

CHRIST REVEALED



Episode 6

Transcript

Gretchen Jensen: Welcome to episode six. Now, if you're like me and you've been following along with the whole Christ Revealed series, you have fallen in love with all of the interviews and the many travels that we've been able to take you on. On today's show, we will have an interview with Dr. Randall Price, also with Father Kelly, and part two of the series with Greg Koukl, but right now let's talk about the interview that you had with Dr. Randall Price.

Patrick Gentempo: Dr. Randall Price is this bigger than life character. He sort of reminds me of Indiana Jones, but he's a serious scientist. He's an archeologist. He dug at Qumran, where they found the Dead Sea Scrolls, and he was the lead archeologist out there for a while. We sit in what's referred to as a museum that literally is his private collection of biblical artifacts that he's dug up over the years. If you want to see history come to life in a very compelling way, watch my interview with Dr. Randall Price. It's extraordinary.

Then we talk to Father Kelly. Now, I don't know if Father Kelly drinks a lot of coffee or where he gets his energy from, but I'll tell you one thing: His energy is contagious. He is so excited about what he's doing. What is he doing? There is a first century synagogue unearthed right next to the Sea of Galilee, which it is certain that Christ would have taught there. Secondly, with Father Kelly, in the middle of this dig, where I am with him, they found what is considered maybe the most important archeological find in the past century, which is the Magdala Stone, or they pronounce it out there Magdala Stone, which is a 3D model, basically, of the second Temple, so this is something that is significant from a historical standpoint and an archeological standpoint. It's pretty exciting to have Father Kelly take us on a walk, show us what was found, talk about the significance of this, and knowing that you're standing in a place that Christ taught from. It's pretty significant, so you're going to get a lot out of that. I think it will give chills up your spine.

Then, lastly, we have part two of my interview with Greg Koukl. If you saw part one, you realize that this is an incredible intellectual experience that brings precision and logic to the understanding of the Christian faith. Make sure you engage in that. I really look forward to taking this journey with you through these interviews.

Patrick Gentempo: Dr. Price, thanks so much for taking time for us today.

Randall Price: Oh, it's my pleasure.

Patrick Gentempo: Give us a bio sketch on you.

Randall Price: Well, I teach here at Liberty University. I'm a Research Professor. I also am Curator of our Liberty Biblical Museum, which is the setting we're in today. My background is both in teaching Biblical Studies, Jewish Studies, and as an archeologist. For 10 years, I was Director of Excavations on the Qumran Plateau, which is the site of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Now, I'm involved in what's called Operation Scroll. We're looking through the caves in that area for more Dead Sea Scrolls

that were hidden in jars and will help reveal more information about the Bible.

Patrick Gentempo: That's got to be exciting to be on the hunt for those things, I'd guess.

Randall Price: Well, it's exciting, because it's a kind of unparalleled opportunity. The last 60 years, the politics in the region have prevented people getting to those caves. I think, generally, people thought there was really nothing left to find, because all of the excitement was in the '40s and '50s. Like talking about faith in general, many people think there's just nothing to find. It's all been done. This is a world yet to explore, particularly in the Dead Sea and in other places, as well.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, well, you talk about things to find. I mean, we're in the museum here, and we're surrounded by artifacts, and I have now come to find out this is your personal collection. Is there a sense of how many artifacts are here?

Randall Price: Well, there's about 2800 artifacts here, collected over a period of 40 years, with the primary purpose of bringing the world of the Bible to the United States, so people can see that and see for themselves that the faith that they have is based in history, based in a context of a real place.

Patrick Gentempo: Now, was your faith in place before you became an archeologist and started going out there and collecting these artifacts?

Randall Price: It was. In fact, that's what stimulated me to do this. I and my family moved to Israel. I studied at the Hebrew University. Part of that was studying archeology, and I just became aware of how, in a sense, shallow my own faith was. I had a storybook faith. It was traditional. It'd been taught to me all my life, and I never had challenged myself to really think, are these things true? You just assume them. Now I'm in the context, living context, of history, where all these things actually took place. I'm beginning to see, if you could take the actual evidence and put it together with the documents that you already knew, how much more that would strengthen your faith.

Patrick Gentempo: That's a very interesting characterization, storybook faith. That is really the chasm that you cross, because now, when you're holding artifacts from the period ... For people, who don't have that experience personally, which is the majority of people, obviously ... Maybe they understand the Old Testament and the New Testament. They've learned from the Book, if you will, but when actually you've got your hands in the dirt, and you're pulling the stuff away, and it starts to corroborate what's in the Book, what's the experience of that like, or what does it do to you personally?

Randall Price: I think that we're more than just one sense. We have many senses. When we read, in fact, the New Testament, 1 John 1 tells us, "Things which we have heard with our ears and seen with our eyes, things which our hands have handled concerning the Word of Truth."

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Randall Price: For me, putting my hands in the dirt and pulling out an artifact that hadn't been touched in 2000 years that could relate to a certain event that I read about in the Bible is extremely moving, because now, my already emotional, spiritual senses are combined with the real, objective facts that are in the ground. I had to put that together. The sense is that this really happened. If it really happened, and it really happened to people here, and I'm like those people, then the faith they had is the kind of faith I should have, not just ... I'm living in a world, particularly when I'm down at the Dead Sea, lowest spot on earth, two inches of rainfall a year, up to 130 degrees in temperature, nothing there ... Its just barren, and people survived there. They trusted God there.

That's where Jesus was tested. Moses was tested. David was tested. You read about all these people living there. For me, it made me say, when everything is stripped away, can I really survive just by faith alone? Can I really? I think that's been translated to other parts of my life, when I've lost things that I really depended on, and there was nothing left, except a basic trust that God cared for me and He had spoken promises to me. Is that enough? I think that real world experience helped me, where I was, to make the leap, as it were, to my own experience.

Patrick Gentempo: It's not only just validating intellectually, but on the spiritual level and the emotional level, it creates a foundation or a confidence there that's maybe beyond what you would've had otherwise?

Randall Price: Oh, yeah. Well, confidence in one sense, that my faith is not placed in objects that come from the ground or in archeology or in science. My faith is placed in the living God, who has spoken, and I have trusted His Word, and I have seen in my own experience that trust is valid. On the other hand, those types of evidences, which the Bible itself said I could expect to find ... I mean, it was written in a context where this was normal. The people, who lived in the Middle East ... This is where the story unfolded. They saw these things. If I go there, and I see those things, then all of a sudden, I enter into that element of the experience.

In a sense, there's a bit of confirmation. It simply reinforces--let's put it that way--that what I had believed is on a solid foundation. My faith is founded on facts. I already had the faith, but now I have the facts that support it. In one sense, it holds it up a little further.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, so this is where it starts to get, I think, interesting, because you've spent a lifetime collecting this evidence, right? There's certainly a history that's written in the Bible. There's a lot of scholarly work around the corroboration, relative to that, and then there's the archeological work that also starts to validate, and a lot of this has come in, relatively speaking, recent times. You start to see that the level of corroboration is pretty high. When this evidence starts to stack up, from your scientific standpoint--and I also know that you have a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Texas in Austin--what conclusions have you drawn, as far as relative to evidence and proof, and how it ties into all of this?

Randall Price: Well, I think everyone comes with their presuppositions. While I believe in an objective faith, that is, faith in an object outside of myself, I bring myself to that object. The sum total of my years being in a home with parents or not with parents, being subjected to good people, bad people, seeing maybe religious people, who have gone astray or gone wrong or treated me wrong ... All these things I bring to it. There is a reluctance, many times, to accept evidence, which is clearly there. The evidence is there. We interpret it differently, based on those presuppositions.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Randall Price: Everyone lives by faith. You get up in the morning, because the sun has risen, and you expect it to rise. You never question that. You get in your car and you turn on the engine, expecting it to start, as it always does. You have no idea about the mechanics or the engine or anything else. You just take that by faith.

