

# CHRIST REVEALED

**Episode 4**

**Transcript**

Gretchen Jensen: Hey, everybody, we're so glad you could join us today, and if this is your first time, welcome to episode four. Now, today we have something really exciting. I'm so excited to hear about this interview. This is from Gary Habermas. Also, we're going to be taking a tour of Capernaum, and to finish this off we also have another interview with Professor Mordechai Aviam, but let's start. You were really excited about this interview with Gary. Let's talk about that, Patrick.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, Dr. Habermas is considered an intellectual stud in the Christian apologetic community. As I was interviewing other apologists, they would ask me, "Am I going to be interviewing Dr. Gary Habermas?" They had this excitement about them, and the answer is, yes, he was on the list, and we were going out there to interview him at his home outside of Lynchburg, Virginia.

Now, what's interesting about him? He's a scholar. He's a PhD. He teaches Christian apologetics, but he was also born in Detroit and has that Detroit street attitude. He's got that edge to him, kind of that hockey player edge. Here you have a guy who's an extraordinary intellectual, who also knows how to brawl. That's a perfect combination to be a defender of the Christian faith. We went down into his study or into his office at his home, and had a heck of an interview. It's really a thrill ride, so I'm really excited for you to watch that. You might want to break out some popcorn, lean in and enjoy this interview with Dr. Gary Habermas.

So Dr. Habermas, thanks so much for taking some time. I have to tell you, I've been really looking forward to this interview.

Gary Habermas: Well, thank you.

Patrick Gentempo: Everybody else I talk to says, "I've got to talk to you."

Gary Habermas: Really?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Gary Habermas: You never know what those reasons are for.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, let me put it this way. They all said it with a twinkle in their eye, so I think we're about to find out. Can you maybe just start with a brief bio sketch of your background?

Gary Habermas: Well, I'm from Detroit, although I've lived in Virginia now for over 30 years. I grew up in a German Baptist family, and lived in the city so kind of rough. Maybe apologetics and walking the streets and staying alive are similar species here. I was raised in a Christian home, and when I was a teenager, I started having some doubts. I started to wonder, is there any basis for Christianity? How would I know? Of course, friends and nervous parents came alongside me. I was visiting the Mormon Temple in Utah, and I went to other religious kinds of churches and talked to people of other religious persuasions, and I wondered what else could be true, and do we have any basis?

They would try to help me. They'd say, "Hey, have you heard the latest discovery on the reliability of the New Testament?" or "Hey, there's a new archeological discovery. What about the Dead Sea Scrolls?" They wondered, "Creation, well, you've got some good scientific evidence for creation." I studied these things enough to go, "Yeah, that's okay, but I wouldn't want creation to be true and Christianity not, so how do I know Christianity's true?"

One day, it occurred to me while doing some reading, because I was getting a very bad habit in those days of not doing my schoolwork, staying up late at night, reading some pretty sophisticated stuff to answer my own questions, getting to bed late, and to this day I do the same thing. One day I was reading, and this text said, "If Jesus has been raised from the dead, you can pretty much hang the Christian hat on the truth of the resurrection," because it's the, as I like to say, Yellow Brick Road. Stay on that road, and you end up at the Emerald City of Oz.

The gospel is the gospel for a reason. It's the center of Christianity. I thought, "Wow, I have no idea if the resurrection happened or not, but if it did, I could see the reasoning here, because why would God raise somebody who was a heretic?" The resurrection is after life, so we are pointing to the Emerald City. We are talking about, where do we go from here? Wow, this is cool.

In my teen years, I started studying the resurrection. When people say to me in interviews, "Well, did you do this to help your students, or to do this, or to do that?" I'll say, "No, I was really selfish. I did it for me, because I had some really heavy questions." I actually got to a place in my late teen years where I thought, "I just have to give up. You can believe the resurrection by faith, but you can't say it's true." I'd had an issue at that time that I couldn't get past, but I only found out years later, it's because I was reading some really good books on the resurrection that were written around 1908 and 1910, and science has changed since then.

When I couldn't get over this bump, now you can get over the bump pretty easily, but at the time I just had to walk away from it and said, "Yeah, I better just get on with my life, and don't know if it's true or not." I came back to it later, did my dissertation at Michigan State University on the resurrection. They let me do it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, we'll talk about that. When you proposed it, you're getting your, this is your PhD, resurrection?

Gary Habermas: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: You're at Michigan State.

Gary Habermas: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: You propose that you want to do this on the resurrection; how did the faculty respond to that?

Gary Habermas: Well, one of the guys said to me, “You know, we’re kind of liberals here, but we’d like to think of ourselves as good liberals. What we mean by good liberals is, we don’t have to agree with you. If you don’t agree with the way we say it, that’s fine. Just be able to say something with data. Have reasons for what you’re saying. We don’t care if it’s the line or not, but be able to defend things.”

As I was leaving that meeting with the director of the program, because about half my committee probably believed in the resurrection and the other half did not, and so they were a nice balance. He said something to me. He says, “Oh, by the way, don’t tell us the resurrection happened because the Bible said it happened.”

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Gary Habermas: I was trying to act like ... I thought he would saying, as so many people think today, I thought he was saying, “You can’t use the Bible.” That’s not what he was saying. Bart Ehrman, who’s the best-known skeptic in North America, if you don’t quote the New Testament, he will. Now, he’s like the spider. I don’t know if this is true or not, but when you hear the story that spiders know how to run across the web, because they know which ones are sticky and which ones are not?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Gary Habermas: The critics will only quote verses that they know have good reasons behind them. My professor didn’t care one iota if I used the New Testament, expected me to use the New Testament. Liberals will use the New Testament. Just know which strands of the web you’re walking on. Know why you’re doing it. That got me into a lifelong study of thinking the way critics think. If the critics are right about the Bible, the New Testament, if they’re right do we still have a resurrection?

Patrick Gentempo: Interesting.

Gary Habermas: That was what my dissertation really came down to.

Patrick Gentempo: When you concluded it, how different was the final paper versus what you thought it was going to be when you started?

Gary Habermas: Actually probably pretty close, because by that time, I had already studied the event for about six years; more than that. I will always remember, I was pastoring before I finished my PhD, and I sat in my living room one night because I still had doubts about my faith, even though I never let on with my people that I had. I mean, all doubts are our questions, so we all have questions. I sat there, and one of the alternative theories against the resurrection bothered me.

I looked the other day, I just pulled this out of my file about three days ago, but I took a sheet of paper, and here’s what I wrote on it in my living room. What would have to be false in order for this theory to be true? How many refutations do we have? My point was, I hadn’t even started writing my dissertation, but my point was, how many things do I

know to be true from the New Testament, critically, any one of which will refute this theory?

I got all the way down the first page with like 25 reasons, flipped the page over, and I got to about 30 things that would have to be different. I made a mental note that evening. I thought, that's the kind of critique I want. Something where I can handle, or I have so many comebacks against a critical theory, that as happens in some debates, I'll start saying, "Well yeah, but the problems with that theory, one, two ..."

I always tell my students, "Number them," because otherwise they'll think later, "Yeah, he gave me three or four." He goes, "Excuse me, I gave you nine." I have them count them, one, two, three, four, five, six. Sometimes the critic goes, "Okay, okay, I'm good." That's kind of the way I started thinking. How many refutations do I have of this? Can we handle anything from any angle that comes at the resurrection?

If it's solid, whenever the New Testament defines a gospel, it always includes the deity, death and resurrection of Jesus. As long as deity, death and resurrection are solid, I don't have to know if I'm a Calvinist or an Arminian. I don't have to know how old the Earth is. I don't have to know, am I dispensationalist or covenantal? I don't have to answer those questions. If the center is true, as I teasingly tell my grad students, I'll say, "I might take a course in creation with Moses," or "I might take a course through the resurrection with Paul. I'll answer those questions later, but let me make sure there's a Yellow Brick Road, and let me make sure there's an Emerald City of Oz, and we're good to go."

Patrick Gentempo: So yeah, this is the core of it all. What have you found to be the toughest critique or objection to the resurrection?

Gary Habermas: Someone's going to say I'm cocky, but I don't think there's any great comebacks. The one that probably cost me the worst, the most time, the response today goes something like this. According to my head count, less than 25% of critics actually opt for naturalistic theories anymore. The naturalistic theory is, no, Jesus wasn't raised from the dead. What really happened was, fill in the blank, and I don't care what you fill in the blank with.

Okay, they've kind of gotten away from that in recent years. They go with what I call metacritiques, big ones, that question the whole thing. The one that's caused the most thinking is, yeah, you've got some good reasons here. This is thoughtful, and I understand you're using my Bible. You're using the critic's Bible, and I appreciate you thinking like I think, but here's your problem. You're telling me that I have to believe in a whole other world, and I don't believe in a whole other world. I don't know how you have evidence for anything outside of this workaday world, this cement and trees and driving my car, and go to work and back. That's the only world I know.

When you tell me, "Oh yeah, I want to talk to you about the world of angels and miracles, and where a son of God came to Earth," I'm going, "You've got some good data here, but something else must be true,

because I never see a world like that.” That kind of comeback, and so that’s a second cognate area I’ve started moving into. A lot of my friends will get around the objection by saying, “Well, have you ever heard this argument for God’s existence?” If there’s an argument for God, and his world is the real world, this is a creation, well then, if there’s another world, I have to be able to respond at another level.

Or, the one that I’ve chosen to work with the most is near-death experiences and afterlife, because if there’s an afterlife, then you can’t criticize my effort to talk about the afterlife in the form of Jesus’ resurrection. Afterlife, unless you can refute this NDE stuff, which is highly evidential, then don’t criticize me on resurrection, because I’ve already shown you that the door is open.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, let’s talk about NDE. What have you been discovering relative to near death experiences?

Gary Habermas: Well, I’m just getting ready to publish an article where I catalog 300 evidential NDE cases. I don’t-

Patrick Gentempo: And by evidential, you mean that they’re documented, corroborated-

Gary Habermas: They’re documented, but the person who’s having the NDE sees something outside the emergency room, outside the operation room. They’re often drawn to where their family are. For some reason, they’re drawn to the waiting room that’s two floors away, and they see something really, really odd in the room. One account is, a family member who was just plain nervous, who never smoked and is known for telling their family ... She’s an older lady, a grandmother, and she said, “I hate those cancer sticks. I’ll never smoke. You’ll never see one in my mouth. All they do is ruin lives.”

When they looked in on the family they said, “Oh, Grandma Jones, I heard her say, ‘I’m going outside and smoking a cigarette.’” I go, of all the people in the world, that’s strange. Later you say to her, “Did you say that?” She said, “As a matter of fact, I did. Do you know about what time that would be?” Well yeah, because I just looked up at the ... I was thinking about going outside, so I looked up at the watch or clock, wondered how much longer the operation’s going on, and it was 3:06. I’ll never forget that time, and maybe there’s some record in the emergency room where you were out and you coded, between 3:05 and 3:14.

When things like that happen, they do make you think twice, and we have a little bit of crossover between scientific measuring and something really strange like, my other grandmother smokes. I can understand that, but this grandmother, no, this would never happen in 100 years, but I caught it. I saw her do it. There’s 300 cases like that. Some of the cases of the reports they have that are corroborated are unbelievable.

