to serve around here as a difference maker." That's incredible—500 people in four weeks.

I just want to thank you if you were one of the 500 because I know that our calendars are already crazy busy. So if you did that, that means that you said, "You know what? I'm already really, really busy but I'm going to prioritize this and I'm really, really grateful that you have.

It's not too late for you to jump into a serving opportunity or to jump into a group. If you look around the room and you're like, "Man, how do I get connected here?" That's it. You serve and you get in a group. And when you do that, you build relationships. When you build relationships, you make a big church a whole lot smaller.

You know, one of the areas that you can serve is in our Student Ministry. Our Youth Night kicks off this Wednesday night. This coming Wednesday night. We're super excited about our mid-week Youth Night. And you can serve there.

One really small way that you can serve is... You know today was our new service times. We've already done two services so far at a couple of our campuses. And you look around the room, the reason we added a third service is because we are trying to make room for more. And as I look around here, we're going to get full this fall.



So I want to ask you, if you're on mission with us, if this is your church home, that you might consider going to an earlier service. This is the 11:15—it's not lost on me that you guys aren't coming to the 8. I know that. Right? You guys aren't even awake at 8 o'clock. So I get that.

But if I can get the 9:30 people to move to 8 and for you to move to 9:30 then we can kind of create some room for more. Yeah, it will be the shortest, cheapest mission trip you've ever gone on. You just vacate your seat so that way we can make room for more in the fall season. I'm really encouraged about what God is going to do.

If you have a Bible, go ahead and find Hebrews, chapter 4. Hebrews, chapter 4 is our passage today. And as you may already know, we're kicking off a new series of messages that we're going to be in for the next five or six weeks or so called *Deconstruct |Reconstruct*.

This is a series that I have been kicking around, thinking about, praying, and planning for the better part of a year. And you're going to find out why here in just a minute.

Let me kind of kick things off this way. Several years ago I jumped on the phone and I was catching up with a friend of mine who I went to Bible College with way back in the late 1900s. And this was a guy who...

You ever had a friend; somebody you grew up with and they were just good at everything? They were just popular and everything they touched just kind of seemed to turn to gold. Don't you just get aggravated with those people?

That was him. He was popular on campus. Successful. Great student. He was a year older than me so I really looked up to him. He was the R A on my dorm floor.

This was one of my very first friends at Bible College who had what we called a weekend ministry, meaning during the week he was just a lowly Bible College student like the rest of us.

Then on the weekend he would hop on a plane and fly to the northwest part of the country where he was already on staff of a real live church getting paid with real live money. And we just thought that was amazing.

I remember walking into his dorm room often. And he'd be on the phone looking really serious. And I would be like, "Hey, man. Let's go to the caf." Or, "Let's go shoot some hoops." And He would be like, "I can't." I'm like, "Why?" He's like, "I'm phoned in to an elder's meeting right now."

I was like, "Whoa. He's so important." It was like, "I'm going to go launch water balloons at the girl's dorm. That's what I'm going to do."



Anyway, when we caught up a few years ago, I was really looking forward to hearing what all he had accomplished. He'd accomplished so much at an early age. So we jump on the phone, "Hey, man. Tell me about your life and your family. What about the ministry? Tell me about the church."

And he got kind of quiet on the other end of the line. And then he said these words that really surprised me. He goes, "Well, I'm not really in the ministry anymore." And he goes, "Honestly, Aaron. I'm just kind of done with church."

It sort of shocked me. He went on to tell me about some painful seasons of life that he has been through and some questions that he had and experiences that he had endured that had led him to this point.

Now, his story is not uncommon, unfortunately. In fact, just this last week there was an article published in the *Atlantic* that said here recently there have been about 40 million Americans who have stopped attending church.

Not all of it has been like all of a sudden, like stepping off of a cliff. It's been more like a gradual slope down. Many didn't even realize that it was happening. And certainly COVID accelerated all of that.

But 40 million Americans who have stopped attending. That's about 12 percent of the population, which represents the largest concentrated change in church attendance in American history, which is bound to have some sort of ripple effect.

Now the term *deconstruction* has become kind of like this umbrella term that is used to describe a process in which somebody who once used to be a Christian...

Now when I say that I'm not talking about Christian in name only, I'm not talking about cultural Christians, I'm not talking about somebody who said, "You, know. I grew up Catholic or Baptist."

I'm talking about somebody who at one time or another believed that the Bible is God's Word, that God is Creator, that He has a Son named Jesus, that Jesus came on our behalf to pay the price for our sins and reconcile us all back to God. And we're saved by grace through faith. That kind of a Christian.