You may be driving to the doctor, because you need an appointment, and he's going to look at you and write out a prescription for you. Basically, you can't even read that. You don't even ask him his credentials. They're hanging on the wall. "How many people have you successfully treated?" You just take it all by faith, and you do it. Then, you go to a pharmacist and you take that piece of paper, and you hand it to him, because you can't even read it, and you expect him not to poison you to death, but to give you something that actually will help you.

We do that in our normal life all the time. That's simply faith, because we're predisposed to accept these things as normal in our culture. It's just part of what we've always accepted. I think, when we come to questions of faith ... Who is Jesus? What is His claim? What does He ask of us? How does someone have a personal relationship with Him, which He does ask of us? What's the evidence for that? We're going to bring those presuppositions, but many times our presuppositions are forced to change, by that evidence. In other words, people may have a huge presupposition against the supernatural. "I don't believe it, can't happen," but then they meet people, who are walking miracles, which thinks it happened, and that challenges those presuppositions, so they begin to move a little closer toward, I would think, more of an objective understanding of the evidence itself.

Patrick Gentempo: It's very interesting, as you said, that people can have these inflection points in their life, where something moves them toward shifting one view of reality that they had, and now they move into a new one. With the work that you've done ... Well, let me ask you first, why did you choose archeology? Why'd that become the passion for you?

Randall Price: Well, I think for the very thing we're talking about, that, in my case, I came as someone who already was trained in the Bible and history, and then I came into the living context. I began to say, "If other people could see this, what I've seen" ... Because it emotionally changed me, a lot of my presuppositions. Back in my day, it was the flannel graph.

People may not understand what that's about, but it's putting little cutout figures on a board to tell a Bible story.

Jesus was dressed in pressed linen, and he walked on carpet grass, and I thought that's the way it was. Then I went to live in Jerusalem, and it wasn't anything like that. The culture, the style, everything was so different from what I was used to in my American western culture. I realize now, as I come to the Bible, that's what I see. That's where they lived. To try to read the Bible through western eyes, with a 20th, or now 21st century perspective, is to miss it. I needed to go back into the world of the Bible to understand the message, when it was given, how it was given, and the language it was given, and then understanding the truth there exported to the 21st century, so I could live it out. That's why archeology became important to me, because it puts those details and pieces together to help us explain the text more accurately.

Patrick Gentempo: Now, what you're doing, since everybody can't go to Jerusalem, you're bringing artifacts back here, so they can come visit right here in the western world.

Randall Price: Exactly.

Patrick Gentempo: Have you witnessed any changes in people that were profound, because they've come into contact with these artifacts or with this direct contact with history?

Randall Price: Yeah, many times, which is why, for the last 40 years, I've done tours to the Bible lands, taking people to encounter this personally. I see how it changes them. It's different for different people, but it's moving from their comfort zones, their understanding of things, to seeing the way things really were, and then examining their own faith to say, is it a real faith? Is it the way it really should be? Do I have, as I mentioned earlier, storybook faith or have a real faith? That's what this experience can do.

Not the same for everyone. Some people can just hold an artifact in their hand, and, all of a sudden, the connection's made with two, three thousand years of Holy Spirit, to say, "This came from the land of the Bible, from the place where biblically that's happened, and that's enough for me." Many people need much more, but that experience, in itself, is life changing sometimes.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, I mean, I might be asking that question somewhat selfishly, because we're about to go to Israel. We're taking the whole film crew out there, and it's going to be my first trip there, so I'm really looking forward to it. In your direct experience, what is the most profound or most important things that you feel like you've uncovered or discovered, while you're in the Mideast?

Randall Price: Well, every archeologist hates to hear that question, because, for them, it's always the next thing that they haven't found. We don't think of ourselves as Indiana Jones on a quest to loot and find, but, as a scientist, and that's what an archeologist is, for me, it's uncovering the past in such a way as to explain to the present what happened and why that's important, significance of things. Now, as I said, for 10 years, I

was Director of Excavations at Qumran, which is a settlement from 2000 years ago. It existed during the time of Jesus, during the formation of the early church, a very pivotal point in history.

It was a settlement and a group of Jewish people, who were unknown in history, until we found the Dead Sea Scrolls. They write about very interesting things. They give us a commentary on certain verses of the Bible. One is about a Messianic banquet. In Isaiah chapter 25, in verses 6 through 9, it talks about the final day when Messiah comes, and He defeats the enemies of Israel, and a victory celebration is held. It describes all of this in very interesting terms.

When you come to the Dead Sea Scrolls, someone wrote a commentary on it. They actually wrote, but it wasn't just a commentary. It was instructions on how this should be observed. They assumed they were living at the end of days. The Roman Empire was there. They needed release from their enemies, so they expected this to happen in their day. Messiah was coming. They write this, about how, when Messiah comes, He's going to sit down, and the men of renown will come together, and they will have this celebration, bread and wine and other things, and it's all explained.

Well, in the 10 years of excavation at Qumran, we began to dig up the remains of a communal meal, which we believe relates to that very thing. We found a wine jar sealed, never opened in over 2000 years. We found these animal bone deposits, but they were a meal. They were cooked. Then they took the remains of the meal, with all the vessels they cooked the meal in, all the vessels they served the meal in, and they went and buried them.

I'm thinking, what kind of people, in a place so desolate, where pottery and things is not cheap, would take all of this and go bury it somewhere? Well, only people who had a very strong ritual concern. They believed that this was a sacred meal. It was for a very important purpose, that if you used those dishes again for a common meal or a common purpose, it would ruin it, so they could never use them again, so they took them and buried them.

By the way, it's the only place in Israel or in the world, that we know of, that this thing actually happened, but now I can connect a biblical passage, people who believed that passage, actually expected to be part of that, and then the remains of their observation of those meals. I'm the only person that really has that evidence still today. For me, that's a very fascinating thing, to combine biblical text, history, and personal experience, because I was involved in all of this.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, so what was the timeframe to unearth this whole thing?

Randall Price: Well, 10 years, basically. We did excavate the entire plateau, where these things were hidden.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow, so that's a 10-year passion project.

Randall Price: That's for sure.

Patrick Gentempo: I guess it's a game of centimeters, as you're getting in there, over time, to uncover all this stuff. Let's talk about the team that's with you. In a general sense, what are their backgrounds and orientations, and what's the spirit of this excavation like?

Randall Price: Well, every archeological team has people with certain expertise, people who can--shall we say?--be an area supervisor and control how a dig should happen, people who are involved in administration to make sure everything works well, and then people who can document those finds, and photographers, and all that. Then, we have simply volunteers. This is where it gets exciting. I bring students. People come from all walks of life and join me in this, and they make discoveries for the first time in their life.

Let me tell you a story. There's a man in his late 60s. He came. We start at 4:00 in the morning, and it was already getting hot by five or six o'clock. He hadn't had breakfast. He was using a pick ax, trying to dig, and he just said, "Look, I'm giving up. I can't do this anymore." He said, "I'm too old. I'm going to change my flight ticket and leave today."

I sat down on the edge of the balk. This is the excavation square. I just prayed. I said, "Lord, I want to encourage this man today. He came all this way and did this. Can You do something?" It was amazing, the very next time he stuck his shovel in the ground, he pulled up this beautifully preserved oil lamp.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Randall Price: He said, "What's this?"