These days, when you have a cardiac arrest, you measurably lose heart activity. Well, your brain stops in just under an average of 15 seconds, so at the two-minute mark, this person could be effectively, measurably

now, who knows what? Machines can't measure, but in three minutes you would be effectively without a heart or a brain.

Now, if you don't have a heart or a brain, because you're on the table because you just had a ... We're trying to fix your heart, and right in the middle of it you had a cardiac arrest, what are you doing watching your grandmother, who never smoked in the room? You say, "Well, that's an odd lineup of things." Well, there are a fair number of odd lineups of things like that, that have been written up.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, and so you said you studied 300 of these cases?

Gary Habermas: There's over 300 that I know of, 300 evidential cases. The majority of those, some of them are in private literature where someone interviewed somebody, but the majority of them have been published.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow, and any other outstanding things that you saw in those cases that you think are enlightening, especially for a Christian?

Gary Habermas: Yeah, you mean like another evidential case?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, any kind of visions that people had, that they reported when they came back?

Gary Habermas: Well, there are cases where there's five people in a room, and one of them flat lines, or one of them has a problem, or we're all visiting you in the hospital and you're pretty close to death. In one case, there's this ball of light that seems to appear in the middle of the room, and we're looking around like, nobody wants to talk, and they're going ... Everyone's going like that. The guy who was down on the ground, there's some facsimile of a spirit-looking thing. The guy goes into the ball of light and goes off, and all five of us are left there going, "What just happened?" They're watching the person.

There are well people who claim to have witnessed people who are really in trouble, or actually in some cases, in two of the cases I know, the person who's in trouble, they both died. The other people were watching them go off in the wild blue yonder, so to speak, and there's five of them. Some of their near-death experiences, they meet somebody, a dad who died 18 years ago. There's been a family mystery that they have been able to figure out where something is after dad dies. When they come back they say, "Dad told me where this thing is, and you will never believe where it is." He gets this information, and he goes and looks where he said his dad told him, and this thing is there, like a little money bag or a little bank certificate. He'd put it up in the rafter behind something in this particular place in the attic.

There are stories like that too, but the only problem is, his dad's been dead for 18 years. If he got that information indeed, now you're going, "Well, that goes a little too far. You're getting a little off the Yellow Brick Road there." Still, how am I going to answer it? If his dad's been functioning somewhere for 18 years, that's more than just ... Because see, one of the comebacks is, "Well yeah, that may be good for two

minutes, but that's not exactly what we call afterlife." It is if your dad's been dead for 18 years.

Patrick Gentempo: Interesting, yeah.

Gary Habermas: There's just about every kind of evidential case you can think of. I've actually been in debates where I'll be talking about resurrection. One critic said, "Well, I don't want to talk about the resurrection. I want to talk about, what kind of a world do you think this is, that you can even talk resurrections?" I said, "Do you want to talk about near death experiences?" Well, he knew I did a lot of research, and he goes, "No, I don't want to talk about near death experiences." He was asking me about what kind of a world do we live in, but when I purported to give evidence, he didn't want to go any further.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, interesting, which is sort of this confirmation bias, right? It's not somebody wanting to come in and say, "Let's see if we can just discover some, or come to some understanding with an open mind?" It's saying, "I've got an agenda." It's almost like you're saying, "Which ones are sticky and which one's not sticky?" That's basically saying, "I want to confirm what I already think, not try to learn something new."

Gary Habermas: Yeah, it's just occurred to me lately, how acidic the political situation is in our country. When you're on the other side and you didn't expect to lose an election, and you're just plain angry, sometimes you don't have data on your side. You certainly don't have votes on your side, because you lost. It's almost as if, this is just a guess, but it seems like the options are, I didn't beat you in the empirical realm, votes, so I'll take it to the courts.

I think some of the critics are going there today. The evidence is so strong for religion in general, Christianity in particular, that this is a Narnia-type world. It is a world with Yellow Brick Roads and Emerald Cities and a real Narnia, and Aslan is somewhere. The data are so good, as I told my PhD students, we have a lot of arrows in our quiver today. We have a lot of different things. Well, what about this field? You can change fields. I mean, you go to intelligent design, fine-tuning, arguments for God's existence, the Shroud of Turin, afterlife.

Critics now think that Jesus definitely was a miracle worker when he lived. It's a whole new field to open up. He didn't just rise from the dead, he predicted it ahead of time, which is a great arrow. If the strangest event in history were predicted ahead of time, that would mean that I'm a player. That would mean that I have the world view down, because I knew it was going to happen, so I had, if you want to say it the way the New Testament says it, "This I have received of my father, the lord has permissioned because he knows the one who created everything."

It's like, this is heavy. Where do you align this, reliability of scripture? We have so many arrows to draw from, I've got a feeling that sometimes the other side, like in politics, is saying like, "Yeah, I don't think I want to debate this, but I will meet you in court, because you're not being politically correct. You can no longer witness, you can no longer ..."



They're going to try to handle it in the courts, because I think, this is my view, I think they're not doing so well on the data.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, this is very interesting, because one thing that I've observed is it seems to me that there's a more burdensome standard for evidence for the resurrection than there is for other historical things. Do you find that to be true?

Gary Habermas: Well sure, because they don't believe in Narnia. They don't believe in the Yellow Brick Road. If you don't think there's a Middle Earth or a Narnia or a Yellow Brick Road, it is kind of strange. No matter what the evidence is, you're going to say, "Well, yeah, hallucinations." You go, "I'm sorry, we have really good early evidence for group appearances," which we do, and people don't see hallucinations in groups.

Well, people don't see resurrected people, either, so something's got to give here. "Yeah, but you have a lousy theory." "Yeah, well, you believe something crazy supernatural." If you start asking questions about what world it is, you have to bring other data in here to show that there's an Aslan somewhere. Once you connect that, if there is a Narnia, and someday we're there for eternity, then there's a lot of stock in whether the resurrection happened or not.

Now you can't say, "Well, you want me to believe in a crazy world, so I'm going to think that it's something like hallucinations. I'm going to go there." Well, you don't have that option, if I know that other world is there. If that's my backup, just refute me on my data, for the data's sake. As a critic recently said, an agnostic, it was an agnostic scholar, he said, "Group appearances are really rough on hallucinations." You go, "Well yeah, I don't believe in that world anyway," but now you do, unless you can refute this other data. Now, what do you do with hallucinations? One of the leading scholars, skeptics, who used to take hallucinations, he just recently has come out and said, "I'm not going to take theories anymore."

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Gary Habermas: I think he sees windows and doors closing on him.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, and it's interesting, because I'm finding a lot of times as I've been looking at this and having these conversations that there's a lot of contradiction in the skeptics, where they'll critique the evidence you present as far as the history, and the rules of evidence they'll apply to the history of Jesus, and the details of what the accounts are, but then they accept it around other historical characters where they say, "Oh, this is a validated historical fact based on evidence," but when you present as compelling or as detailed evidence from the point of-

Gary Habermas: That's excellent.

Patrick Gentempo: Do you see that?

Gary Habermas: All the time, it's two standards.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, two standards.

Gary Habermas: Yeah, it's mine, and when we get too close to yours, that's the two standards. This is an actual situation. I was debating a very well-known atheist, and he had just stood up and said ... We got to the dialogue part, so we were talking to each other and he just said, "I'm sorry, the gospels are not good sources. They're too long after the events. They happen too late."

I'm sitting there going, "Really? They're too long after the events?" All right, Mark is plus 40, I mean 40 years from the cross, so Mark's plus 40. This is the critic's dates now. I'll use the "liberal dates." Evangelicals back these up, well, at least for Matthew and Luke, they back them up about 20 years, but this is the worst it gets. Mark is about plus 40, Matthew's about plus 50, Luke's about plus 55 and John's about plus 65. Everybody puts John at about 95, or subtract 30 from the cross, plus 65.

Well, years ago I heard about a man who was writing his memoirs of World War II. That was in about 1990, so the closest he could have been to the last events of World War II would have been 1945. He's writing his memoirs at plus 45, which is about exactly where Mark is. Nobody's going to say to him, "I'm sorry, General, you're a stinking liar. You don't know what you're talking about." No, because people can remember things at 45.

So now, when I'm giving lectures, I'll say, "How many of you here remember things from 45 years ago?" Of course, there's hands all over. "50?" All over. "60?" A bunch of hands go up. I'll say, "How many of you are so sure of events that some things that happened, maybe like a marriage, your first child, 60 years ago, and you're sure you could pass a test that says this is as clear in mind as yesterday?" Hands are going up. "So, that's not impossible, is it?" "No." "Why is it impossible for the gospel, guys?" "Well, because you need it." They don't say that, but I mean ...

I asked the guy, "Well, let me ask you a question. You're so sure the gospels are lousy?" "Yes." "Do we know a lot about Alexander the Great?" I actually said this in the dialogue and he said, "Yes, we know a lot about Alexander the Great. His father is Philip of Macedon, it's probably the most unique link in history of the most brilliant military mind with Aristotle, who was his personal tutor. He conquers the whole world before he's hardly, he's still a young man, and these incredible stories about Alexander."

When is the earliest, I don't mean an inscription on a rock, "Alexander was here," I mean, what's the earliest treatment, extended treatment, of Alexander?" The guy goes, "I don't know." I said, "Well, you should. When you're going to throw criticisms around like this, you should." The earliest biography ... There were a lot earlier ones, but we don't have them ... The earliest one we have is plus 280, 280 years, "But Alexander is good for you, right?" "Yeah, Alexander is good to go." "But, Mark's lousy at plus 40, right? And John, who's the worst, is horrible at plus 65, but Alexander's biographer is good at 280?"

“Well, that’s because the New Testament believes in propaganda. It’s a world of demons and miracles and resurrections.” “Oh, really? Well, it’s a good thing these Alexander books are good history books, because Plutarch, who may have the best known life of Alexander, the book starts like this; ‘It’s commonly believed that Alexander’s mother was a virgin, and his father was one of the gods.’” I said, “It’s sure a good thing these ancient historians didn’t bring any religion into their writing.”

Of course by now the audience is laughing and they’re going ... I said, “Look, I’m not trying to embarrass you,” I said to the guy. I actually got to be friends with him that weekend and I said, “I’m not trying to embarrass you. I’m just saying, you’re playing with two decks, or two sets of dice, and one of them’s loaded.” You’re not giving Christians a fair shot, and you’re coming back with, “Well, they believed in the supernatural.” Well, so did Alexander, and everybody at that time. In fact, there’s almost no Greco-Roman historians who don’t incorporate the supernatural into their histories, almost none.

So, play the game by the rules, and if I have good data, deal with my data, but don’t sneer and tell me you hate them. You may hate what I stand for. You may hate my political party. You may hate my religion, my ethnic background, whatever, but treat me fairly, and deal with my data. That’s all I ask.

Patrick Gentempo: It’s a matter of being intellectually honest, right?

Gary Habermas: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: I’m wondering, how much is self-deception on their part, where they’re even deceiving themselves sometimes?

Gary Habermas: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: When you look at the other characters from history, even at a similar time to Jesus, and what is generally accepted as evidence to validate that this history is accurate, you can’t say that that’s better evidence than what the Bible presents, or what evidence exists for Jesus inside and outside the Bible.