But they end up experiencing maybe some pain or some trials or some abuse or a betrayal of trust or have some questions that they are not getting good answers to. And they embark on a quest to dismantle and to abandon the faith.

Now, some don't completely walk away from it all together. Some just simply reshape it. So they say things like, "Well, don't get me wrong. I still love Jesus; I just don't love the church." Or, "I still consider myself a very spiritual person, it's just that I think that there is more than one way to view God."

As I'm saying all of that, chances are, maybe in your own mind you're making some connections and you're going, "Man, You know. I have a story of my own. I know

somebody I grew up with or somebody I was in small group with or somebody who was really influential in my early days as a Christ-follower and he has deconstructed and walked away from the faith.”

Maybe you have kids who you raised in church but now you realize that they are young adults and maybe you didn’t raise them in Christ. And there is a difference, you know? And they move off to college and they get confronted with questions and lifestyles that they are not prepared for and they end up deconstructing and walking away from the faith.

Maybe this is your story. Maybe right now you’re kicking this around. You’ve walked through some pain and some hypocrisy or maybe there was a former leader who really betrayed your trust.

Or, right now, you’re just confused and you saw that social media post by somebody who used to be in the ministry and he’s kind of created this really slick, well-worded, perfectly placed picture of a life of freedom now that he has shaken off the shackles of religion and is now inviting you to do the same. And you’re like, “You know, that sounds pretty inviting.”

If that’s you or you know somebody who has walked through this this year this series is for you.

Now, what we’re going to do is we’re going to talk about some of the tough topics that cause us or maybe trigger us to deconstruct our faith.

Let me just say this before we go any further. Deconstruction in and of itself is not always a bad thing. In fact, I would even argue that Jesus, Himself, did a fair amount of deconstruction when He came.

Jesus would come along and He would say things like this. This is a deconstructing statement. He would say, “You have heard it said, but I say to you...” Jesus would say, “I’ve not come to abolish the law, I’ve come to fulfill it.”

Another way to think about deconstruction is sort of like a re-thinking, a breaking down to build back up. It’s kind of like when you’re physically out of shape, or you’re trying to build some muscle, you go to the gym, you break your body down. We don’t say it this way, but you deconstruct the muscle so that it will come back stronger and transformed.

This summer when we were travelling through England with our daughter, we visited a number of abbeys, cathedrals, and churches that are centuries old. It was amazing to walk into some of these facilities.

We walked into this pub and we were sitting there and we asked the waitress, “How long has this been here?” She said, “Since the 1300s.” It just blew my mind. You know, in

America, if something is 10 years old, we tear it down and build something else. But over there they had these cathedrals that have been around for centuries.

But one of the things that we noticed as we walked through many of them, is that many of them, right now, are being renovated. There was a certain section where there was a white sheet hung up or there was some plywood. And there was a sign that said *Excuse the mess but we are renovating this cathedral so that it might be around hundreds of years from now.*

I would say, in a very similar way, discipleship, our growth as followers of Jesus, requires renovation rather demolition. There is going to be a crisis, there is going to be pain, and there are going to be questions that we walk through. I certainly have walked through some in my own life. But instead of reaching for a sledge hammer, all we really needed was to reach for a paint brush.

So, over the course of the next several weekends together we're just going to take a look at a few of the subjects or the topics that are oftentimes at the center of people deconstructing their faith.

So we're going to take a look at the exclusive claims of Jesus. Why is Jesus the only way to God? Isn't being a good enough person and sincerely believing whatever you want to believe good enough? Why so narrow?

And we're going to talk about our sexuality. Why does God care who I sleep with? We're going to talk about gender dysphoria and transgendered people.

We're going to talk about how some Christians throughout church history have used the Bible or the faith to oppress minorities and women. We're going to talk about church hurt and hypocrisy.

That's all going to be in this series. Just a few little softballs. We're just kind of lobbing them up there. Alright? We're just going to line that up. I've got to say that in jest unless I cry. It's heavy lifting in this series.

Now, here's what I want to do. I just want to set the tone for the series. By no means am I going to come across as a know-it-all. I hate it when preachers do that. I don't have the answers to all of the questions. It certainly is not an exhaustive list.

And if I do my job right, and I don't get cancelled by the end of this series, here's what I want to invite us to do as a church. I want us to just engage with each of these subjects thoughtfully and theologically.

As my friend Preston Sprinkle says, "We want to think deeply and we want to love widely."

Now, even as I went through that list, automatically, especially those of you non-confrontational people, some of you are already squirming in your seats. You're just like,

“Oh, man. Tell me which week you’re going to talk about that because I’ll just watch online.” You’re just kind of uncomfortable.