I said, "You found the find of this year, for sure." Perfectly preserved, and there's only been one other like this that was found in a partial form in one of the caves of Qumran, so it's a very important thing. He got his picture holding it. It ended up on the cover of a magazine. He stayed two more weeks, so just the passion and the experience of actually making a find just changed him from disappointment to confidence.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow. With these volunteers, is that what they do? They come and cycle in and out every couple of weeks or couple of months?

Randall Price: They come for the time that they can come. We train them, and they do a certain job, and then some make repeat trips, over and over, through the years. I've actually seen people, as a result of doing this, go now back to school, become an archeologist, get the passion. Some people, we say, are getting bit by the archeological bug, and others don't, but you can see them, as they're working. You can't even get them to stop for the day. They're so excited.

Patrick Gentempo: That's great. Now, what's interesting, and another thing that's probably, I think, important to talk about, is the context of being there, because it is culturally extremely different, right? The environment's very different, the seasons, the temperature. Everything seems to be different there, and so if you're trying to understand the Bible through

reading it and living where you live, let's say, in the western world, and then when you go, and you exist there, there's a different contextual experience you have that can deepen the understanding. Talk a little bit more about that.

Randall Price: Well, let me say, first ... I mean, we have sometimes the feeling that the Bible's a grab bag. It's whatever I want it to mean. It can mean anything I want, and so it doesn't really matter who it was written to or when it was written or where it was written, I'm applying it to my experience.

Well, there's a devotional sense of application, which is correct with that, but we can't get there until we understand that God chose a place, and He chose a time. In the Bible, it tells us, "In the fullness of time"--or at the right time--"God sent his Son to be born of a woman and be born under the law," when that was in effect. It says He came to His own people. He was born as a Jew, because God had chosen Abraham and his descendants, the Jewish people, to be the bearers of His revelation and to extend that to the world.

If you are going to get that message, you're going to have to go to them. He came as part of a whole line of promises made to them, that they could expect One who would come, One who would be the seed of Abraham, One who would be of the line of David, One who would be ultimately born in Bethlehem. All these promises were made, and He came to fulfill those. When we go to approach the Bible, we have to approach it on its own terms, not our terms. I have to go back to that place. I have to go to that context, either by getting books to help me understand that, watching films like yours to help understand that, or to actually go there myself. Then, we're in the place where we can put it all together and say, "Okay, now I can see things through the eyes of those who wrote the Bible, lived the Bible." Once I understand it as they understood it, then I can take the next step. How should I understand it for myself?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, with all your experience and talking about evidence, as it keeps mounting up over time, you've got a handbook of biblical archeology. Can you tell us about that, and what's it describe?

Randall Price: Well, in this particular case, I'm walking through the Bible, picking out verses that need explanation from the archeological world, again, trying to put the text back into a context, so we can understand it better. That's where we have, not only places, but we also have artifacts that illustrate those places. I mean, some are very key, because they will mention the names of people in the Bible, or they relate to the historical figures in the Bible.

For instance, when we talk about Jesus, the historical Jesus, He had a Roman trial, and so you have the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. We have the inscriptions of Pontius Pilate that he left for us. We have the Jewish trial of Jesus, Joseph Caiaphas, and we have the ossuary or bone box of Caiaphas, with his name on it. These are people related to Jesus personally.

Patrick Gentempo: Let's dig into that for a second. In the bone box, and this is where maybe the debate comes in, from your point of view, you feel that it's very validating, the discovery of this bone box, but others might say, well, they're not convinced yet. Talk about both sides of that, so we can see how these things are discussed.

Randall Price: Yeah. I talk more in terms of plausibility than proof, because you'll never be able to prove things absolutely. I mean, there's some cases where there's just no doubt. We have the name of the place. You're digging there. It says it. What else could it be?

With the Caiaphas issue, here we have a family tomb. We have, obviously, a wealthy family. There were 12 ossuaries or bone boxes, where they put the bones of the people the year after their death, in these boxes, to make room for burials in the regular niches. One of those boxes is very ornate. It's carved with palmettes and rosettes, and all kind of things that were very typical of someone of rank. In the box, there is the bones of, from carbon dating, we know, someone about 60 years of age, and we know that written on the box, inscribed on it, is the name Joseph Caiaphas. There's two inscriptions of that, spelled somewhat differently.

We know, from the New Testament, there was a man named Caiaphas, who was the high priest at the tie of Jesus. We know that, from Josephus Flavius, a first century Jewish historian, he writes about a man named Joseph Caiaphas. This ossuary has both of those. Even though there's not a title that says high priest, and even though we don't have clear, direct evidence, there's nothing that ... How could you, in a case like this?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Randall Price: From the ancient world that we know, we have a lot of names. We have a lot of descriptions. There is no other Caiaphas that we can match to this. This is the only one we know. He was a wealthy man. He was a man of rank. He was an older man. All of this fits the picture.

What evidence am I willing to take, to validate something in my mind? Well, I already come with the presupposition that we have an historical character, named Caiaphas, and that he was there presiding over the Jewish trial of Jesus. He actually organized the plot against Jesus, we read. By the way, ossuaries, these bone boxes, have a very narrow lifespan. I mean, they started maybe about a hundred years before the time of Jesus and end just shortly after that, so a very short period of time.

We have something from the right time. We have someone with the right name. We have someone with the right conditions, in terms of the nature of this tomb. Why would I not, then, at least be plausible that this is the Joseph Caiaphas that is mentioned in the New Testament. Again, your presuppositions are brought to that, but I'm more predisposed to accept it than to reject it.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, well, I mean, there's a high level of likelihood here, right? As compared to saying that there's a remote possibility, I mean, this seems very plausible.

Randall Price: Again, why would someone not accept that evidence? Well, that would lead them to the historical Jesus, and ultimately to the claims of that historical Jesus upon their own life, which might be very uncomfortable, not willing to want to go there or concede that or to be examined, in terms of their own faith, and so they would want, as much as possible, to try to make that evidence less than it could be, in their case.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, and that's interesting, usually because they'd say they're looking for reasons to deny it or to say that it ... to invalidate. I think, if somebody were to come at it objectively, you could say ... Could you say this is 100% certain? No. Is it a very high degree of likelihood? I mean, there's so many pieces that would have to add up, the probability of it not being him is very low, seemingly.

Randall Price: I don't think people consciously come out to refute something. There are some, where their career is built on a certain premise that they have to attack a contrary premise in order to retain their standing, everything that they know and everything that they are. It is true, when we talk about Jesus, particularly Jesus ... I mean, you can talk about Buddha, Confucius, anybody you want to in history, and it does not seem to have the same effect on people as Jesus does, because He's the only one that said, "If you believe in me, you have eternal life. If you trust me, you take my word." No one else made those kind of claims. No one else claimed to rise from the dead. No one else claims to be able to take you to Heaven, simply for believing in Him and what He did on your behalf.

I think, at a certain level I may not perceive, for most people there's a threat, and it's a challenge, so they are going to be more diligent about trying to unravel this than trying to simply accept it. You'll see this. You'll see people who have faith. Most people come to me and say, "Well, I don't need that. I don't need to find anything. I'm fine. I just believe what I was told." Other people say, "Well, that's gullible, and you are someone who really can't be serious," but they are, because their faith does not require that amount of evidence, in order to be confirmed.

Patrick Gentempo: What's interesting is you had faith before you started in your career, but still got excited about it and have eminently succeeded in a career that keeps building evidence. It's not like you had, maybe, the need of it, but I guess somehow it still was stimulating to you.