Gary Habermas: Again they’ll go, “Well, that’s because your books are propaganda. My books are history.” Then I’ll say, “Okay, well, I’ll tell you what. You read Suetonius’ ‘Twelve Caesars.’ He wrote about, well, he’s writing about 120 A.D., so he’s writing less than 100 years after Jesus, and it’s called ‘The Twelve Caesars.’ In the table of contents, for several of the better-known ones, Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, it says, ‘Julie Caesar, later deified, Alexander, later deified,’ because they were emperor worshippers.

Don’t tell me you can wade in there and do a ... You might be a secularist. You might be a secularist Roman that doesn’t believe in the gods, but just look at what Suetonius wrote. Jews were exempted, because people knew they were weird and they’ll rebel, and let them believe in their god. Most other people around the empire had to

worship. In fact one writer, Pliny, one early writer writing about the same time as Suetonius, he would try to make Christians recant by denying their belief in the deity of Christ, and worshipping a representation or avowing their faith in a Roman emperor.

You can't say Christians are religious and nobody else is. Just keep your hate speech to yourself if you want to say it in politically correct terms, but answer my data. If you can get them to say, "Well, I just don't like where you're going, I think you're prejudiced," that's fine. Tell me my views are right, and you're just not going to be as prejudiced as I am. You could, I'm sure, do better than I can on some certain things, but we're not talking about me and how prejudiced I am. We're talking about whether my data are right or wrong. Refute it or do something, but don't tell me you walk away from it because you hate it, because now it's your emotions that's guiding your history.

Patrick Gentempo: This is what's interesting, because our characterization for Christ Revealed is those three pieces. We say it's the history, which is basically just the factual history, what occurred, the evidence, what evidence exists to support it, and then there's the inspiration. Based on this emerges this inspiration for all these people worldwide, all these years later. What happens is I think, and tell me if I'm reading this right, you've really painstakingly said, "All right, here's the history and the evidence. Now, you can decide if you want to have the inspiration that goes with it or not, but it's really hard to invalidate the history and the evidence."

Gary Habermas: Yeah, and theoretically you could step in there and you could say, "Yeah, you're really off on this and that, and the Roman emperors didn't really do this, and this is really what happened at the history that time. I'm not going to follow you in your politics, or I'm not going to follow you in your faith stuff." If they want to do data, that's ... Of course, I will take it in bits and pieces. If you're going to respond to my data first, you say, "Well, but I'm not going to believe in fundamentalist stuff, that Jesus was the son of God." Hey, just answer my data.

If he can't get around it, because I'm saying right now I've got a lot of arrows, and I've got some things I want him to check out, I'll say later, "Now, just tell me something. How do you get out of the Jesus was really the son of God thing?" "Well, I don't believe in those things happening." "I understand you don't, but how do you refute this? Let me line up some more data for you," so I introduce more data.

They probably resent the getting closer and closer, and you knowing this field maybe a little better than they do, and sometimes they just walk away. I had one guy stop a dialogue and say, "I'm not talking anymore." People get worked up. Just look at the political debates today. People get angry, they walk offstage, they call people names. They have to bleep it out when they ... Because you're dealing with my life. You're telling me what my kids and I have to do. You're trying to prescribe for me what's good ethics and what's bad ethics, and how I should vote on this amendment. Yeah, if it's relevant to some facts we've solved, I'd like you to tell me how else you can get out of this.

Piece by piece, you start building a world view. What you said earlier, they're speaking through their prejudices, really we all are, in a way. I tell my grad students, we all wear glasses. We talk about people who wear rose-colored glasses, and people who wear depressed glasses, and always down glasses, and always up glasses. Our glasses are not the world. In fact, they're not even really us. They're the way we view the world, but we have to be ever so careful that we don't let our glasses prescribe the kind of universe that's there. Maybe for you, if you wear rose-colored glasses, the Yellow Brick Road might be the Rose Brick Road. We do really color the world we live in.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, so here's the thing that I find really uncanny, is that from let's call it the general societal context outside of Christianity, most people would say you have to ignore facts in order to adopt Christian views. You're coming here saying, we're relying on the facts to adopt the views. How do you solve that problem? You're out there doing the debates. You've done, I think you said, 650 interviews, so this is your life's work. You're writing, you're public speaking, you're debating, et cetera. Even after all this, there's such a mischaracterization. How do you think that is overcome?

Gary Habermas: I think you have to, I would say, you keep giving them the data, keep asking them for a viable explanation, not any old explanation, a viable explanation, that can account for the data as well as yours. Sometimes, even if they're your best friends, seriously, I have a lot of skeptic agnostic, even guys who are skeptical or agnostic New Testament profs, who I've become friends with over the years through dialoguing, huge names, and they might get upset with me. They might, but I think there's a lot on the line here.

Let's put it this way, a real mundane example. There's a lake out here behind my house. A few years ago, I had a friend in the boat with me, and I caught a large bass out on the lake. I pulled it in, and I looked around the little lake, and nobody was out in their yard. Darn it, if I'm going to catch a bass like that, I held it up and I went, "Whoa." Nobody heard me, except the guy in the boat with me.

If I'm going to tell you about the bass I caught, my first child being born, now we're getting a little higher, the new job I just got, how I got a publication, and you're one of my best friends so I'm going to say, "Hey, what about those Packers winning the Super Bowl last ...?" We talk about those things. Now, if it's about your faith, or if I can help you because you're going through an issue with a high school child, and I've already been there and done that because my child's a little older than yours, we share those things.

If it's as mundane as a bass, as important as, "Let me just give you a point or two that I've found out about my son," I'm going to tell you, because we're friends and I care about you. I'm not trying to be cocky, but if I have good arguments for what I believe, and you're not doing a very good job refuting them, to be frank, if I talk about the bass, I tell you about reality, if I tell you about my first child being born, should I tell you some new evidence I found for Jesus? If we're good friends, and we're fishing ... I don't play golf, but I mean if you're doing that kind of

stuff, and it's just any old thing, why wouldn't I throw out there, "I care about you, so I'm thinking this is something about ... We've talked about religion before. I just discovered something you might want to hear of. Did you hear that story on the radio? Did you hear they just discovered X, Y, Z?"

That's normal conversation. If I'm in the driver's seat and I have the data, I feel pretty comfortable. If you're the guy getting beat on because you're not read up on it, yeah, that's not comfortable. If I know you care about me, and our families are close, and the child, the bass, that's life, I'll let you go a lot further. I trust you enough to know that you're not trying to dog me.

I think a lot of this, two things go together; good data and friendship, good data and caring about the person. I'm not trying to take your scalp and a quick lunch and then go, "Hey, nice meeting you. We'll probably never see each other again," but I can go, "One more," as I walk away. No, but if we're fishing buddies, we're golf buddies, I think friends can push and tease.

Patrick Gentempo: Or even collegial discussions with other people who are-

Gary Habermas: Unbelievers.

Patrick Gentempo: Leading an intellectual life, in whatever realm they're doing it, and have a collegial conversation, it should be stimulating.

Gary Habermas: You have to be fair too, and Christians can be as unfair as anybody else. I think about Richard Dawkins today who says, "Now, what would you rather have? Do you want the sciences, or do you want it all on faith?" All on faith, that's what the Christians say. Either he's really silly and hasn't studied it, or he wants a bad caricature, and then he starts this thing about where he calls atheists "the brights," the brights in society. They're the bright lights, and religion is horrible and leads us to war and everything else, just on that data.

Patrick Gentempo: This is the question that I had, is that I'm wondering if a part of the challenge or the problem is that, because listening to your approach on all this, it seems faith is a mischaracterization of what you're bringing to the table, right?

Gary Habermas: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: That in and of itself, I think starts to misbrand Christianity, because the words are important. Basically you say, "Okay, this is my faith." Yes, I understand, but there's maybe a generic definition of faith, and maybe-

Gary Habermas: That's good.

Patrick Gentempo: What you mean, so because that-

Gary Habermas: I mean belief system.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes, that's a-

Gary Habermas: To me, that means facts.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Gary Habermas: You think I'm saying, "I take it on faith." An illustration I often use is, coming to Christ has a lot to do, a lot similar to marriage. You might date somebody for years. You might know somebody better than anybody else in the universe, even their parents. You don't say "I do," you're not married. I'm sorry, that's just the way the rules are. You don't say "I do," you're not married. You can be best friends. You can know them better than anybody in the universe. You want to be spending more time with them than anybody else. If you don't say "I do," you're not married.

Faith plays a role, but in marriage, you spend a lot ... It's a silly person who wakes up in the morning and somebody's in bed with them and they have no idea who this person is. They look down and there's a ring on their hand and they go, "What was I drinking last night?" That kind of stuff makes movies, but it's kind of silly.

We get to know somebody and we say, "I don't think I can live without this person," so then we say "I do." The faith commitment, and that's what it is, for better or worse, richer or poorer, til death do we part, that's the icing on the, we've been hanging around for two years and I love you with all my heart and I want to be with you, so I'm going to make a commitment to you. There's a difference between a groundless commitment and a grounded commitment. It's not the person whose ring is this, that I find the next morning, oh no, I'm tied down. That's not Christian faith.

Patrick Gentempo: But the skeptics are using the term faith in an abusive manner.

Gary Habermas: Good point.

Patrick Gentempo: I think that's interesting, because I would listen to what you say, other apologists that I've been having these conversations with, and the construct of faith is, I think, incompatible with how they're approaching their faith and Christianity.

Gary Habermas: Even the average Christian.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, even the average Christian, so it's been very interesting, because there's zero doubt in my mind at this point, and we're heading to Israel pretty soon to go even deeper, but there's very little doubt in my mind that the, for lack of a better term, brand known as Christianity, is completely misunderstood from the outside world. I think some things are coming clear to me as I'm hearing the types of evidence that you're presenting and what your experiences are interacting with these people.

If you were to now look at the resurrection, and if you were to say, kind of as a highlighted summary, here's the pieces of evidence that have lined up, and maybe even in more modern times have lined up because of some of the archeological evidence that's come, other things that

have come along, to really say that the evidence is just, these are the highlights of the evidence that's very compelling about the validity of the resurrection.

Gary Habermas: I'll tell you what, let me do it in terms of making a quick comment about a methodology I use, how I marshal these things and what I use. When I did my dissertation, back to my lead professor who made the comment, "We're not saying you can't use the New Testament, just don't say it's true because the New Testament says it's true, but build a case by using accredited passages from any material, use accredited passages."

Okay, so what I did was, in that dissertation, I went back and I said, "There's a certain number of facts," and I think I started with about a dozen of them. "There's facts that virtually every person who is ..." Now, you've got to be a specialist. You can't be somebody who says, "Well yeah, I'm interested in religion. I blog once a month for my friends, and I have a PhD." "What's your PhD in?" "It's in electrical engineering." "Well, I mean that's fine, but I'll tell you what. I'll make a deal with you. I won't talk about electrical engineering, if you don't try to tell me what the New Testament means," because you have to work at your own fields.

I would say, "Let's just use the specialists. I don't care what you believe. I don't care if you're an atheist New Testament professor. I don't care if you're an agnostic classical, you study Greco-Roman civilization. I don't care. Just know the data, and I'm going to use a list of facts." I start with a dozen, then I cut them down to a half dozen, and I kept asking, "How low can you go? How much data do we have for this or that?"