You might even say, “Should we even talk about this in church?” And I would just very lovingly respond, “We’re already talking about it everywhere else. It would be kind of awkward for us to not talk about it here.”

And I would just say whether you realize it or not, your kids are already hearing about every single one of these subjects via Tic Toc. So if we won’t intentionally disciple the next generation, somebody else will.

Now, each week of this series... Yeah, go ahead and clap... Because we’ve added these other service times, I’ve been trying to cut material so that that way... But this is the third service. I can keep you guys as long as I want. Right?

So anyway, each week what we’re going to do is we’re going to release a list of trusted resources for you to do some reading and study on your own. Because there is no way that I could adequately cover... These are complicated topics—many of them. There is no way that I can adequately cover them in a mere 35 minute message.

So you can take a picture of this QR code behind me and there is just going to be a list of trusted resources that we’ll release every single week so that we can do some reading on our own. I just want to invite you to think deeply, thoughtfully, and theologically through some of these subjects.

Here's where I want to start today. I really want to start with the Bible and I really think that that's foundational to everything else that we're going to talk about.

### **Discipleship requires renovation rather than demolition**

Oftentimes it is one of the things where people begin to ask questions about it and if there are not good answers to the questions then it kind of creates some doubt and it sort of spirals and they dismantle or deconstruct their faith and walk away.

This isn't theoretical for me. This is day to day. I've been following after Jesus for about 30 – 35 years and I've been in fulltime ministry for about 25 of those years. And these are questions that people have asked me as a pastor.

If Christianity is based upon on the Bible, then how can we trust the Bible? Wasn't the Bible written a really long time ago by privileged people just seeking to consolidate power? And don't people interpret the Bible in wildly different ways to fit whatever agenda they have? And can't you just make the Bible say whatever you want? Why should we trust that?

These are really, really important questions. And they are going to be the foundation of everything else we talk about in this series.

So, our passage today is one verse, Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12. And I'm going to read the passage and this is participatory. The first two earlier services were very energetic so you guys have no excuse. You've already had three cups of coffee.

I want to encourage you to read the passage with me by saying the word that is in bold as I read the passage. Alright? Here we go. Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12:

*"For the word of God is **alive**," very good, man you guys make me so proud. You're better than both of the earlier services. "...and **powerful**. It is **sharper** than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It **exposes** our innermost thoughts and desires."* Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

What an interesting way to explain what the Bible is and what it does. Here's what I mean. I read a lot. I read books on parenting to become a better parent. I read books on leadership to become, hopefully, a better leader. This last summer I read a book on how to be a great golfer and it did not work, like at all.

But usually I read a book and the reason why I read it, most of the time... I don't read very much fiction, I mostly read something to try to gain some nuggets of insight, to gain some wisdom, to gain some knowledge, to apply some things to my life.

Then, if it's really good, I'll recommend it. Never once have I recommended a book to people by saying, "Man, you've got to read this book, it's alive." If I did you would think that I was so weird. If I was like, "You've got to read this book, it's sharp. It's just going to expose you."

But that's how the Bible describes itself. Here's how the Bible is described in 2 Timothy, chapter 3. Paul says that the Bible is breathed out or it is God breathed and it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What I want you to see here is that the Bible was not written for us to grow in head knowledge. The Bible was not written like you read an owner's manual. And I know it sounds like a cute statement: Bible—BIBLE, basic instructions before leaving earth. But that's not how the Bible is meant to be read.

It's not like a bunch of check lists you check them off, "Yeah, I've got that down." No, the Bible is this living, active, breathing document that is seeking to form us into a brand-new person. The Bible also presents a narrative. A story that we can identify with and that can help us make sense of the world in which we live.

Rick Lugar, a sports psychologist, says the reason why fans rush the field after their team wins is because they are looking to belong. They want to find a place, a sense of identity, which is why we are drawn into becoming a fan of the team even if that team doesn't win anything for years.



We're like, "You know what? I'm just identifying with this team." Maybe it's a childhood memory. Maybe we like the colors or the logo or whatever. But really when our team does win, we win. When our team loses, we have other fans to be miserable with. So we're all looking to identify with someone to help us make sense of our own lives.

This goes well beyond the world of sports. In fact, there's a popular book called *Story Wars* which says that consumers will buy a product, not necessarily because of what the product is or what it does, but so that they can fit their lives into a narrative or a story.

So marketing professionals are at war with each other to sell the best story. They are not selling a trinket. They are selling a story. And Hollywood has picked up on this. I was at the movie theatre last weekend and I saw many of you wearing pink. No judgment. Just an observation. Because we're all looking to find ourselves within the midst of a story.