Randall Price: Well, I mean, your faith grows. There was a time when I didn't have faith. I didn't believe. I started down a more scientific path. There were a lot of things I could not explain, that I didn't know if I wanted to call them supernatural, but they were intriguing, but the Bible wasn't part of that. When it became part of that is I had someone challenge me to consider its claims and to believe. It took a while, but eventually I found that the Bible was trustworthy, and if the Bible was trustworthy,

its message was trustworthy, and, therefore, I could trust the One, who gave that Word, which was Jesus Himself.

That moved me into a whole different level, in which there was a relationship. There are people ... I remember the old story about Albert Einstein's wife. They said, "Do you understand Albert's theory of relativity and all that?" She said, "No, I don't, but I know Albert. He can be trusted."

Now, see, I don't know everything that there could be. I'll never have enough knowledge in all these various fields to be able to say I know absolutely and for sure, but I've come to know the One, Who I believe is Life, and Who has spoken, and I think His Word is true, and I've found that He can be trusted. I come with that trusting factor, when I come to His Word.

Now, there's a lot I don't understand. I'm seeking to understand it, and I've tried it. That's how my faith grows, as it starts very small, and experiences, especially in trusting God and seeing Him come through for me, testing me, and knowing that it actually is a test, and if I react correctly, I grow even more. Then, all the evidences and things that I have--evidences not just from archeology, but from the general sciences and from other parts of life--give me, I guess, a firmer foundation than what I had. The foundation was enough to support me. It's secure, but it just gets more solid, and I feel that since that, these things are true.

There was a philosopher, named Francis Schaeffer. He talked about true truth. In that sense, it's true, but it's true for me. It's objectively true, but it's also subjectively true, in this case.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes. It's a faulty premise to think that science faith are mutually exclusive things.

Randall Price: Well, let's take ... I mean, science is very much a changing discipline. You go back, even five years in some science, and it's old hat. We know things are very different now. The way people operated in the Medieval Period is barbaric, and that people maybe 20 years from now will think things that we do are barbaric. Our understanding of astronomy, I mean ... We just don't know. Recently we had an eclipse of the sun here, and you think, well, the sun is so big, and the moon is so small. How in the world does it cover the whole sun?

Well, the sun is 400 times larger than the earth, but the earth is 400 times closer ... The moon is 400 times closer to the earth than the sun is, and that proportion works just right to make a solar eclipse, right? That's not observable everywhere in the universe, but it is here. For me, Someone designed that. That's not a coincidence. That's not an accident. It wouldn't work if it wasn't just right. These kind of evidences that come all the time in the world we live in, from the sciences, continue to impress me that my faith is genuine.

Patrick Gentempo: An area that you also have particular expertise in is the Old Testament or maybe the linkages from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

Randall Price: Right.

Patrick Gentempo: Can you talk about that area of your expertise?

Randall Price: Well, the Old Testament, or we call it the First Testament, or simply in Jewish terms the Tanakh: the Torah, the Nevi'im, the Ketuvim--three parts of the Bible: the Law, the Prophets, the Writings--this is the revelation that God gave, through time, to the Jewish people to then disseminate to the world. In Genesis 12:3, Abraham is told, "I will bless those who bless you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." People often wonder, wasn't it odd of God to choose the Jews? Why them? Well, it wasn't all about them. They were simply servants to be used to bring the message to the rest.

It's always ... They're a means of blessing to the world, and so that message that was given has an endgame, that is to bless, to bring God's salvation and His peace on earth, and all the things people want are wrapped up in that package. God has a plan. He reveals that plan down through time. It starts with this First Testament, the Old Testament, all the way, for me, back to the original man and woman in a garden, as it says in Genesis 3:15, there, that the seed of the woman will be in conflict with the seed of the serpent, who deceived her, and ultimately, while the serpent will bruise His heel, He will crush his head.

We see that expanded in the Bible, but that's a very initial promise of the fact that a woman will have a Child. That Child will be the one who saves them from the curse, from the evil one, ultimately. He will Himself be wounded in some way, and I think it's a fatal wound. When a snake bites you, you're pretty much on the way out, but, of course, He must recover from that in order to ultimately crush that one and have the victory.

We have, already from the very beginning of the Bible, a picture of what God wants to do. We see the outline. Then, He starts to fill it in. Abraham is chosen, and He says, now, of your seed there's going to be One, so it's a seed of woman. Now, it's a seed of Abraham, who is the father of the Jewish people, so it's going to be Someone Jewish.

Then, it tells us that there is the tribe of Judah and that there's going to be a King that comes from the tribe of Judah. Then, it says from the tribe of Judah, there's a family, called the house of David, and now that seed is going to come from that line, as well, and it will be there forever. Then, you get all these pictures of this is One, who we'll call Him a Branch that branches out, a righteous Branch. It talks about Him as a King. It talks about Him as a conqueror. It talks about Him as One who's going to ultimately bring the hope of Israel together. Then, it talks about a place where He'll be born, Bethlehem, a house of bread, so that this One, who ... The place of feeding, place of sustenance.

All this came together, as we move through history, to Jesus of Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem. He was born of the lineage of Abraham, born of the tribe of Judah, born of the house of David, and, in fact, then goes on to proclaim Himself the King of the Jews. When he died, that was the words written by His enemy, the one who punished

Him, written on the placard above His cross: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

Of course, the story doesn't end there. We believe it goes on, with the resurrection three days later, and then the promise that "I will come again," and all these things that He laid out in the Old Testament He would do. He would establish a kingdom and He would rule over Israel and the nations. He would bring peace on earth. War would end. All kind of glorious things would happen, and that's what we wait for.

For me, if I connect these dots, going down this, shall we say, highway of promise, that if you take this by faith, and then you ... What happened? Take it by faith. Oh, this happened, and now we look back on these things, all of having happened in One Person, at one time, and we say, now, if it happened literally, and it happened as precisely as it did then, can I not then trust what He said will yet happen?

We actually have a passage of the Bible that talks about that. It says you have your faith made more sure, because of the fulfillment of these Messianic promises. Now, I look forward to the coming of the Messiah again to fulfill the rest of what He said He would do.

Patrick Gentempo: Now that, obviously, you have such a great grasp on this, when you're in Israel or Jerusalem, and you are interacting with people of other faiths, what's that dynamic like? Because I'm sure you speak to other people, who are principals in their faith, and that you have these interactions as you're doing your work, what's that like?

Randall Price: Oh, I would say there is a common core. For those who respect the Bible, we have certain basic principles, basic beliefs, that we share. Again, those presuppositions come in. Yeah, I happen to have a Jewish background [inaudible 00:43:35], but for Jewish people, what you find is that now they have the experience of persecution, and pogrom, and the Holocaust, and all of these things, much of it in the name of Jesus, much brought about by what they called The Church. The result is, the last thing they want to hear or deal with is Jesus. To them, many Orthodox Jews, it's still a swear word. They'll never say, "Jesus." They say, "Yeshu," which means, "may His name be accursed." His proper name is Yeshua, built off the verb yeshua, which means "to save."

In the New Testament, it says, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Again, all that is, shall we say, obscured by the emotional, historical experience, persecution, and suffering under the cross, under the name of Jesus, all these things that have happened. There's a point, at which we share certain things, but there's a point, at which you just can't go. Only as someone has looked at the evidence themselves and began to honestly look at it, despite all this emotional, historical baggage, can they move beyond that. Of course, there are thousands and thousands of people who have.