I came up with this argument that I call the minimal factor. Sometimes I call it the lowest common denominator argument. I'll say, "If I had 100 facts in the New Testament, I get the resurrection easily if you'll give me those 100 facts. If you give me a semi-skeptical New Testament, that's a decent source but it's not inspired. Don't talk supernatural with me." What's the chances of getting to the resurrection with 50 facts instead of 100? You might be able to get around it, but what if I start with a list of a dozen? You go, "Oh no, I'll give you more than that." "No, that's okay." You tell your skeptical friend, "You have way too much faith. I only need a dozen."

Then I'll say, "Hey, I don't need a dozen. I'll use a half dozen." I'll say, "What do you think about these?" You'll go ... I'll give you all half dozen, because I only picked the ones that are best accredited. The minimal facts argument says, if I only use the data which are allowed by the vast majority of critical scholars, and they're allowed because each one you pull out, the facts come in like this. I could get 10 different perspectives, five different perspectives, whatever, on why that fact is true.

Now, you allow it, right. Why do you allow it? "Well, I don't know. I've looked it over, and the data looked pretty good for this." Okay, now if I assemble six of those, what if the resurrection looks like the best option



using your Bible? You go, “Oh, you mean like Jefferson’s famous scissors and paste Bible? You know, that famous picture of the Bible where the acid was poured on it and there’s a lot of holes, and when you open it up, not every verse is there?” “Yeah, yeah, yeah, that Bible.” “You’re going to give me how many facts again?” “I’ll give you a dozen.” “Yeah, well, I just need a half dozen of them.”

I like to play this, “How low can you go?” thing. Mike Licona and guys and I who do this, we’ll get down to three or four and I’ll say, “I’ll use your data, and using only your data, because they’re so well-attested, you’re an agnostic so there’s got to be a reason you allow these facts, I can still show that the resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation for the data we have.” Now, if your comeback is, which is common today, if your comeback is, “Yeah, but I don’t know that world in which the resurrection occurs,” then I might have to go, “Time out, let’s talk about a potential god, or let’s talk about near death experiences and afterlife,” and then reopen the discussion and say, “If we do know something about our Narnia or Yellow Brick Road or a Middle Earth, if there really is a reality there, there’s somebody out there who created me and has a plan for my life, I mean if there’s something like this,” now I’ve sufficiently closed off a couple of your big loopholes, and you have to handle that data face-on.

You go, “I don’t know, hallucination.” Well, now I’ve got you where I want you, because you haven’t thought about this. That’s kind of the way I close it down. I will use the critics’ Bible, and I use any number of big-name guys. The way to argue today is to say, “We can’t trust the whole New Testament,” the critics’ view. “We can’t trust the whole New Testament, but I can trust these pieces of data.” Then I’ll step in and say, “What can we do with those pieces of data?” Now we have a case and I’ll say, “Bingo, we got resurrection.”

Patrick Gentempo: Yep, see, and basically as you’re saying, what’s based on these facts that are the ones that you’re willing to accept, you choose the areas that you want to accept, and basically the idea is, what’s the most plausible explanation?

Gary Habermas: Of just these.

Patrick Gentempo: Of just these.

Gary Habermas: Right, now the critic often comes back to me, and if you go down through history, if you go back 200 or 300 years, when higher criticism starts, the one single objection that I’ve been able to find down through history goes like this, and it’s very, very common. The gospel accounts, especially those surrounding the crucifixion, burial and resurrection, have so many discrepancies in them. Discrepancies like what? Well, how many women went to the tomb? How many angels were at the tomb? Well, Matthew mentions one, Mark mentions one, Luke two, John two.

See, we’re not too far off; one or two is not bad. You can say, “Well, who are the women?” Matthew has two women, Mark has three, Luke has three, but one of them is different from Mark’s third one, and John only has Mary Magdalene, but when she walks away to tell the disciples

that the tomb's empty she says, "They've taken the lord, and we don't know where they've laid him." There's more than one. John's just telling you, "I don't care to give you a list of their names."

They'll say, "Well, what do you do with discrepancies?" I like to play this little game with them where they'll say, "I think there's discrepancies in the gospel accounts," and I'll go, "And?" "Well, doesn't that bother you?" I'll go, "And?" "Well, that means the text is not true, doesn't it?" "Does it?" If you read a Greco-Roman historian and there's two things that don't work out, does that mean that emperor was never in control? No.

What if you listen to the two coaches after yesterday's big football game, and one of them says, "That guy's foot was out of bounds, I was standing right there," but the replay shows his foot was in bounds? You go, "And? What are you saying?" I'm saying that play with his foot did not change the game, because they won by two touchdowns. I don't care what happened to the guy's foot. We make allowances, and that's the way we normally argue.

The point I'm trying to get across when I go, "And, and, and?" is, I'm not arguing on the 100% we don't agree on. I'm arguing on the things that you think are impregnable. I'm using your facts, and I don't care how many women went to the tomb. We can talk about it later. I don't care about the angels. I want to know what you do with these six facts. If I can get a resurrection from these six facts, as Paul Maier, retired professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, as he says, "There was a great fire in Rome. The sources are very divergent, whether Nero caused it or someone else did. How many sectors of the city were burned? Exactly what happened? We can't put it together, but we know there was a great fire in Rome." If you and I can't agree on every last detail, you give me the six that you trust. I'm thinking about recalling those. I can see the fire's getting a little too hot, right?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Gary Habermas: I'm using your data. Don't say, "But I don't know about the women and the angels." We never once brought up the women and the angels, so don't bring them up now. I'm only building on the positive facts we both agree on, so it cuts down a lot of the garbage in conversation. Then somebody inevitably goes, "Well, forgive me, I'm just curious. Are you Calvinist or are you Arminian?" "Listen, let's do that over lunch tomorrow, but will you answer my question about these six facts?" You have to stay on task.

Patrick Gentempo: Now, you've got my appetite whetted. What are the six facts?

Gary Habermas: What are the six facts? Well, to show you how versatile this group is, we change them. You go, "Why do you change them?" Because nobody only gives us six facts. The skeptics will say, "I'll give you 20." I'll go, "I don't need 20. In my dissertation, I did a dozen." "All right, well, I'll give you those dozen." "Oh, I don't need a dozen, I only need a half dozen." It's intriguing that I can get down to a real small number,

because of course the smaller number I get, the more scholars I'll get on board.

In this book right here, "The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus," Mike Licona and I, we have a chapter four called "A Quintet of Facts; Four Plus One." We're doing five in this one. I've been doing six lately, but on that kind of a model, and I'll explain the plus one, I would take, Jesus died by virtue of crucifixion, and somebody says, "What's that got to do with the resurrection?" Well, not much, but you need a dead guy before you can talk about resurrection.

Okay, secondly, and I'm wording this very carefully about years of reading the skeptics. I read the skeptics more than I read believers. Jesus' disciples had real experiences that they believed were appearances of the risen Jesus. In other words, it's a simple way to say, they really believe they saw Jesus alive after he was put in a tomb. That's two.

Three, their lives were transformed to the extent that they were willing to die for a lie. Now, sometimes critics are willing, they're waiting for you to say this and they go, "Prove they all died." Nope, I'm not going to play that game. I didn't say I could prove they all died, although by the way, the four most influential early Christians, James the brother of Jesus, Paul, John and Peter, we have first century sources for the martyrdom of three of them. The more important they get, the better our evidence is. That's interesting, but you can't prove the rest. You're going to have to go to third and fourth and fifth century sources for rumors about the martyrdom. I can't prove that.

I can show that they were so transformed that they put themselves in position where they were willing to die. You go, "How do you know?" Because they went to towns, and they were told to leave and they didn't. They kept preaching, and they were stoned, things happened to people. James, the son of Zebedee now, he's killed. Herod kills him. Steven is stoned. Now, he's not an apostle, but Steven was stoned, so they were willing to die.

Fourthly, this fact of the resurrection was taught very, very early. Critics think we can get all the way back. Critical scholars, agnostics, unbelieving scholars, atheists like Michael Goulder, passed away I think not terribly long ago, but Michael Goulder, an atheist New Testament scholar, says the report of the resurrection can be traced back to no more than about two years after the cross.

Two years, when our earliest source gospel is Mark at plus 40? How do we get plus two? Well, it takes some arguments. I mean, it takes a way to get the path back there, but we're doing the Yellow Brick Road in reverse now. We're going back to the cross, but if an atheist New Testament scholar says it's two years, you better believe he thinks he has some reasons, because he doesn't believe that Christianity is literally true. It was proclaimed very early, and then two skeptics, and I think they're singular enough that I would separate them, Paul the persecutor and James, the brother of Jesus, who the gospels tell us was

an unbeliever when Jesus came to town there in Mark chapter III and then again in John VII, they were unbelievers.

I'd use those six. Now, we use five here and we say a quintet, we say four plus one. What's the plus one? Well, there's more evidences for the empty tomb than any other fact, but the definition of our minimal fact is, we will use no facts where the evidence don't just pile in, and secondly, as a result, the vast majority of scholars concede that fact. What's vast majority to you? Well, I'm the guy that did the head count. When people say, "How do you know the vast majority?" I'll say, "I counted, did you?"

Because I went back and went for my dissertation to present, and I've got 1,200 pages of sources on where scholars are today. It's at about the 90-something percentile on these four. Empty tomb? When I was in grad school in the 70s, I'm just guessing, scholarship might have been at plus 20%. The empty tomb was not popular. Today, it's at about 75%, so it's come a long way, but it's not up in the 90-something realm.

We call the plus one is the more important thing. The evidence for the empty tomb is so good, but all scholars haven't conceded it yet, but we're getting the number, the number's going up. How many evidences for the empty tomb? I said, "I won't use any fact that doesn't have all these facts coming in." I gave a paper a few years ago at a scholarly conference that included 21 separate arguments for the empty tomb, and now I'm ready to add another one, 22. 22 arguments for the empty tomb, and here's what's incredible.

It's not true because I pick up my Bible and I say, "Oh yeah, here's a verse, here's a verse." No, I can't get away with that. With these guys, I can only use it if those are critically given. All 22 are critically ascertained. If I have 22 evidences for something, that's way better than almost anything in the ancient world. We stick it on there as a four plus one. It deserves to be in the list by the evidence, which is by far the most important, just a little lag time on how many people believe in it.

Those are the ones I would use. I would say those six, I would say six plus one; the crucifixion, they had experiences they thought were the risen Jesus. Their lives were transformed to the point that they were willing to die. It was proclaimed very early, one to two years later. James and Paul, two skeptics, and the plus one is the empty tomb.

Patrick Gentempo: When you put those together, the conclusion is, what's more plausible than Jesus was resurrected?

Gary Habermas: They're going to probably come back and say, "What's more plausible, planet Earth or Narnia?" I'd say, "I'm glad you said that. Let's talk about Narnia. Let's talk about near death." A new book just came out on near death experiences, very scholarly. It's written by the medical community, and the book starts out like this. I don't know if it's an advertisement or what, but the opening of the book is this. "According to recent polls, 10 million Americans claim to have had near death experiences."

Now, those definitely aren't evidenced. Some of them could be lying. Some of them could have dreamt. Some of them could have been on drugs. Okay, but 10 million are a lot of experiences. If you said to me, "Okay, funny man, how do you know there's a Narnia? How do you know there's a Middle Earth? How do we know there's a Yellow Brick Road or an Emerald City?" I'll say, "You know what? If 10 million Americans alone claim to have been in this other world, you can't just blow it off and say you're all crazy."