And philosophers for centuries from Kierkegaard to Niche have said the same. Here's another word for it *worldview*. It's a set of lenses that we look through to interpret and make sense of the world in which we live.

Now, I would contend that the Scriptures provide the best story. Not a set of stories, story in the singular. This would be what I would call... In fact, I'm going to throw a few nerdy terms out to you. Some of you will love it. Some of you—maybe not.

Here's the term: metanarrative. And a metanarrative is the over arching story line of the Bible. When we read the Bible devoid of the metanarrative, we don't understand what's going on.

This is how you can read some things in the Bible and you're like, "I don't understand. That is so offensive. I don't understand how that can be in the Scriptures. When you read it divorced from the metanarrative that's the conclusion you come to.

Here's the thing we've come to understand when we understand the over-arching narrative of Scripture. Not everything in the Bible is prescribed. It's simply being described. And oftentimes, when you play it out, you see what happens when people live that way. Not everything in the Bible is being endorsed. It's just simply being explained.

So the metanarrative of Scripture is: Creator God who creates, there is a fall, there is a redemption of God, and the restoration of all things. That is the over-arching storyline of the Bible.

And the Scriptures provide the best story. It is God's story of you and for you. He does not put everything into this book that you could possibly ever know about life. He puts something into this book that He needs you to know about who He is, what He has done, and what He plans to do.



What I want to do in the remainder of our time... Here's the thing. I learned a long time ago I never, ever want to try to convince you of things with mere human intellect because then you could be easily argued out of it.

I don't want to try to strong arm anybody. I certainly don't want to present some things that feel like I'm slam dunking on you. What I do want to do is I want to invite us to just kind of think, just kind of engage in this.

Maybe you're here today and you're like, "I don't know that I can trust the Bible." Or, "I don't know if I believe it." And I just want to kind of present a few things.

The length to which God would go to get this story into our hands, I would say is nothing short of miraculous. I don't think miraculous is too strong of a word. In fact, I want to present it to you and I just simply want to say this. I would contend, this is my opinion, that it requires more faith for you to believe that the Bible is just merely a human book than for you to believe that it is a human and divine book.

So let me just kind of throw out a few facts about the Bible. I'm going to talk faster than you can write. So if you want you can take a picture with your phone and go back and look at this later.

The Greek word for Bible is: **biblios**

and it just means: book.

The Bible is not a book; it's actually a collection of:

66 books written over a period of 1,500 years in over a dozen countries, on three continents by over 40 different people.

And it wasn't just one kind of person, meaning there wasn't a bunch of college professors and it wasn't just a bunch of fishermen who wrote it. It was people who had a wide variety of perspectives. So:

poets, prophets, princes, kings, sailors, soldiers, attorneys, doctors, farmers, scholars, shepherds, priests, historians, fishermen, tax collectors, and businessmen.

It wasn't written in coffee shops and offices it was written in:

caves, ships, homes, palaces, prisons, and deserts.

The content includes literary genres of:

history, law, poetry, songs, prophecy, sermons, and letters.

And the reason why I bring that up is because you would read a letter from somebody differently than you would read poetry. And oftentimes we don't take that into account so we read it the same way and we sometimes get confused or misinterpret it.

Now the question I have as I present that to you is: how do you get that many people over that amount of time from that many places and that many perspectives saying the same thing about the metanarrative? The grand narrative of God's redemptive plan.

I have never written a book but I have written a chapter in a book and I know how many Zoom calls, text messages, and emails that all of the contributing authors shared with each other to make sure we were all aligned.

The authors of Scripture didn't have that. Many of them, they didn't even live in the same time period. And yet they are saying and affirming much of the same thing. This is oftentimes looked at as the cross-referencing that is in the Bible.

Did you know that there are nearly 64 thousand cross-references in the Bible? Cross-reference is when a certain passage of Scripture says something that has been referenced in another setting—it could be centuries, hundreds of years later in a different setting written by another person.

In fact there is a graph—somebody took the time to put this together. We've had to kind of smash it to put it on the screen. But you can google it and look at it if you want. The gray and white graph at the very bottom represents books of the Bible, so Genesis through Revelation. And when there is something that is mentioned and then it is cross-referenced in another section, he drew a color line to connect the two. You take nearly all 64 thousand and it creates this image.

Now, I'm under no illusion that by presenting that to you you're going to drop to your knees and say, "My Lord and my God." That's not what I think will happen. I just simply want to show that to you and say if the Bible has not been breathed out by God, then that is an interesting coincidence.