In Israel, there are congregations of Jewish people, Israelis, who believe in Jesus, even though it's counterculture, and they're considered renegades, and even blamed for the genocide of their own people, because the typical Jewish view is if you believe in Jesus, you're no

longer Jewish, as though somehow a magic transformation happened, and you changed somehow. You can be an atheist and be a Jew, but you can't be a Christian and be a Jew. It's, again, tied to this whole history that's there. Those people, who step back objectively and are able to look at it, have been able to embrace a Jesus, who their own culture and people reject. With them, of course, I share a different affinity, because we both had our own journeys to Jesus and understand what that's about.

Patrick Gentempo: Some of the more stimulating artifacts that you might have relate to coins. I know you have silver coins back there that would have been the same types of coins that Judas would have received.

Randall Price: Yeah, I mean, I have basically every coin of biblical significance. I have a coin that has probably the star of Bethlehem on it. I have coins of Augustus Caesar, who was the emperor when Jesus was born. I have coins that Jesus would have used and referred to, the pruta of Alexander Jannaeus, which they call the widow's mite, the small coins, the denarius. All these things are mentioned in the Bible, particularly ones that are related to Jesus' ministry and life: the coin used for paying taxes, the silver shekel, the Tyrian shekel; the half shekel, which was the one that was paid Judas Iscariot, as the money paid to someone for the value of a slave, is what it was, so that's a silver coin.

I even have coins related to many things related to Jewish history, one of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who proclaimed himself divine. It's written on the coin like that: Antiochus Epiphanes, God Manifest. This is behind the one, who defiled the Temple, and the Jews rose up, the family of the Maccabees, and defeated him, rededicated the Temple. The word for rededication is Hanukah, so this is the whole event of that. I have coins minted by Titus and Vespasian, the father and son, who destroyed the second Temple, after the time of Jesus, and many coins that have "Judaea Capta" on it--Jews Captive--and show them.

I mean, in coins, we have a whole history of these events. That's exciting in itself, because they have often a date and time. I have a coin--many of them, in fact--minted by Pontius Pilates, and one's dated the very year of the crucifixion. Here's a coin by the guy, who condemned Jesus to the cross, the very date it happened. Those things are stimulating.

Patrick Gentempo: To say the least, and you also have nails, I think, right?

Randall Price: Oh, we have many of the Roman crucifixion nails from the first century. I have one of the barbs from the cat o' nine tails they used to scourge a victim, such as Jesus was scourged with. Roman dice ... The Bible tells us that the Roman officers gambled for His seamless garment. They didn't want to tear it apart, so they ... I have those kind of dice. The kind of spear that pierced His side ... I have that exact spear, not that spear, but one like it. They call it the Spear of Destiny. It has a whole history. That's not the one I have, but I have one like it, and a number of other things like that, related to these events, because they still exist. People sometimes don't realize that so much from the ancient

world is still there. It can be unearthed, and, therefore, the present can connect with the past in very exciting ways.

Patrick Gentempo: Again, these are all pieces of things that are written about in the Bible, and then they exist in material fact, and the reference, like you said ... Even things, like you're talking about, the barbs, it's like, wow, this is written about, and here they are.

Randall Price: Yeah, but think about it. An average person looking at this says, "So what? This is a piece of metal." If you reduce it to that level, that is all it is, but now you bring the document, which we believe is a document given by God, which explains for us, the One, God Himself, coming into time to take our form, to pay for our sins, to do an act, and that's history, and then, now these things are related to that. It becomes something far more exciting, where, some people, as a matter of faith, even would consider that a relic and venerate it. I wouldn't, but, I mean, their faith and emotions drive them to see that as something of that importance. Again, it's what you bring to it when you come.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. You have a PhD in Near East Studies from the University of Texas, a secular university, and you now teach at a Christian university. What do you feel like the trends are for university students, in general, especially those, who maybe were born in Christian families, but maybe the university experience starts to alter their view? What are you observing?

Randall Price: You know, it's very different in every generation. I mean, we had the Generation X. I'm the Baby Boomers, but then Generation X, and then you had the Millennials, and Generation Y is with us now, and then Generation Z is coming up. I mean, this is the first year, in which we had people come into the university, who were not born in the 20th century at all. Something like 9/11, for many kids, is going to be ancient history, I mean, something they never experienced or know about.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Randall Price: Now, we also come from a world that is biblically illiterate. Public schools do not teach that. They even purposely try to distant themselves from that. They come with a worldview that is formed from your culture, primarily, mainly from video games and television or whatever, movies, whatever you get, peers, and it's pretty mixed up. We, here, have a biblical worldview.

Now, one of the first courses every student takes is biblical worldview, to help them understand the various worldviews that exist out there, how this one differs, and the significance it brings, to orient yourself into a relationship with the living God, Who made all these things, because if you're part of that creation, you're really not right, until you're rightly related to the One Who made it and sustains it. Then, to think you could actually know that One personally and be guided by Him is an amazing thing. Then you begin to look at all your sciences and subjects and arts and everything through the lens of that biblical worldview.

Now, being a law enforcement officer is important, because God made you to serve and defend and protect; or the arts, because God is a designer, and He's created things. You feel energized by knowing that the God, Who made all things, has given you the gifts and skills to do this, and music, and all these things, and, in my area, just to dig deeper into the understanding of the background of this through archeology and sciences.

Here, we try not to steal faith, but to instill faith. I think the statistics are something like more than 80% of kids, who were raised even in a homeschool, Christian school, good church, lose their faith when they come to college, because it's never been their faith. It's been the family's faith, the parents' faith, the church's faith. They've never, themselves, come to the place where they've had to grapple with these issues, come to a firm decision for themselves.

Tradition won't do it. You've got to have truth. They come to college, and if you don't give them that, in fact, if you hide that or, shall we say, rail against that, as many universities do, feeling like we've got to keep church and state and everything separate, and the worst thing on earth is to be religious ... Well, in a sense, I think religious is a problem. I'd rather have a relationship than to be a religious person, but-

Patrick Gentempo: What is that distinction?

Randall Price: Well, a religion is my attempt to try to please God, to find out Who He is, and, in some way, find out what He wants, and to hopefully do something that'll help me in a relationship with that One. A relationship is where God took the first step, and He came to me. He revealed Himself, and He said, "I love you." I responded to that love and to that invitation, and, as a result, a relationship is formed. I find there's really nothing I can do to please Him or to gain His approval. That's all done. He did that, and so I live in a relationship that is already secure and confident. I simply grow in that relationship, and that's faith.

Patrick Gentempo: That's a great distinction. I've not heard anybody make that distinction, but I think it's a very important one.

Randall Price: I think, as our ... We have about 15,000 students here at Liberty. As many, many come with no faith at all, and parents want them to come here, because that was a safe environment, conservative environment, whatever it might be, and they're challenged concerning faith. Some may never believe. Some struggle to believe, but many do believe.

We have a lot of students, who come to faith in their first/second years, and then it just is a life-changing thing. Now, looking at all of life, and the choices ahead of them, from a biblical worldview, it's not where can I make the most money? What job is the job of the future? What's going to get me ... It's not me anymore. Now, it's what does God want for my life? God gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him. They've learned to do that.

We have many, many, many students, who, whether they're in our medical school, in our law school, whatever they're ... They see

themselves as servants, and they go into that profession to try to help, to serve, to better others rather than themselves. In the process, of course, they help themselves, too. That's what it's about.

Patrick Gentempo: That's fascinating, a fascinating journey you just took us on. With maybe just a little final word, so what do you see for the future, the future of Christianity?

Randall Price: Christianity has a lot of challenges, basically from within, the problem of a cultural shift, in which very few things are believable. We have people who want to believe. We have people who need to believe, but they don't know what to believe, and they have to find people who are believable. Unfortunately, we're running churches like a business, rather than demonstrating real love and concern and sacrifice for others, and not as believable as it used to be. People are looking for that. They're fleeing from the traditional churches, because they're not finding that there.