I'm saying, "Why don't you believe there's another world?" "Because I've never seen it." "Okay, what else?" "None of my friends have ever seen it." "Okay, that's good, but maybe you don't know any of these 10 million people. What if one of your friends had an NDE? It's not that uncommon." There's a lady in my church who had a near death experience while she was delivering one of her children, and she didn't go to another world. She didn't meet Aslan. She stayed up by the ceiling, no evidence. She just said, "I watched them working on me, and yeah I saw a couple things in the room."

Maybe something funny, I'm just making this up, but maybe one of the nurses who came in had a blue nurse's uniform on and everybody else had a white one, just something a little bit odd. She said, "I was up by the ceiling." I said, "Did it make an impression on you?" She said, "It made a huge impression on me." I said, "Why?" She said, "Because I know when something happens for me for real and I die ..."

Patrick Gentempo: There you go.

Gary Habermas: "I'm not afraid." "You're not afraid to die?" "Not at all." "Why not?" "Been there." "Been where?" Now, I know I'm being silly when I say she's been to Narnia, but the point is, she's been in this world that you don't have any friends that have been there, but if 10 million Americans have been there, this has had a profound effect on her life. She doesn't care that there's no evidence, or that you don't believe her. If I said to her, because I've interviewed a lot of these people, "What are you more sure of, that you were up by the ceiling while your child was being born, or that you went to the supermarket last night and bought a loaf of bread?" They'll usually say, "That I was up there. It's the most real thing that ever happened to me."

I'll say to my friend, the one I would tell about my bass or my hole in one or my first child or getting my doctorate degree, I would say, "You know, you don't have to believe these people, but you may be passing up on the most important fact you'll ever learn about the universe, that there is a Narnia. If there is," the more I'm friends with them, the more I'll tease them. I'll say, "You know, it's not safe for you to go home tonight. You might get hit by a car. You really need to be thinking about what I'm talking about."

I would say that, I would kind of nag them, push them, the way I would push any friend like, "You know, if you were a good fisherman, you'd catch a bass just like mine, or you'd get a PhD just like ..." You know, we do that with our friends. Friends don't let friends drive drunk, right?

Friends don't let friends not know about a reality that you found something else about. These are the things in life we pass on normally.

Patrick Gentempo: You've written a lot of books. Some of them, or maybe many of them, are directed toward doubt, when people, why they have doubt, the problem of evil, et cetera. What are your views on all that?

Gary Habermas: Well, I start with a very ... Remember, I mentioned, I didn't get into the resurrection to be a good guy or to help people. I got into the resurrection because I was having issues. I came to this whole topic from doubt. I've done three books on doubt; "Dealing with Doubt," "The Thomas Factor; Using Your Doubts to Grow Closer to God," and "Why is God Ignoring Me?" Interestingly enough, the cover on the book "Why is God Ignoring Me?" is a guy who's walking down the middle of a highway with an empty gas can.

That's so expressive, because we do feel like we're on empty sometimes, and we've done everything, and how come he answered my friend's prayer? How come she got the near death experience while she's having the child, and I got a child who's got issues? It's a bigger part of the problem of evil, and philosophers like to say, "Evil has some really objective components to it. Bad things happen to good people." But, for the most part, evil has a lot to do with what color our glasses are, a lot to do.

Contemporary psychology, which I'm no psychologist but I've taught a little in this area, and contemporary psychology, probably the most common rubric for handling psychological problems is a method that says, "The worst things that happen to you," there are exceptions, but for most us, the worst things that happen to us, by worst I mean what causes most of your pain, is not what happens to you. It's not your car accident last week. It's not when you flunked out of a class at age 17 and always thought you were dumb ever since. It's not what happens to you, it's how you download what happens to you.

We all know stories. Anyone who has been near sports or academia, we know the guy who everybody says, "You're a loser, you can't think, you're stupid." The guy could have a really high IQ, but the problem is not when you call me names because I'm stupid, it's when I internalize it and say, "I must be stupid, and don't do my homework and don't care because everybody knows I'm stupid." It's not what happens to me, it's how I download it.

I deal with people who doubt all the time. They write to me like crazy. I got an e-mail today from a lady and they'll say, "What do I do with these things?" I'll say, "Look, there's different kinds of doubt, but the most common kind of doubt is not factual doubt." People think it is, especially men, think it's, "Give me 22 evidences for the resurrection I'll believe." If you're not inclined to believe, if you don't want to, you won't.

What you're asking me is, can you what if it? If you can what if it, which you can what if anything, I could give you 22 evidences and you could say, "What if there's no God? What if we got this wrong, and there's

something that fell between the cracks and we're just not smart enough to know what it is?" Then I'll say, "Well, let me ask you a question. Do you what if a lot?" "I what if almost everything." Okay, second question, "Does your doubt hurt?" "My doubt's very painful." "Why?" "Well, because," and here's the answer I get a lot, "Because it's very personal. If there's a Yellow Brick Road, to use your language, and if there's a Narnia, I want to be there. I want to be on the bus. I want to get there, but what if there isn't? What if I can't be sure, or what if I think, what if my family goes there, but I'm missing the bus? These are painful thoughts."

"Ah, okay, it's painful. Then your doubt, almost for sure, is emotional." "No, I'm asking, how do I know the resurrection's true?" That's right, you're asking the same questions that a factual doubter is asking, how do I know the resurrection is, but you're trumping it, when you're done, with a little what if icing on your cake. You're getting the cake, and then you're slapping some icing on that nullifies the whole cake. When you tell me it hurts, that's because this is the most valuable thing to you in the world, or close to it, and someone's told you you'll never have it, or you might wonder, what if I never have it? That hurts.

Patrick Gentempo: What if I'm the guy with the gas can in the middle of the road? The feeling is, why is God ignoring me? What's the alternative view for that person?

Gary Habermas: Well, let me ... If you went to a counselor and you wanted to pay \$100 or \$150 an hour, I don't know how much they charge, but here's an issue. What if your gas can is not totally empty? What if it's half full, and what if in the last month, if you would take the time to take a three by five card and jot down some things where God's answered your prayer? It just happened to me the other day. Jot down a few things that you asked for, and especially if it's a real special kind of prayer request that would be really cool for you, but it's not likely that this happened by accident, and you just jotted it down.

Like children, we are prone ... If I ask God 10 things and nine of them take place over six months, why do we forget the nine he did and ask him why he never answered that one prayer for us? We do that all the time. Kids do it all the time. We say, "Oh, kids are so ungrateful." Adults are ungrateful, and what if you think your gas can is empty, but it's not? Now, what I mean by that is this. We all have glasses. If my glasses are called cynicism, and I always look at God askance because when I was little, I went through a really, really scary situation and I didn't think ... I've always held it against God that he didn't pull me out of it and put me up on a rock like the psalmist says. That didn't happen to me.

Well, someone could point out to you, there's some other guys who were in that situation, they got hurt a lot worse than you. Something was answered on your part. You'd forget all that and say, "I just know God didn't pull me out of it." You'd walk around with this pain all your life. You say, "God let you down." Now, here's where it really hurts. My glasses are called cynicism. I look at the world with cynical glasses. Let's say God didn't let me down. I tell myself God lets me down.

Here's the key. For me, God let me down, but God didn't. For me, God let me down, because I see everything through these glasses.

I can't see anything without looking through cynicism. If I say, "You let my dad die when I was ... My youngest was nine years old when my wife died of stomach cancer. How come I didn't grow up with a mom? How come? Why did God let that happen to me?" Well, I don't know. When you get to Heaven, God might need a whole sentence to answer that question for you, but there is an answer. Don't think you have, that you're going to trump God with your knowledge all of a sudden.

If you say to you, "God let me down, God let me down, God let me down," today you'll believe God is un-trustworthy, he doesn't answer my prayers. It's not the empty gas can, it's the cynicism from which you view the whole world. Everybody who knows you says, "You know, you've always had an axe to grind with God, ever since your mom died." Well, wouldn't you be like that if ...? You see, you just proved my point.

In your mind, God's guilty. What if God's not guilty? By that I mean, God's the only person in the universe who can't go against his own attributes. I can lie. God can't lie. I can die. God can't die. God can't be other than God. God can't decide to trick you today, in some kind of nasty or unethical way. God can't do that. I'd say most of the time, the way we characterize our issues are the way we characterize the issues. It's what we make of it. "No, you're wrong. My mom really died." She did, but that doesn't mean you know the reason or don't know the reason.

I tell people, to me the theme of the book of Job is, Job realized by the end of the book that he knew enough about God to trust him in those things he didn't know. When I was growing up, my mother used to have this funny little way. My dad was very strict. He went into special forces, fought in Germany, quit high school when he was 17 years old; tough guy, and he's dying of cancer now, real tough guy. My dad would be kind of hard on us sometimes. He'd even say, "Boys, I've been hard on you, but for a reason."

We'd go to my mom and we'd go, "Mom, he wants us to wash the cars on Friday night, and I already had plans with my friends. Can you please talk to dad?" Well, she didn't do it very often, but my mom had this way of going, "It's going to be okay." "Well, mom, will you do it?" "It's going to be okay." "Mom, will you talk to ...?" "Have you ever trusted mom and I didn't come through?" "All right, mom, I'll give you another chance," and Friday night comes, and I get to go out with my friends. After a while, we got to trust my mom that she could pull this off. After a while, I start trusting mom.

Why can't God be like that? I think the answer that Job got, Job realized that he knew enough about God to trust him with those things he didn't know. I would say, "I know Jesus is a miracle worker, a lot of arrows in my quiver. I know there's a God, I know there's an afterlife. I know that today, many, many people are healed. Two volumes on my shelf over there with thousands of healing cases, two more over there with many healing cases by medical doctors. That's the world I love in.



It a world where Jesus predicted his resurrection, then he rose from the dead. That's what I know about the world."

Can I give God a chance to get to heaven and let him tell me, because I think it'll only take him one sentence? Who died and put me on the throne? It's my glasses, it's not reality. I would say, if I know the resurrection's happened, there's an answer to that question. "Well, what is it?" "God knows it." "Oh, that's just a cop out." It's only a cop out if there's no God, and it's only a cop out if there's no resurrection, but both are true.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, extraordinary, extraordinary and stimulating thoughts and comments. I really appreciate you taking the time today.

Gary Habermas: Oh, thanks.

Patrick Gentempo: We covered a lot of ground, and it felt like it went by in five minutes, but this was really wonderful.

Gary Habermas: Thanks.

Patrick Gentempo: Thank you for all the work you've done, and thank you for taking the-

Gary Habermas: Well, I enjoy it. It's all about ministry, and if some of this can help somebody who's got the empty gas can, and you tell them it's about your glasses and they fight with you for a few minutes, but then they realize it is about their glasses, you've helped one more person, so I think it's great.

Patrick Gentempo: That's us, and thank you very much.

Gary Habermas: You're welcome.

Gretchen Jensen: I loved that interview with Gary. That was so awesome, but still to come, we have a tour of Capernaum, and also don't forget that interview with Professor Mordechai Aviam. First of all, let's talk about Capernaum. What was that like?