You might be saying, "Okay, well Aaron, that's all interesting and fine and good. Thanks for the art lesson. But, you know, times have changed. And the Bible is an ancient document. And kind of like an owner's manual from the 1950s, I'm not going to use that to change my oil in my modern life. And why in the world would I adapt my modern life to an ancient text?"

"I'm sure that people altered it through the centuries. Besides, there are so many interpretations of it anyway. Don't people just use the Scripture to make it say whatever they want? That's why we have a jillion denominations out there."

And I would concede that. I would say, unfortunately, that can and does often happen. That's why we have some dark moments in church history. That's why, at times, people get things wrong. And this is why I think that Paul urged Timothy in 2 Timothy, chapter 2, to correctly handle the Word of Truth, implying that there is an incorrect way to handle it.

James, chapter 3 says, “Hey, not many of you should aspire to be teachers and preachers because you will be judged more strictly on the Day of Judgment.” Bad news for me.

So there is a lot of bad teaching out there. In fact, I invite this of our church, we should be like the Bereans. If you hear me teach something and you’re not quite sure about it, you double check it. Now, lovingly do that. Assume the best. Come to me and say, “Hey, could you clarify that? Maybe you got that wrong.” I’m not inspired, the text is. And I want to correctly handle the Word of Truth.

And I would say that just because somebody has mishandled the Word of Truth in your life, whether that be a co-worker or Ned Flanders who lives next door, or a preacher on the Internet, wherever—that doesn’t mean that it isn’t the Word of Truth.

I don’t know how many of you love Indian food, but I love me some good Indie food. Yeah, we’ve got one person here man. Lunch afterwards. So you give me some good Chicken Tikka Masala and some Naan bread, man I’m going to be content for a really long time. Good, good Indian food.

When we were traveling this summer we were in Western England in a little town where we’d never been before. I didn’t know the restaurant scene, and it’s late at night, we didn’t have much dinner. I’m super hungry. It was at 10 o’clock that I told Lindsay, “I’m really, really hungry and I am craving some Indie food.” And she was like, “Please don’t. We’re in a hotel room.”

I was really hungry. So I opened up Uber Eats and found an Indian food restaurant not far from the hotel. And the reviews were sketchy. They were sketchy. But I was so hungry and I was like, “Well, I’m going to roll the dice on this one. It got three stars.”

So, I went ahead and I ordered some food. Twenty minutes later the dude shows up to the hotel lobby. I got my Indie food. I was so excited. I ran up and I tore it open in the hotel room, I took one bite and realized, “This was a bad idea.”

I couldn’t even take another bite. I packaged the whole thing up, and I was like, “I’ve got to get rid of it. Can’t keep it in the hotel room.”

So I did one of those things... Do you know how people set their room service food outside their door. I just went down about six doors and put it outside somebody else’s room, not mine. Now, here’s the deal. I am not giving up on Indian food because one restaurant served me poor Indie food.

Maybe you were a part of a church or maybe you were part of a movement or small group in which they mishandled the Word of Truth. Don’t give up on the Word of God because somebody prepared it or delivered it in a way that was harmful or abusive. You discern that.

This is why... You might say, "Well, how do you discern it?" Well, there has been this whole system of interpretation that's been developed over the centuries, principles that hold true for interpretation.

Let me get nerdy on you again. The term is *hermeneutics*. And it's this idea that when you come to a passage there is a set of principles that you employ as you read it so that you can discern the truth of what the passage is saying.

There is another word for it. It's called *exegesis*. It's this idea that when you come to a passage, you come to it with a set of questions.

Have you ever been a part of a small group where you read a passage and it's like, "Let's go around the room and you just say what the passage means to you." That is not good exegesis. That's how we get bad Indian food. Alright?

This is the idea that when you come to the text you ask a set of questions. Number one: Is this written in the Old Testament covenant or the New Testament covenant? What genre is it written in? Because I'm going to read poetry differently than a letter.

Who wrote it? Do we know who wrote it? Who were they writing to? What was the setting? What was the time period? What was going on in culture? What was the issue that they were addressing? Here's the biggest one. How does it fit or connect into the metanarrative: Creation, fall, redemption, restoration?

Once we answer all of those questions, we can discern, as best as we can, the meaning of the text. Out of the meaning we get the application. We go straight to application. That's preaching.

Every week, what we are trying to do regardless of whether it's a thematic series or we're working our way through a book of the Bible, we're going to exegete Scripture.

Oftentimes I'll have people email me, DM me, text me and say, "Hey, Pastor. Can you give me a set of verses about \_\_\_\_\_? Divorce. Can you give me a set of verses about alcohol?"