I think that we have to change our image, our brand, in one sense, to be what we were called to be. As we do that, as we conform more to Christ and who He is, and we reach out ... I mean, it's not about being comfortable making it our own. No, no, it really is about we're no longer our own. We were bought with a price, and we're to glorify God with our bodies and all that we are. When you start making those kind of choices, that's contagious. People see that and say, "I don't know. Nothing else has worked for me. I'm frustrated. I've got everything, but I don't have that. How do you get that?" Let's put it this way. People, who are genuine, who are believable, then they can lead someone to real faith.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, well, I think it's been fascinating to have this conversation with you, and I appreciate you taking the time, because I know how busy you are. I think what you've shared is going to enlighten a lot of people.

Randall Price: Good. Thank you.

Female Speaker: Welcome back to the studio. Now, before we get back to episode six, Patrick, can you tell us how we can actually take this home and own it and have it a part of our lives and maybe share it with other people, too?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, we have multiple packages that we created for Christ Revealed. We really put a lot of thought into it, saying that different people have different needs or different wants, when it comes to this information, and this entire production that we've created. There's a range of packages that are there. My recommendation is that you go there, take a look at what's available, understand that this is material that will stand the test of time. Years from now, you're going to want to refer back to it.

What makes it unique, and this is the comprehensive experience that we had through Christ Revealed, is that we don't just look at history. We don't just look at evidence. We don't just look at inspiration. Literally, we covered the range of all of it with luminaries, who have deep

experience that could give meaning to all this in a way like I've never seen before.

My recommendation is to find the package that's right for you. I also know that this would make an incredible gift that will keep on giving. For people that you care about, that you think would be inspired by this information or moved by it, it's something that you should think about getting for them, also. Just like you saw with Dr. Randall Price, this is witnessing information that you'll want to revisit over and over and over again. Owning it is something that allows you to do that. I really want you to enjoy the rest of this episode.

Patrick Gentempo: Tell me about this room.

Father Kelly: Well, everybody looks at the picture.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Father Kelly: They're drawn by it, and they miss the floor. Pat, we're standing on the first century floor, where Jesus would have walked. We needed a spot to put a chapel where all of the Christians could pray. This would be, in principle, an ecumenical chapel. We talk it the Encounter Chapel, because the Evangelicals have a problem with the word ecumenical, which the main churches do not have.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Father Kelly: If you look at this, it's an unusual chapel. Have you ever seen a chapel designed like this?

Patrick Gentempo: No, so what is it that-

Father Kelly: If you're a Jewish person, you come in here on Shabbat, and we have many secular Jews coming in here. They look at this, and they say, "Why did you guys, you Christians, build a chapel like a synagogue?" Here, we just came from the synagogue, so it's just like what we just saw, with the two rows of seating, a stone, the pillars, and the colors. We have redone the colors, tested them in a lab, analyzed them, and reproduced them. With this construct, with this architecture, we are back in the first century. You're actually standing on the first century, but we have the environment of the first century synagogue.

We have to now ask, "Well, why do we do that?" Well, our synagogue-- imagine a priest saying, "our synagogue"--has two generations, so, more or less zero to 30, and then from Pentecost until just prior to Temple destruction. Let's focus. Well, the first generation Jesus would have walked there would have been in the synagogue. I say, He would have been here more often, because He was with the people where they were working.

In the second generation, after Pentecost, who's using the synagogue? Jewish people, but among them, like you have Peter and John are going to the Temple for afternoon prayer in the Acts of the Apostles ... They

were Jewish people. They didn't stop going to the synagogue on Shabbat.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Father Kelly: In this synagogue, we would have a Jewish community, and, among them, a number of Jesus' disciples, a small number or a large number. We don't know how many. They would be in the synagogue with the Jewish people. At that time, Jesus' disciples were not divided into Presbyterian, Methodist, Evangelical, Anglican, Episcopalian, Seventh Day Adventist, the whole nine yards, nor were we alienated from the Jewish people.

Our synagogue actually is like an icon of our commonality, what we share together. We have a first century archeology of commonality. Here we have a 21st century architecture of communion, communion with each other, walking together, encountering each other, meeting each other, recognizing each other.

Patrick Gentempo: Isn't that unique in the world? I mean, I've never seen this in any other part of the world.

Father Kelly: It's beautiful to be at an original biblical site, where we captured that first century moment, and it's also translated into the 21st century, when we so need, today, to meet each other again and learn about each other.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, the common roots and common heritage seems to be something you want to promote and exhibit, as compared to try to hide and show your distinctions.

Father Kelly: Yes, I think even just think of your own children. Each one of them will want to present their individuality.

Patrick Gentempo: Sure.

Father Kelly: It's very important for the young person to discover this, but your family would never work if you and Laurie don't bring out the fact that you're a family, that even if these three kids can be at loggerheads on occasion, that we're one family, and when we've gone on vacation or we're doing something together, we're a family. We need this in humanity today. We don't need to suppress the individuality or the particular of each community, but we also need to recognize how much we share in common.

This picture is fascinating from an awful lot of aspects. I always ask people, how big is Jesus' big toe? It's huge. You didn't notice this when you came in, Pat.

Patrick Gentempo: No.

Father Kelly: Look at the toenail's broken, the dirt under the toenails, the realism and the depth. This lady is an elderly lady from Chile, and she's very ill. The story of that woman, who was bleeding for 12 years, and touches

the wings of Jesus' garment. Here, Jesus is presented with the prayer, [Child, inaudible 01:04:25] of the Jewish People, in this image.

Now, an interesting trivia, if you will, which is really not a trivia, about all of the art in Duc in Altum is that this was done by a Chilean, who was Protestant. Upstairs, the icons were done by a Chilean, who is Orthodox, of Greek and Russian backgrounds, and the main decoration was done by Maria Jesus Fernandez, a Catholic. Without us intending this or looking for this, providence brought the great streams of Christianity together to decorate Duc in Altum, at the same time confirming what we are discovering in the very stones of Magdala, that we belong together, that here we were following Jesus together, and we discovered this, also, within our Jewish roots.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Father Kelly: Part of the infrastructure of the first century port ... You can see all the port ... It extends here behind this wall that we've built, and exact same pavement. If we think, with whom did Jesus work, were they electricians or truck drivers? What type of profession were they?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Father Kelly: They were fisherman.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Father Kelly: Where do you meet fisherman?

Patrick Gentempo: At the port.

Father Kelly: You don't swim out to see them in the boat. They arrive, and you wait, and you drink your wine or a glass of beer, and then they were in at the port, right?

Patrick Gentempo: Right, right.

Father Kelly: Jesus had to walk for two days from Nazareth, and he's going to go on to Capernaum and Bethsaida on the north of the lake. We're here at the widest point of the west of the lake, and He meets a port at a town, a fish processing town. Migdal Nun in Hebrew means fish tower. The Greek name [foreign language, inaudible 01:05:59] means tossing, like tossing salad, tossing flour, tossing hay on the farm. They were tossing the fish. Strabo, the Greek historian, would have used the word [foreign language, inaudible 01:06:15], the Greek word for the tossing, when he tells us that fish from Magdala was sold in Rome. They were exporting fish. That means, Patrick, if you in Los Angeles, and you had the extreme privilege of eating fresh Irish salmon, not the Alaska stuff, so can you imagine fish from Magdala 2000 years ago, being shipped from here to Caesarea Maritima and then on to Rome.