Patrick Gentempo: Well, what do I remember about Capernaum? The first thing that comes to mind is, it was hot that day, and we were shooting outside. It was really kind of amazing and festive, and incidentally you sort of, when you're in Israel, you embrace the elements. It's just a part of the experience, so as we showed up there and you're approaching what they really refer to as the hometown of Christ, not that he was born there, but in the three critical years of his ministry, that was pretty much where he was centered.

I'll never forget the sun really beating down on us, bringing all the equipment in, getting ready to interview Tisha about the significance of Capernaum and all that happened there, a lot of miracles, the apostle Peter's home was there, et cetera, there's a lot of really great stuff there, but as we were walking in, there is a big contingent from Africa who is coming out, and there's probably a dozen to 15 of them. They were singing and dancing and expressing their faith in this joyous way

that was contagious. A crowd kind of formed around them, so you'll see all this. It's a really light, fun, engaging experience. The town of Capernaum itself is absolutely vital to Christ and Christianity, so you want to witness what we explored there.

Then, we go to a place, and I feel really excited about this and proud of this, because there's a brand new archaeological dig. It's very recent, and it is the Biblical town of Bethsaida. There's some speculation around Galilee, where Bethsaida might be. They feel like now that this is the actual site, and the evidence there is extremely compelling. We literally go right into the dig with Professor Mordechai Aviam, who is the head of that archaeological project there at Bethsaida. Again, seeing things come to life is very exciting as a part of this journey.

The one thing that really struck me the whole way is the fact that as they're unearthing these new archaeological digs, and then when you look back historically at prior archaeological digs, what do we know? That literally 100% of them corroborate what's written in the Bible. When you look at a text that's thousands of years old, and you're seeing recent archaeological digs that are coming literally to life now, and see that they match up or that there's corroboration there, it's something that gives you a feeling that's very, very difficult to describe.

With that, I look forward to you experiencing this episode coming up. Also, I do want to again give you a heart-felt thanks for supporting Christ Revealed, for investing in purchasing Christ Revealed. This is what allows us to release this to the world free of charge, so that people everywhere can get this particular inspiration that we're providing here. Thank you for that, and we will look forward to seeing you with the next episode.

Tisha, we're absolutely in a very popular place here. Where are we?

Tisha Michelle: We're at Capernaum. This is the center of Jesus' ministry.

Patrick Gentempo: When you say the center, what does that mean?

Tisha Michelle: It means that first of all, Jesus we know was from Nazareth, and the prophets never accepted him in his own hometown. In fact, we remember he was at his famous synagogue speech, and they wanted to throw him off the cliff, the brow of a hill. The next thing we know, he disappears in their midst and reappears right here at Capernaum, which this scripture says becomes his own hometown, even his own city.

Patrick Gentempo: What's the significance of this site right here, they have a bunch of structures around us?

Tisha Michelle: Right here, we've found an ancient synagogue. We actually found the base of the synagogue from the time of Jesus. The top of the synagogue is from a later period, third or fourth century. We also found what we believe to be the house of Peter, which is just behind us.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow, so Peter's house, we're right here by the water, so obviously it would make sense that he lived here, because we're right by the water. He was a fisherman, and it all kind of ties together.

Tisha Michelle: Right, Peter actually, we know from scripture, that Peter was from Bethsaida, which is another one of the villages that saw most of the miracles of Jesus. Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum saw most of the miracles of Jesus, yet how sad is that that they were all cursed for their disbelief?

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Tisha Michelle: We know this was a fisherman's village during the time of Jesus, but very significant in the ministry of Jesus.

Patrick Gentempo: With the walls of the first century synagogue, is it presumed then that Jesus probably spoke in that synagogue?

Tisha Michelle: Many, many times, right; if John 21 the last verse says there's not enough books in the world to contain what took place here, in those three years, he just had three years of his ministry, can you imagine in his own hometown how many miracles took place here, and how many times he must have taught in that very synagogue?

Patrick Gentempo: So this is basically characterized as the hometown of Jesus, not where he grew up, but where his ministry was-

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: And where he resided.

Tisha Michelle: This would have been the center of his ministry, and people ask why this particular town? Well, there were over 200 villages here in Galilee that he could have chosen, but I think one of the most important things for this particular town is its location. You have to understand, when Herod Antipas ... First of all, Herod the Great died, and then his sons take control. Now, Herod Antipas got the area of Tiberias, and Herod Philip got the area of the Golan Heights.

There was a customs house right here on the main trade route at Capernaum, so you would have to go through a customs house to cross into territory to territory. We're crossing from here into the territory of Herod Philip. Now see, Herod Philip was a lot more lenient than Herod Antipas. Remember, Herod Antipas was the one that had beheaded John the Baptist. Jesus first of all would have had a lot more leniency and freedom to minister here and teach.

Second of all, we just talked about the trade route. You have to understand that also, Israel is like a land bridge. This land bridge connects Asia, Africa, and Europe. Basically, anyone in Biblical times that possessed this territory controlled the trade in the ancient world. This trade route had trade and caravans coming up and down all the time. First of all, he has the freedom to minister in the territory of Philip, and second of all, it's like a super Internet. People are coming

through and seeing this peripatetic or traveling rabbi, and he's teaching, and the blind are seeing and the paralytic are rising and the deaf are hearing. News spreads like wildfire down that trade route, and it really is like a super Internet. All of a sudden, you have people flocking, and 5,000 people and not enough food to feed them.

Patrick Gentempo: So, when Christians are on a pilgrimage, this is kind of a vital area for them to visit if they want to really experience the land that Jesus walked on, where he performed his miracles, where he ministered, where all these things happened?

Tisha Michelle: This is it. The tiny little triangle of those three villages saw most of the miracles, and so this is a very significant place for Christian pilgrims to come, to see where it all took place. If you want to get technical, 95% of the Bible took place in an area of 150 by 50 miles. Here, we're talking just a few mile triangle saw most of the miracles of Jesus.

Patrick Gentempo: Now, there's a statue over here also for Peter, about building his house upon this rock. What's the significance of that?

Tisha Michelle: Right, well we know in Matthew 16, Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven. That took place in Caesarea Philippi, also in Philip's territory, Caesarea Philippi. That is not at this particular location, but obviously the house of Peter was uncovered here, and that's why the statue was here.

Patrick Gentempo: So, they built the structure over what looked like the ruins of the house of Peter.

Tisha Michelle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patrick Gentempo: Why did they build a structure over it that way? Kind of, how does this lay out, because there's kind of the house, and there's the synagogue that's behind the house. How would this have all laid out in the time of Christ?

Tisha Michelle: Well, first of all, the house was much smaller than what we're looking at. You can see that behind us is the church that was built. It was built much later. This is a modern church, but it actually is over the house of Peter underneath, which is a small cubicle. We believe that was the house of Peter, due to ancient inscriptions. Now, you will see when you go down that there is an octagonal structure that goes around the house of Peter. That's from fourth century church, fourth and fifth century churches that were built around it.

When the early Byzantines built churches, when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 324 A.D., they built churches in octagonal shapes. That was to venerate what was holy in the center, in this particular case the house of Peter. Now, next to the house of Peter, you'll see there's a big area which is called the insula. That is an extended family dwelling, and you can see several homes, probably 15 families live there, but the house of Peter is just one of those cubicles, just one particular house.

Patrick Gentempo: Just one of the ... I looked over and I said, "Oh, that looks like kind of a big house." That's actually, he was just one little piece of that.

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: There were all these other families that were living around.

Tisha Michelle: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: When we look at the ruins from the fourth century synagogue you said, but the one below it is the foundation, did they just build a newer synagogue on top of the old one? Is that how that worked?

Tisha Michelle: They did. Now, the Jewish people always built the synagogue in the same place. It was in the focal point of the city. It was the most important building in the city, and so if the synagogue was to be renovated or destroyed, they always built the synagogue in the same place. In this particular case, you'll see that the base of the synagogue from the time of Jesus was actually black. That's basalt stone. Now, behind us are the Golan Heights. They're inactive volcanoes, so basalt stone is a local stone that's dried lava. That is what the synagogue was built of during the time of Jesus.

The synagogue on top here, you'll notice, is a beautiful white synagogue, limestone. It's not a local stone. By the third and fourth century, there was a mixed population of Jew and Gentile, and the Jewish population wanted to make this beautiful white synagogue in contrast to the rest of the city or village, and that's why they built it in a different color stone.

Patrick Gentempo: Right, but they put it right in the same place, because that's the place where they traditionally would put a synagogue, even hundreds of years later.

Tisha Michelle: That's right.

Patrick Gentempo: They sited them that way, so is this actually where the church started?

Tisha Michelle: Well, if you look at the house of Peter, first of all there's several things that could have happened there. One, we know that Peter's mother-in-law was healed of fever. That could have happened right there in that church. Another thing that we know that happened here in Capernaum is that the paralytic was lowered through the roof and healed. That could have happened right there. It could have been where Jesus stayed, and it could have been the first church, so very significant. This is where he called his disciples, and yeah it was basically the first gathering place for Jesus and the disciples.

Group: (singing)

Patrick Gentempo: Professor, thank you for inviting us here, and for your time. Can you tell us a little bit about your background?

Mordechai Aviam: I'm an archaeologist. I'm teaching at the Kinneret College, in the department of the study of the land of Israel. I'm an archaeologist in Galilee for the last 40 years, digging mainly what we call classical archaeology from the Hellenistic third century B.C. to the Byzantine, sixth, seventh century C.E. I was focusing on Byzantine churches, and then on the second temple period Judaism in Galilee. That's the field, ancient synagogues, that's the field I'm doing for the last 40 years.

Patrick Gentempo: Where are we right now?

Mordechai Aviam: We are now at a site that's Arabic name is el-Araj. Its Hebrew name is [Hebrew 01:24:20], which means the house of the [Beck 01:24:22]. Beck is a name in Turkish for a very rich person. This land, the entire valley, Bethsaida Valley, between the Golan Heights in our back and the Galilee up front, he owned it. In late 19th century, beginning of the 20th century, he built here a farm and a palace for himself and his family, and he came here every winter. It's a nice place to be in the winter, a winter palace, rather than in Damascus. That's the origin of the Hebrew name.

There was a little palace over here, two stories high building, white with a red roof, stood here from the end of the 19th century until 1955, with steps leading down to the Kinneret, to the lake, a very nice place. In the end of the 40s, beginning of the 50s, it became a Syrian military outpost. There were Syrian soldiers here. It was the border between Israel and Syria until 1965, until the Six Day War, the Jordan River was the border.

The Syrians had attacked many times the Israeli shipping boats on the lake, and therefore in 1955, the Israeli army attacked many of the Syrian outposts around the Sea of Galilee. One of the units came over here and blew up the building, which was the headquarters of this camp, and retreated, of course. In 1967, the Six Day War, the entire area was conquered including the Golan Heights. Since then, Israeli archaeologists were able to visit the place. This place is known from the end of the 19th century as one of the candidates for Bethsaida. Therefore, from the end of the 19th century, when scholars were interested-

Patrick Gentempo: You say when the candidates; it was known that a place existed called Bethsaida, which means home of fishermen?

Mordechai Aviam: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: So they were searching saying, "It must be in this area somewhere," so you came looking for, trying to find the arch ... Now, when was the dating for Bethsaida?