Please hear me correctly. I want you to do that. But oftentimes I'm very cautious about doing that because we can cherry pick verses to make the Scriptures say what we want them to say. It's called Progressive Christianity.

It's this idea of like, "Well, I don't really like what the Bible says, so let me twist the Scriptures to make them say what I want them to say to justify about how I want to live." That's mishandling the Word of Truth.

In Psalm, chapter 33, verse 4 says:

*"For the word of the LORD holds true, it holds "and we can trust everything he does."*

Psalm 33:4 (NLT)



So in the remainder of our time together here's what I want to do. I just want to present some... If the Bible has not been breathed out by God, then there are some things about it that at the very least are interesting, miraculous coincidences. And I would even go as far as to say it requires more faith for you to believe that this is just written by flawed human beings, than for it to be breathed out by God through human beings.

Once again, I'm not trying to slam dunk on anybody. I'm just trying to ask you to engage and to be thoughtful about each one of these. Here's just a few.

One would be:

### **Reliability of the manuscripts**

The reliability of the manuscripts of the Bible. Now, here's what literature historians will tell you. When it comes to ancient documents outside of the Bible—let's just take cultural and secular documents—the more copies of the manuscripts of the original given within the shortest period of time the more reliable or authentic the manuscript.

So here are a few examples.

Tacitus—31 manuscripts

There is a guy by the name of Tacitus, regarded as one of the greatest Roman historians of all time, 31 manuscripts of the original, written within 1,000 years after the original. And historians look at that and say, "Man, that's pretty legit."

Plato—210 manuscripts

There are 210 manuscripts of his writing within 1,300 years.

Julius Caesar—251 manuscripts

No one disputes this—251 manuscripts written within 950 years.

Historians and scholars marvel over 1,757 manuscripts

The gold standard, outside of the Bible, the gold standard—historians look at this and man, they fall all over themselves about this. It's Homer's *Iliad*—1,757 manuscripts within 500 years of the original.

NT—5,700 manuscripts

But guys, the New Testament has 5,700 manuscripts that have been written within 100 years of the original.

Include other languages outside of the Greek—24,000 manuscripts

You take the other languages outside the Greek; it equals out to 24,000 manuscripts and it dwarfs any secular text by far.

Jesus said this in Matthew, chapter 5, verse 18. He says:

*"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved."* Matthew 5:18 (NLT)

Jesus, right there, in that passage, He affirms the durability of the Scriptures and the He affirms the authority of the Scriptures even in the Old Testament. And He says, "God's going to keep His Word."

Another thing to consider about the Bible would be:

Archaeology and fulfilled prophecy

You know, it would be a big risk if this was just merely written by human beings because they weren't just telling stories, they were making prophecies. They were talking about things that would happen in the future. So a really easy way to discredit it would be to say, "Well, did those things happen?"

Well, 300 of those thousands of prophecies had to do with Jesus, Himself. Jesus fulfilled every single one of those 300 prophecies written 400 years before He was born—specific details about Jesus.

David actually prophesized that Jesus would be crucified by Roman crucifixion, get this, years before the Romans even invented crucifixion. How did he know that?

In 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 20 it says:

*"Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God."* 2 Peter 1:20-21 (NLT)

You know, I went over to the Holy Land earlier this year and they are still excavating places around the Holy Land that just confirm what the Scriptures teach.

In the past, liberal scholars argued there was no such place as a city called Jericho, until they found it. And they argued that King David never existed until they found an artifact with his name inscribed on it. And they argued that the Exodus from Egypt never took place. Now archeological proof has been discovered to show that it had.

In the late 1800s there was a famous archeologist who was a professor at the University of Edinburgh named William Ramsay. And he was agnostic at best. He was an atheist. And he said of the Scriptures that they are sloppy historically.

He took aim at the book of Acts, which lists a lot of names, places, and dates—he took aim at that. Luke is the author of Acts and he said that Luke was a sloppy historian.

So to prove his point he set out to Asia Minor, which is the context of the book of Acts. And when he was there he was actually confronted with so much archeological evidence that was overwhelming to him and he conceded and became a believer just on archeology alone.

**Scientific observations**

Another thing for us to consider would be scientific observations. Here's what I mean. What we know about the known universe is always changing as we discover new information. That's largely what science is.

So, if God is God, then that means that He created the laws that govern the universe. So, by seeking scientific answers we're seeking to know the Creator better.

In fact, many of the fathers of modern day science as we know it were theists who were seeking to understand creation better. And the Bible affirms some things that we now know about the universe that mankind didn't know at the time the Scriptures were being written.

Here's what I mean. Stay with me. The scientific knowledge that was widely accepted during the days that the Bible was being written was false. Yet none of that ended up in the writing of Scripture, which if it was just a human document, don't you think it would have?