Now, think about the fisherman on the lake. They're going to be focused on the export trade. When we saw lands and cattle at home on the farm in Ireland, we were very happy. My dad was happy when he got an extra

penny on the pound, if it was going to England or export to Europe, rather than the home market. These fisherman, I'm sure, were focused on Magdala. I mean, you have a lot of infrastructure here, probably related to the fishing industry, fish processing industry.

Jesus was with the fishermen. This was the town that He met. We have a very unique find here, as another part of this first century town. Magdala is the only complete first century town discovered in Israel, excavated in the Holy Land.

Patrick Gentempo: We're quite a ways from the synagogue that was unearthed, so it flows all the way down to here, what's been excavated.

Father Kelly: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: This is a whole town that existed here.

Father Kelly: Right. It's a big town. Flavius Josephus wrote about 34,000 people. Critics say that he exaggerated. Modern archeological estimates say Magdala had three to four thousand people, which would still make it a nice little town at that time.

Patrick Gentempo: Sure.

Father Kelly: It was obviously significant that it merited to be the scene of a battle with the Romans, and so there's actually Jewish blood probably spilled on this floor also, on this pavement, 2000 years ago, in September 67, when the Romans crushed the Jewish uprising here. Then, Jesus gets here in two day, walking, and He has another day left to walk, so why not get in a boat. The fishermen say, "You're a nice guy, and we like the way you talk. I'd like to show you my family. Come in the boat with us." We have so many boat stories, crossing to the other side, in the Gospel, so it's not difficult for us to imagine how these encounters could have happened here. That's the first thing about this room here, about this chapel.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, yeah, yeah. When Jesus came back from Nazareth, and He'd get together with the fisherman here-

Father Kelly: Pat, let me show you something outside this window. This window over here, you'll see the meaning of this floor. Patrick, a first century port, when Jesus was with fishermen, and this is on His path from Nazareth to Capernaum and Bethsaida, so many stories going in the boat to the other side ... Could it happen here? All the fishermen are concentrating in Magdala for the export trade, fish to Rome.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Father Kelly: Isn't this amazing?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, it is.

Father Kelly: Jesus here with the fishermen. They're happy campers. They just sold fish for an extra penny on the pound, and they're whistling on the boat.

They have invited Him to go back with them, and He's talking kingdom in the boat.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Father Kelly: This is ... You can get goosebumps here.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah. You found four of these, and what are they?

Father Kelly: Exactly. These are ritual purification baths. The word in Hebrew is mikvah, for one. mikva'ot is the plural. We have four: one, two, three, and the fourth one over there. They are considered by the experts here to be the best built--that would be so hard to scour--the best conserved, and also the best water supply, which comes from the Arch and the waters coming from Mount Arbel. The next set of mikva'ot, of this category, which have been so far discovered on the planet, are in Europe in the Middle Ages, in Germany and France, in Speyer and Grenoble, where they had great Jewish communities in the Middle Ages.

Patrick Gentempo: These are dated for what?

Father Kelly: They're also first century.

Patrick Gentempo: They're also first century. Wow!

Father Kelly: Yeah, we actually did a test this summer. We had ... The latest archeological test was trying to assess if there was something prior to the first century in habitation of this space, and it seems that there was not. There would also be some things here of second century, so it's possible that there was some further usage of the space, which you can see they were treasured, and this great structure is so well built and so it's ... With the mosaic floor behind us, this was a very, very special location.

There's also reports that there was a priestly family living in Magdala, which would have service at the Temple. Just like Zechariah in Ein Karim, where we remember him today, the father of John the Baptist, he went to the Temple to do his service. There were priest families around the country that went to the Temple for a week, or whatever, of service. One of those families lived in Magdala.

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, wow.

Father Kelly: This is the understanding. This could help explain the intense ritual consciousness of the Magdala people, as evidenced in the synagogue and the mikva'ot that we find here.

Patrick Gentempo: Nice.

Father Kelly: The significance of these mikva'ot is also very powerful for us, if we look at the theology of baptism in the New Testament. Saint Paul is talking about us dying in Christ and coming to new life in Christ. This was a totally Jewish practical theology of the mikvah, because you became Jewish, not by instruction, not by circumcision. That didn't cut

it. You needed to go and do the mikvah and go into the water and come out a new man, with a new name, and all your past was erased. We think of our terminology in the New Testament, a new man, and the old man that's dead with Christ on the cross. We didn't come from nowhere. We're here. We have a crossroads here of Jewish and Christian history.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, that's amazing.

Father Kelly: Yes.

Patrick Gentempo: Let's go look at the synagogue.

Father Kelly: Pat, look at this, all the pottery here that the rain has washed up. Look at this.

Patrick Gentempo: This is actual first century pottery?

Father Kelly: First century pottery. Look at this here. I already know I am not an expert at all about these lives. This is first century pottery, for sure, and this is just washed by the rain. This is a town that was lived in, and people broke their pottery jars. I mean, they just fell, you know?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Father Kelly: They had an accident, and that wasn't nice, but their pottery shards remain here.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Father Kelly: It's amazing. Hey, Pat, why don't you just go down those steps. You're not afraid of scorpions and snakes are you?

Patrick Gentempo: I don't prefer them, but what's down here? Wow. What am I seeing down here? It seems like it's a cavern that bends around a corner.

Father Kelly: Yeah, actually there are more steps there still. They're filled up in the meanwhile with some runoff sediment from the rain, the winter rains. Basically, we have a shaft for the extraction of water, to replenish the pools that you're going to see when you come outside here, Pat.

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, wow.

Father Kelly: You survived the hole, Pat.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Father Kelly: Bring out your bucket of water with you and pour it in here.

Patrick Gentempo: That's how they did it.

Father Kelly: Probably. Then, the standing theory here is that this was for the fish processing industry [inaudible 01:13:19] Magdala. From here ... This is one unit. Look at how well built this is compared to the other surface, so there was a lot of traffic here. The idea is that here we have six units

from here down to the plastic, and we have other units on the side. One standing explanation is that this is for the fish processing industry, where they were tossing the fish, salting the fish for export.

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, wow.

Father Kelly: There are some other archeologists, who dispute this now, so we're going to have some fun for a while, until the dust settles on the arguments.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's great. We're surrounded by the synagogue here, and this looks like approximately the center, so is this the place where the stone was found?

Father Kelly: Exactly where you see it. This is a replica. Here we have the menorah, and the golden altar underneath it, even though that wouldn't be placed like that in the Temple, the entrance to the Temple, with the columns and the arch, and then this is the crown jewel of all the discovery. The crown is the synagogue of this first century town. That's because of the mosaics we see here. The mosaic and the unending pattern mosaic, and then we have all the fresco samples, even on this pillar here. All the pillars were frescoed, plastered and frescoed. Then we have, really, the most beautiful first century synagogue of all those discovered. Besides that, it's the first synagogue, where Jesus would have preached.

Patrick Gentempo: I was going to say, there's almost no doubt that Jesus preached here.

Father Kelly: Pat, you'd have to be an academic acrobat to bring about arguments to prove that Jesus was not in this synagogue. He would walk two days from Nazareth on His way to Bethsaida, another day's walking, and Capernaum, and this was the point of contact with the lake.

Patrick Gentempo: He had to pass this area.

Father Kelly: Exactly, so there's one very, very strong reason in order to get there. Secondly, there's a port here, and to go from here by boat across is much more attractive than hiking all around the lake.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Father Kelly: Especially if his mama was with Him or some older people were with Him.

Patrick Gentempo: There's always talk of Him crossing to the other side.

Father Kelly: Absolutely.