Mordechai Aviam: Bethsaida is first mentioned in the New Testament as the home place of three of the apostles, Peter, Andrew and Philip. If we put it in historical frame, let's say that around the 20s, 30s, we speak here about the Jewish village. Then, Josephus Flavius tells us about the place. He was here in 66, he became the governor of Galilee for the first Jewish revolt against the Romans. He came here in 66, and he is a little military clash

between his units and the soldiers of a group of the second from the Golan. He said that the battle was near Julius, and that he was wounded, he fell into the swamps, so it's a swampy area, and here we got to the name Julius.

He tells us that in the year 30, King Herod Philip, who was the former king of the Golan area, the son of Herod the Great, decided to upgrade the position of the village Bethsaida, made it a palace, and renamed it Julius, after the daughter of the emperor. That's the story from Josephus, which we believe, there is no reason not to believe that it is true. Therefore, that's the place we connect Julius and Bethsaida, and the location. The location is very clear. It's the swampy area near the Jordan. That's what Josephus tells us. It's in this valley that is later on called Bethsaida, and we can be sure that we speak here about the Jewish village in the first century B.C., first century C.E., which was upgraded to be a palace around the year 30.

Scholars were looking for the remains of a Jewish village and the palace from the early Roman period. From the end of the 19th century, there were three candidates. First one is a site called et-Tell, which is a tell, a Biblical tell, just about two kilometers northeast from us, about two kilometers from the shore of the sea of Galilee. The second one is called [foreign language 01:29:13], which is two kilometers to the east, and the third one is el-Araj, which is the site we are in right now.

Each scholar in the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century, was fighting or suggesting which site is the better. Some of them were sure that et-Tell is the better one. It's high on a hill, and some suggested el-Araj, mainly because on the surface there were a lot of architectural fragments like pillars, bases, capitals and things like that, which has appeared mostly during the year. 30 years ago, a colleague, a friend, Rami Arav, started excavating at et-Tell, and discovered houses dated from the late Hellenistic to the early Roman period, late second century B.C.E., first century B.C.E, and first century C.E. Therefore, he suggested that et-Tell is Bethsaida. Now, as a scientific result from the excavation, there are houses from the first century, therefore this is Bethsaida.

He continued to dig for 30 years. They finished the Roman period, they got down, he found a very, very interesting Old Testament city, an Arminian city, very interesting, but not connected to our story, of course. During those years, he continued calling it Bethsaida, and therefore it got its name even in the scientific world for showing in the public. Even the minister of tourism of Israel, after 1967 of course, when it became Israeli territory and after the excavations, put a sign on the main road saying "Bethsaida," showing et-Tell.

On the site, they developed some touring trails and some signs, so everyone knows that this is Bethsaida, but the disagreement continued all these years. There were other scholars suggesting that it's wrong, mainly because it's far away from the Kinneret, but also because there were no remains at all of any urban sphere. There are two houses that look like rural villagers' houses, fishermen houses. Therefore, the debate continued.

Two years ago, we did hear the first season of excavations. Even before that, we did a little survey, and even before that, others did some surveys here, and there were first century early Roman period pottery found on the ground. Rami Arav suggested that these pottery came from floods from other areas, and therefore it's not an early Roman site. He said that in the early Roman period, el-Araj was submerged two meters below the Sea of Galilee, and therefore there is no Roman layer here.

He even strengthened his opinion by coming here and digging. Some 25 years ago or so, he came here and dug two squares here. He said, "We've found here Byzantine structures, including Byzantine pottery. We dug below it and found nothing, therefore the site was inhabited only in the Byzantine period."

Patrick Gentempo: Which was much later.

Mordechai Aviam: Which was fifth, sixth century A.D. This was the situation until we came to dig, and we came last summer. It says the Kinneret Institute for Galilean Archaeology, which is part of the Kinneret College, and the Nyack College in New York. My colleague, Professor Steve Notley, with American students and volunteers, we came here and dug last year. This was the first season, and we discovered here two layers. The upper one was 13th century A.D., which in Israel is the crusader period. There was a sugar factory here. Below it, there are remains of Byzantine period houses, which we suggest to be probably a monastery that existed around a church, and this was over.

We, of course, did not get to our final target. The final target in archaeology is to get into virgin soil. Only when you get to virgin soil you can say, "Okay, there is nothing below it," whether it is natural rock or virgin soil, meaning no pottery in the soil. We didn't finish, so we came this season, this last summer. We took off some of the floors of the Byzantine period, and we dug below them. Some 20 or 30 centimeters below the Byzantine floors, we hit Roman period layer; a meter and a half of layers that included Roman pottery only, no Byzantine, no [inaudible 01:34:06], only Roman pottery, which is late first century B.C., first century C.E., to the third century C.E., including two coins.

One of them is [inaudible 01:34:20], a silver coin from the time of Emperor Nero, the year 65, and another one, which is Roman from the second century. First of all, we can say that the site of el-Araj is back on the stage. It did not exist only in the Byzantine period, but it existed also in the Roman period. Here we have back again another candidate, like et-Tell, that was some kind of a village in the first century.

The surprise came in the very last day or two of the dig, of course. As always, we hit a wall. It's a small area, we dug only about a meter of its length, but it's a substantial wall, well-built. Beside the wall, we found chunks of white and black mosaic floor. Beside it, we found a few clay bricks. One or two of them are hollow bricks. This type of bricks exist only in Roman bath, Roman period bath, not baths that belongs to Romans, but baths from the Roman period; very typical, as well as mosaic floors.



Therefore, we can clearly declare we've found a Roman period bath house. The other result is that bath houses did not exist mostly in the first century, at the time of Jesus, the time of Josephus, bath houses were not very typical to villages. It is more part of an urban sphere. From this small find, we can come up and suggest, we do not declare, we suggest, that we have the first evidence of urban life in the Bethsaida Valley, and therefore we suggest that this is Julius.

If this is Julius, it was also Bethsaida. That's the results from our second season. We do believe that if we, and we will continue next season or seasons, we'll have more evidence. If we will find here other urban sphere material, like pillars, like streets, like public structures, we can come and declare we found Julius, and if it's Julius, this is Bethsaida. We have here the competition between two sites, one et-Tell, with rural buildings, no urban remains, and this site, which has Roman period layers including urban remains. I think we're in a good position to suggest that there is a chance that we discovered Julius, and if it's Julius, it will also be Bethsaida.

Patrick Gentempo: And this is a very recent find, so how long ago did you actually-

Mordechai Aviam: Last month.

Patrick Gentempo: Last month?

Mordechai Aviam: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow, so what's right behind you? I see that we have a dig right behind you. What is in there?

Mordechai Aviam: In the dig, we have mainly what you see on the surface, are walls from the Byzantine period, we believe from the Byzantine monastery that was here. Below it, we have layers of soil. Some of them are floods of the Jordan River. Probably Julius stopped to exist somewhere in the third century A.D., maybe because of floods. It did not continue into the very late Roman period, and not into the Byzantine period. But, in the Byzantine period, someone in the Christian empire, someone identified the place as Bethsaida. They didn't know that Bethsaida is here, because already covered was two meters of soil.

The tradition and the suggestion was that this is the place of Bethsaida, and therefore, beginning of the eighth century, a pilgrim visited the area, wrote in his memories. His name is Willibald, and he said that after he left Capernaum, which is west from us, he went eastwards and he found et-Bethsaida, the church of Peter and Andrew. I think we've found the church. This is probably part of the buildings we see behind us. Deeper inside, which you can't see from here because it's two meters deep, is the wall with the remains of the bath house.

Patrick Gentempo: What do we have here?

Mordechai Aviam: This is the place where we found the remains of the bath house. We can go down carefully here. We are standing on a Byzantine period floor, a sixth century floor, sixth century walls. This is the floor from the

Byzantine period. This is the wall from the Byzantine period. We dug below the floor. We took all the barriers from here, dug below the floor. What we see here are layers, some of them are floods from the Jordan River, but then they all yielded Roman period pottery, nothing later. Therefore, it all happened in the Roman period.

Down there at the very bottom, you can see stones. These stones are a wall. In front of the wall, we have pieces of mosaic floor and the bricks, so these are the remains of the bath house, dated to the Roman period by the pottery and coins above you. What we have to do now is open the entire area, and to get a very large area dated to the Roman period, and expectations to find more of the bath house and other elements.

Everywhere you walk, there are ancient remains. Israel is the first place in the world for ancient sites per square kilometer, more than Egypt, more than Greece per square kilometer, in the whole country, but this is the holy land. Everything you walk on, this land below it, you have the remains of ancient periods, the holy land for the Jews, Christians whatever.

Patrick Gentempo: You said that in Israel, there's more artifacts per square-

Mordechai Aviam: Ancient sites.

Patrick Gentempo: Ancient sites, okay.

Mordechai Aviam: Israel is the first place in the world for ancient sites per square kilometer, because this state is small. There are many, many, many more in Egypt, but the state is very large. We have the largest number of sites per square kilometer.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow, it really captures the imagination, seeing this. It's amazing.

Mordechai Aviam: That's why it's good to be an archaeologist in Israel.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, you're used to digging archaeological sites from a different period. What's the experience like when you started to find these things from the time of Jesus, kind of where, one of three places people would have guessed it was, and these things start to unfold? What's the experience like for an archaeologist?

Mordechai Aviam: I dug already a site from the first century in western Galilee, a well-known and important site, that existed at the time of Jesus. As a matter of fact, it is three miles away from Nazareth. Its name is [foreign language 01:41:22], that's the place that fought against the Romans, the first battle between Jews and Romans was at [inaudible 01:41:27]. This is the place where Josephus Flavius fell into the Roman hands, so I know the material of first century.

It was a very interesting experience for me to dig a site which is connected directly into Jesus' life, Jesus' movement, and the expectation of the world, of the Christian world, to find something from Jesus' time. That was a new experience for me. I'm an archaeologist. I am not dealing with religion at all. I'm not writing any articles on

religion. I write an article about Jewish synagogues and Christian churches, and the minute we made this press release that maybe we have Julius/Bethsaida, it was a tsunami, really never happened to me.

The world, the press in the world, the television, everyone, radios from the entire Christian world, every day for a week since our first press release on Sunday, for a week I had every day I think like 20 calls from different places in the world, from Japan to Brazil, of journalists who are interested. That's touching the nerves of the Christian world, which is a very interesting experience for me. People ask me, "So, what do you think? Will you develop here a pilgrimage?" I said, "I'm not a developer. I'm an archaeologist. I'll find what I'll find, I'll analyze what I'll analyze. I will try to prove whether it is Bethsaida/Julius or not, and then I'll leave it to the other developers, maybe with the government or others."

Patrick Gentempo: It's interesting, because you approach this as a scientist, right, and a very traditionally trained scientist, to approach some place like this. Then, it becomes a crossroad into the religious world, and now you find as a scientist, you've got the religious world really looking at you in a very enthusiastic way, with anticipation. Does that change kind of the way that you work at all?

Mordechai Aviam: No.

Patrick Gentempo: No?

Mordechai Aviam: It did not.

Patrick Gentempo: Good.