Some of you are like, "Aaron, what are you talking about?" I'm glad you asked that. Let me give you a couple of examples. One widely held scientific belief during the days that the Bible was being written and by a few random YouTubers today is that:

The earth was flat

But it wasn't until Copernicus and Galileo, just 5 or 6 hundred years ago that we learned otherwise. Here's what the Bible told us 2,600 years ago:

*"God sits above the circle of the earth."* Isaiah 40:22 (NLT)

That word *circle* in the Hebrew means sphere or globe.

Another scientific widely held belief at the time that the Bible was written was:

The earth had to be held up

The Greeks believed it was held up by Atlas. A lot of the eastern mystics believed that the earth sat on the back of an elephant, which sat on the back of a turtle, which sat on the back of serpent that swam throughout the sea. Makes sense. The Egyptians, who were brilliant engineers believe that earth had to stand on 5 pillars.

Now, Moses, the adopted son of Pharaoh, would have been enrolled in Egyptian public school so he would have learned all of that. He wrote the first five books of the Bible and none of those beliefs are in the pages of Scripture.

The oldest book in the Bible, Job, chapter 26 says this:

*"God stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing."* Job 26:7 (NLT)

**The number of stars could be counted**



Another scientific belief is that they held then is that they thought all of the stars in the sky that they could see were all of the stars that were, "We think they can be counted." So there was this dude named Hipparchus in 150 b.c. who counted the stars. All of them. And he came up with 1,022.

And then three hundred years later a guy named Ptolemy, who was considered one of the greatest geniuses of astronomy, he found four more. It took 300 years to find four more. And he said, "No, there's 1,026."

But 2,600 years ago, in Jeremiah 33 the Bible says this:

*"As the stars of the sky cannot be counted and the sand on the seashore cannot be measured..."* Jeremiah 33:22 (NLT)

How did they know that? They had no telescopes. Maps did not exist. How did they know that? Well, it wasn't man that was writing it. Man might have been holding the pen, but God breathed it out.

### **Durability**

Another thing I just want you to take into consideration is the durability of the Bible. You ever stop to consider why the Bible has been attacked so venomously if it's not true? Don't you think we would just kind of ignore it. If it's not true it would eventually just go away.

The Bible is the most despised, derided, disputed, dissected, debated, outlawed, and destroyed book ever. No other book has been so burned, banned, or beaten down from Roman Emperors to Communist leaders to liberal college professors to Satanic heavy metalists. So why are they so threatened by it if it isn't true?

My favorite story is about this French student named Voltaire. Voltaire predicted that Christianity would be eliminated and that within 100 years after his lifetime the only Bible you would be able to find would be in a museum—just an ancient, forgotten text.

And within 50 years of his death in 1778 the Geneva Bible Society purchased his home and used his home to put in a printing press where they printed thousands of Bibles. I love that. I love that story. Don't tell me God doesn't have a sense of humor. Alright?

Well, it says this in Isaiah 40:

*"The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."* Isaiah 40:8 (NLT)

Personally, you may not believe this, but personally I believe this is why the Bible is attacked and dismissed and disregarded so often...

You know the Bible is the best selling book of all time. One author recently said, "Yeah, it's the bestselling book of all time but it's never been read."

And oftentimes what we do is we regurgitate what we hear others say, “The Bible is full of contradictions.” You hear that a lot. Well, name one. Most people would be stuck, “Well, I don’t know,” because we just regurgitate stuff that we’ve heard about it.

I personally believe that the reason why the Bible is attacked so often is because it really does contain the words of life from God. And we have an enemy who knows that. So he will try to do everything that he can to get you to undermine the reliability of God’s Word in your life—to try to dismiss it.

Now, I am under no illusion that all of the stuff that I’ve said today is going to cause you to go, “Well, I believe the Bible now.” But one of the reasons why the Bible is breathed out by God is because Jesus said it.

### **Testimony of Jesus**

The testimony of Jesus of the Scriptures... You know that Jesus affirmed the Scriptures when they were challenged? He taught and referenced the Old Testament. When He was tempted in the desert He didn’t try to contend with the temptation through His own reasoning. He said, “It is written.” And then He would quote Scripture.

And He would oftentimes teach from the Scripture’s passages. He would quote from them often. Jesus believed that it was breathed out by God and Jesus even believed... This is where a lot of people get tripped up, Jesus believed that it was a partnership of human authors: fallen, broken, sinful, flawed, inconsistent human beings holding the pen but it was breathed out by God.

And that’s what trips many of us up. There is this mysterious nature to that. And many of us, at times myself included, I would just like the Bible to be one or the other either written by God or written by man.

“This whole idea of human authorship and divine, that just seems messy. It kind of blows my mind. I would love it if God said, ‘I shot a laser out of heaven and carved the Bible in the stone.’ Okay that’s great, it came directly from God.”

But see, the plan of redemption from God always involves human beings. And Jesus seemed to not have any problem with it. In fact there is a little thing that He said in Matthew, chapter 22, verse 43. I’ll close with this. He says this, responding to questions about the Messiah:

*“Jesus responded, ‘Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah ‘my Lord?’”* Matthew 22:43 (NLT)

That’s a really brief thing that He says, but in that little sentence, that little question that He presents, Jesus is affirming human authorship, David, inspired by and through the Holy Spirit. Here’s what He is saying, “It’s the voice of God through the voice of David, through Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

And the Bible is not meant to be read like a reference book. It's not meant to be read like you are cramming for a test. It's certainly not to be read like a religious check list. The Bible is a letter from your Father and it desires your formation over time.

So the Bible—it's okay with us wrestling with it. The Bible is okay with confusion and questions and grappling with the text. It's okay. Why? Because it's trying to shape and form you into a different person.

And guys, that takes time. Well, how long? I don't know, a life time. It's just coming to the passage and you don't read the passage to try to get it all figured out, you come to the passage and the passage ends up exposing and changing you.

But we don't have the time and the patience for that because we are people of Amazon Prime. We want it now. "Hey, Pastor, Just give me a set of verses for \_\_\_\_\_ so I can check the list and move on with my life."

The Bible will not play that game because the Bible is trying to form you into a new person. And it's going to take lots and lots of reps.

This is why I always get a little bit disheartened, actually not a little, a lot disheartened when somebody walks in, "Hey, Pastor, what are you preaching on today?" "John 3:16." "Oh, I already heard that," and he's sort of dismissive about it.

A lot of well-seasoned Christians do that. The Bible is living and active. I don't care how well you know the passage; the Spirit of God is breathing into that text. Why? So He can form you into a new person, to shape you and it requires lots and lots of reps.

I don't care if you get up every day and you just read one verse and say, "God, please speak through that verse. Knock off the rough edges of my life. Shape me more and more into your image. God I give you the time and the space to do that."

Guys, guys, please don't give up. Please don't give up when the Bible is perplexing, when the Bible is confusing, when friends and family are losing heart, when people are walking away from it, when they say things that cause you to second guess your trust in it. Please don't give up, because the Bible is meant to form you into a new person.

I told you earlier in the summer that I recently picked back up the game of golf because, apparently, I need more misery in my life. And I've been working with a golf pro. I've had four or five lessons. He's been great. He's been super patient and has been phenomenal.

But I get to the tee boxes and you know it's one of those things... Speaking of deconstruction, I had a pretty good swing until I started taking lessons. And then my swing started to progressively get worse and worse. And it was really, really frustrating.

I'd be doing what he told me to do but I would dribble the ball right off of the tee or I would slice it way off to the right. So frustrated. And he would just stay really, really calm. I mean it was a horrible shot, he should be making fun of me. But instead he looks at me and he's like, "Hey, man. It's alright. We'll get you there. Keep swinging."



I just want to punch him so badly. I just want to beat him with that brand-new driver I bought. But he's right, "Hey, man. Just be patient. Just keep swinging. We'll get you there. It's going to take a lot of reps."

Guys, can I just say the same thing to you. Man, don't give up. Just keep swinging. You just keep coming to the passage, coming to the text and you say, "God, speak. I believe." It may take a step of faith—a big, giant jump of faith for some of you.

There's a mysterious nature to this. "God, I believe that this has been breathed out and that through it I can know who You are and who I am and what's gone wrong and what You've done to make things right and what You one day will do to restore."

Guys, you keep swinging. Keep swinging. Because through the Holy Spirit, we'll get you there, we'll get you there.

Father, we come to You right now as we start this series that at times is going to be challenging, it's going to be a little bit uncomfortable, But, God, I'm not worried. I'm not fearful.

We need to talk about these things. And we know that Your Word speaks very thoughtfully and deeply to these things that are real life right in front of us.

So, God, I just pray that You would go out in front of us, that You would use this series to gird up our faith, to give us greater confidence.

Maybe there are some who are in the process of thinking about abandoning their faith and maybe they'd rethink that. Maybe there are some people who are like, "Man, I've just had a really horrible church experience or bad experience with Christians. I didn't know it was like this." That they might come to know You, have an encounter with the living God.

God, please speak. We're listening. In Jesus' name. Amen.