Mordechai Aviam: And, it will not. I'm an archaeologist, I'm doing archaeology. I'm doing scientific archaeology for the last 40 years. I excavated four pagan temples, four Jewish synagogues, nine Byzantine churches. I also surveyed a mosque, so I'm digging the history of this land. On this land lived pagans, Jews, Christians, and I'm digging the history of this country. Therefore, I'm not attached to any of the actual remains. I'm not attached to the walls as a religious object. I'm digging it scientifically, trying to date it and give the scientific world, on one side, the evidence. I'm trying to give laypeople the evidence in a different taste.

They are not really interested if the rim of the pottery is like that or like that. They want to know, who lived there? If I found a mikveh, a ritual bath, I'll say, "This is Jewish." If I found a church I said, "This is Byzantine, Christian." We are digging here a Jewish village from the first century. It was Jesus and Peter and Andrew and Philip, who are all Jews, who lived there in the village, that developed into the Christian religion, let's say 100 years or something like that later. Now, everyone is interested in this piece of land, which makes me very happy. I'm very happy to do scientific excavations, and share the historic information with the people around the world.

Patrick Gentempo: Why did you decide to become an archaeologist?

Mordechai Aviam: It's interesting, maybe even unusual, but since I was 14, I knew I'm going to be an archaeologist. There was nothing else I ever wanted to do, and even up until now, some years before my retirement from being a faculty member, I think first of all it has to do with things I learned at home about it. My father was a journalist, so we were traveling a lot in the country, and he was one of the establishers of this state. He was in the Jewish undergrounds against the British, so it was always a mixture of closer past and far past. We were travelling from place to place, and everywhere I saw some piece of pottery and glass, and I started to pick it up.

A guru in a place in the city of Ramat Gan, near Tel Aviv, which was about less than a mile from a very ancient site, and I was walking there a lot, collecting pottery and flint and things like that, mainly very interesting. The world in the late 50s and 60s, without television or Websites or WhatsApp, was books. I was reading a lot of books, and mainly historical books. I think that my first dig, I did when I was 15. Since then, I knew that's what I'm going to do when I grow up, and that's what I did.

Patrick Gentempo: So, because we talk a lot about history, and the land here just tells a story. For you, is it fascinating that there's historical texts like Josephus, there's the Bible, to be able to actually unearth things that corroborate what's been written so many years ago?

Mordechai Aviam: This is a very popular way to look at what I'm doing. Most of the people think, "Oh, it's a part of the 'Indiana Jones' stories." For the people, archaeology looks like something that we are reading the sources, if it's Josephus or the Bible, and we look, and we dig to find what is in the books. We're doing exactly the opposite. I don't come to dig here with the Bible or Josephus in my hand. I come to dig here with my tools, which are a pick and a hoe.

I take out the pottery. I analyze the pottery. I clean the coins, and I read the coins. Then I said, "Okay, what I have here is first century. Let's see what was here in the first century," and I go to Josephus, and I go to the Bible. I read it and I say, "Okay, that's what we have." It is exactly the opposite way. When you have the results, and I write a book or I write an article or I'm interviewed on the TV, the story is combined. Therefore, the people, that's what they see in their life. They think it goes together. It's different courses that are not completely parallel, but somewhere at the end they meet together and merge together, and we have the story, archaeology and history.

There is no doubt, let's speak about new evidence about first century, okay, Josephus is with us. The book as we understand it from the 17th and 18th century, people are reading it and analyzing, historians today are reading and re-analyzing it, but there's no new chapters that were found. Every day, in every dig, we have new evidence that are coming to light, and they are illuminating the history. That's what it does. It illuminates the history, and that I think is exciting.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, so how long is this particular dig that you're in now, how long do you think it's going to last as far as the project?

Mordechai Aviam: There are two components. One is my wish and will, and the other one is money. Archaeology is low tech. We have to come here with cars. The students have to fly over here. We have to feed them. We have to clean the coins. We have to mend the pottery. We have to sit down in the libraries to read. We have to fly to good libraries, and to sit down and read. The entire process, from the dig to the final report, costs a lot of money.

If I will have every sum of money I want, I will make a project here for the first five years, and dig every summer for four weeks with about 40 students. I think that in five years, I can open an area which will be large enough to get into very good conclusions, whether it is or it is not. What we discovered a month ago, we are working on funding. If we'll have the funding, we'll do here a project of at least five years. Let's assume that in those five years we have here a little bit of a street, with pillars on the side, and the very beginning, a corner of a theater, a Roman-style theater, like in Tiberius, where Herod Antipas, the brother of Herod Philip, built. Let's assume we find here a huge wall that I can say, "This is a corner of a theater," and now we have to dig the theater; five more years, and a few more billions of dollars. That's how it goes in archaeology.

Patrick Gentempo: How does it get funded?

Mordechai Aviam: This?

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Mordechai Aviam: With some money from Nyack College, with some money from donors.

Patrick Gentempo: The government doesn't fund?

Mordechai Aviam: The Israeli government doesn't fund scientific excavations. The government supports excavations which will go into development of the minister of tourism, for example. People probably know by chance Theopolis, maybe the largest excavation in Israel, or Jerusalem. Some of it are funded by the Israeli government, but they are not supporting any scientific excavations. We have to look for money ourselves.

Patrick Gentempo: If somebody wanted to donate to this, how would they do that?

Mordechai Aviam: They put it in my pocket.

Patrick Gentempo: Write the check to you personally?

Mordechai Aviam: Yes, that's better, then I can drive here with a good car. If someone wants to donate for excavations, these excavations I assume they can be in contact with my colleague in Nyack College, Steve Notley, and he's organizing the funding. It's a mutual project. He's a historian of the New Testament, I'm an archaeologist. That's a great mixture, by the way. Students are coming here to dig. They get their credits from the university.

We do hope, I think, after this huge noise that was made last month with our release, I think that we will be, I hope that we will be able to find someone who is very interested to support a scientific dig. We are not digging here to look, to find the footsteps of Jesus. We are looking, we are digging her scientifically to identify a settlement from the first century, which if it will be identified as Bethsaida Julius, can be an important location, an important message, to people who are looking to be inspired from the connection between the land and the belief.

We are digging here in soil. We are very dusty after a day, sweaty. That's 45 degrees centigrade. At 12, when we finished, in July, that was 45 degrees. This soil is, I would like to say and it's very clear, this is the soil of the holy land. For me, it's the soil of the state of Israel, with its historical treasures of different people, different beliefs and different religions. At the very end, if we have results that can be identified, I'm really happy that people will be able to connect their religions feelings into a site like that, and it's all around us. It's in Capernaum, it's in [inaudible 01:54:04] that they have the pagan, it's in Corsi and Jerusalem and Bethsaida.

In every Jewish synagogue, people are coming, visiting, having their religious feelings, and they connect something which is in the brain, or as we say in the heart, okay, but you do know that the heart is only a small pump, but in their brain. Bring their feelings in front of stones, or as I like to call it when I teach, I call it let the stones speak.

Patrick Gentempo: Why do you only dig for a small part of the year, especially probably the worst part of the year from a temperature standpoint?

Mordechai Aviam: Summer is not the worst part of the year, especially not in Israel. I love summer. I also like winter. Our winter is wet and our summer is dry.

Patrick Gentempo: I see.

Mordechai Aviam: Completely dry; there are no summer rains in Israel. That's something different from your world. Some places in the U.S. have also dry summer. If it's wet, we cannot dig. Wet soil is not good. I cannot sift it, for example, to look for coins and other things. You cannot dig when it's pouring rain on your head. Therefore, that's the first reason why we don't dig here in the winter. Second is that, which is very important, is that the professors and the students are on vacation. They are the working power. We don't hire workers. Now, I'm digging another site and I'm working with workers, but that costs more money. We need the students, we want the students. We want to teach the students. We want them to get their credits to be BAs or masters' or PhDs. We use them as workers, and this is their vacation.

They are coming here, and I can tell you from, I'm working with American students since 1992, every summer almost, 99% of them came back home and said, "This summer changed their life." There is no problem working in the sun. It's not in the sun on account of the tarps, in the heat. You sweat, you're dirty and you go to the shower and it's gone. You feel even better after that. It's physical work, it's very good for you. You cannot die from heat. If you drink water and you put your

hat on, you can die from cold. Therefore, Israel is a great place. It's not too cold. You can die here from other things, especially drivers.

Patrick Gentempo: I love it. First, I wish you the best of luck, even though I'm sure you don't believe in luck, but I wish you well in the dig, and what you find, and I hope it's very satisfying. I also wish you well in getting the funding you need to make sure that it happens. I'm sure a lot of us would like to see you find out what is truly here. I also want to say, I appreciate your time and efforts in inviting us here to share this experience with you.

Mordechai Aviam: My pleasure.

Gretchen Jensen: I love these interviews, because I feel like I'm taking a virtual tour. Hey, coming up tomorrow on episode five, what we have is an interview with Arie Bar-David, also Greg Koukl and the Jesus Boat. What is that?

Patrick Gentempo: Well, since you asked, I'll start with the Jesus Boat first. It is pretty much the, lack of a better term, cutest story that came out of our Israel trip. It's a story of these two brothers who are amazing human beings, who had their prayers answered. They lived by the Sea of Galilee, and they were hoping that they would discover or find something of great significance, and one day they did. I don't want to tell the whole story here, because I want you to see it unfold in the interview itself. It's an amazing story. It's really a miraculous story, but what they found was this first century fishing boat from the time of Jesus, on the Sea of Galilee. Just watch that particular interview. That segment is really precious. I think you're going to really enjoy it. It's light-hearted, and it's fun.

Now, we also are starting with our interview which may be the vote for the most inspired interview of the entire series, is this interview with Arie Bar-David. We went to his, I'll call it a compound. I think at one time they referred to it as a Christian kibbutz, but it was outside of Jerusalem in the hills of Jerusalem. This man has such a message and such experience, that literally you're going to get chills as he's describing his experience. He fought in five wars. He's got a message and a mission that is something unlike anything I've ever heard. The power, the intensity, the connection to what he's saying, we talk about Christ Revealed. We talk about the history. We talk about the evidence, and we talk about the inspiration. Let me tell you, in this interview, the inspiration is inescapable and profound, so I can't wait for you to see that.

In addition, we have part one of a three-part interview with Greg Koukl. Greg Koukl is a big, big personality in the Christian apologetic community. He has a radio show. He started an organization called Stand to Reason. Why is it three parts? Because there is so much to get out of that mind and to bring to you, that I felt was so important. We're in a terrific set, so I think visually you'll enjoy that interview. More importantly, I really start to recognize something I didn't understand before we started this project with Christ Revealed.

That is that there is this incredible community of Christian intellectuals, who have such searing arguments to defend their faith that I never

knew existed, that I literally had my jaw on the ground sometimes, listening to the logic, the communication, and how they defend the Christian faith. I think a lot of people know that the Christian faith is under attack in a very big way throughout the world, so having these people in the apologetic community being able to communicate this is something that is essential.

When we talk about history, we talk about evidence, we talk about inspiration, this next episode has it all. I want to once again just say thank you. The support for Christ Revealed has been significant. Your support in being here with us is very important to all of us who care about this information, and want to see it get out into the world.

The people who have chosen to own Christ Revealed are making this project possible, so that we can get it out into the world at no charge, but owning Christ Revealed is something that's very critical, because there's such a density of information that can be revisited over and over again, and can be shared with other people. It's something that the world needs right now, so thank you for the support. I look forward to being with you in the next episode.