Patrick Gentempo: What are the chances that this synagogue existed when Jesus was here in His earthly-

Father Kelly: Well, it did. From the coin there that we just saw from the year 29, this coin was found inside, the year 29.

Patrick Gentempo: Oh, wow.

Father Kelly: It was found inside. We have about 2000 coins here in the discovery.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow.

Father Kelly: The pottery is absolutely first century pottery. There's also another argument that Jesus was here, and I think that it's very powerful, is that this is a fish processing town, and we know that Jesus wasn't with truck drivers.

Patrick Gentempo: He was with fishermen.

Father Kelly: He was with fishermen.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah.

Father Kelly: We have a fish processing town, both its Greek and its Hebrew [inaudible 01:15:49] nicknames derive from the fish processing industry, just like Detroit is called Motown. This was called Fish Tower and it was called Tossing Town, related to the tossing of the fish for export, salting them for export to Rome [crosstalk 01:16:04] the port of Caesarea Maritima.

Patrick Gentempo: Right, right, right.

Father Kelly: Sociologically and geographically, we are in a place that absolutely fits the picture, and Jesus meshed and integrated with the fisher community, and this is their key town for export. Here, we're sitting in an extraordinary treasure for the Jewish people, a first century, the most beautiful first century synagogue, the first synagogue ever excavated where Jesus would have preached, and also, after Pentecost, where disciples would have gathered on Shabbat with the Jewish community, also being Jews themselves. Here we have a crossroads of Jewish and Christian history. Here we can look each other in the eye and say, "We have been broken apart since, but we belong here. Here are our roots. Here we have so much we share in common." This is a great call that we need for our time.

Greg Koukl: We want acceptance. We want to belong. All of these things are part of what God offers through Jesus. It fits.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow, that was extraordinarily powerful, especially given the audience that you were in where you're communicating this. Did you have a sense of the audience? Could you feel them? Was there any response to it, maybe after the event?

Greg Koukl: You know, Patrick, I was really surprised about the audience, because I expected massive hostility. Maybe, at the time-

Patrick Gentempo: Can I just interrupt for a second? You expected massive hostility, but you went anyway, so tell me about what runs through your mind, when you're walking into something and saying, "I expect this to be a hostile environment."

Greg Koukl:

Well, I'm nervous, but I'm well prepared. In other words, I know what I want to say, and so usually I get my material out, and then the stage is set for an interactive Q&A. That's when it can get a little bit more difficult. Maybe if I went back today, it would be different for me, but what happened with that group, and it's hard to tell why it was, but that group was just paying attention. I don't want to say riveted, but they were really paying attention.

When I got to this point, where I said, "The answer to guilt is forgiveness," then I added, "and this is where Jesus comes in." I had not mentioned Jesus' name the entire time. I hadn't talked about God. I hadn't ... I was talking about relativism, and I was giving, in a certain sense, a philosophic talk on the failure of moral relativism, and therefore the success of some form of absolute morality, if you will, or objective morality. I explained, "This has explanatory power, and it's the best explanation for the way things are," kind of thing, and that's when I was able to go here.

Now, I was able to just leverage this philosophic discussion into Jesus, which, I think, it's an indication that Jesus deals with reality, you know? I could talk about this stuff and say, "Look at the connection. This is real." The next night, I talked about Jesus being the only way of salvation. That was the topic, so I told them, "If you want to hear about that, you're going to have to come back the next night." It was a full house again on Saturday night, here on campus, for that second event, but, yeah, it was a good response.

Those are the circumstances, too, where I just have to trust the power of God to use His own Word, essentially. Now, I wasn't quoting the Bible, but I was communicating the Gospel. I was giving, in a certain sense, the Word of God. I was explaining the truth that the Bible describes about God rescuing through Jesus, through forgiveness, because of the trade. This has power. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one who believes. Whether, I think, you're quoting the verses or you're summing it up, you're still doing the job there. I could see the impact it was having on the audience.

Now, my goal in these kinds of things isn't to have an altar call, isn't to pray to receive Christ. Now, when I've got a secular audience, I always start by telling them, "I'm a follower of Jesus, but I'm not here to convert you, okay? I just want to annoy you in a good way, right? I want to just put a stone in your shoe." They start laughing, like you're doing, because they expect the Christian to annoy them, and I say, "Okay, I'm your guy, but you'll thank me when I'm done," kind of thing. "If I can just get you thinking about something" ...

That night, I think I put a big, giant stone in people's shoes, to have them thinking about Jesus and about their own life and why there is a certain reasonableness to our claims. That was the whole rationale of an hour talking about the failure of a very popular way of thinking right now, moral relativism. That's not going to work, because you know relativism is false, everybody does. That's why they complain about the problem of evil, because if they were deeply committed to relativism, they wouldn't complain about evil. That makes no sense in a relativistic

world. No, there's got to be real good, real morality, in order for there to be real evil, and everybody know there's real evil.

See, now this gives me a leg up, Patrick, as a Christian. I know something true about the person I'm talking to. He believes in the problem of evil. Great. That's because there is a problem, but you know what? That testifies to my view. That's in favor of my view. It's not against my view, and I can use that to help him see the rest of the story, so to speak. I think that's the kind of thing that was happening that night.

Patrick Gentempo: Wow, quite an experience, and thank you for sharing it.

Greg Koukl: Yeah, you're welcome.

Patrick Gentempo: You spoke to the problem of evil. What are some of the other major challenges to Christianity that you have taken on over time, that you think are the key ones that you have worked through or that you've helped others work through?

Greg Koukl: Yeah, the problem of evil certainly is huge, and I think that I happily respond to the problem, because, as I've described, this gives me a foothold in discussion, because we're dealing with something we both agree with, evil in the world, and this has ramifications for theism in a good sense, not a bad sense, I think, ultimately. That there is evil in the world is evidence for God, not against Him. I've described some of that dynamic.

I think it also positions me well, with regards to Jesus being a singular solution to the problem, because singular problems often require singular solutions, okay? This brings up the issue of religious pluralism. There are a lot of different religious options that are available to people, and generally people want to relativize those options. They want to say, "Okay, all the religions are equally legitimate sources to God."

Now, I wonder sometimes, when I hear people say that, if they've actually thought about that, because, for example, Christianity and Islam and Judaism teach that God is a personal being, all right? Hinduism, or at least some forms of it, teach that God is not personal, that He's an all-pervading force. Let's describe it that way. Well, look. God can not be personal and not personal at the same time. If the Jews and Muslims and Christians are right on that point, then the Hindus are wrong. If the Hindus are right, then the Christians and Jews and Muslims are wrong, but they can't both be right.

Now, we're not talking about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, are we? We're talking about a central thing, the nature of God Himself. When you die, maybe you go to Heaven or Hell, maybe you get reincarnated, maybe you lie in the grave, but you can't do them all at the same time, right?

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl:

The argument that I have against religious pluralism, against the idea that all religions are equally true, is that they have contradictory claims about reality. Therefore, they can't ... They can all be false, but they can't be true, all true, in any meaningful sense, okay? This isn't bigotry, which is the standard response from people, "Oh, that's bigotry." It's not bigotry. It's math, okay?

Now, it could be my view is wrong. I'm certainly open to that possibility, and this is why I look carefully at the evidence and the reasons, okay? They can't all be true. To say it is a condescending patronizing, because you don't really believe that all these religious claims are true at the same time. It's just a way of saying, basically, "There is no real truth about religion. All it is, is a bunch of clubs, and people do what they like." Well, that's a way of saying that all people are actually wrong in their religious views, you know?

My take on this is that pluralism defeats itself as a point of view. Therefore, somebody shouldn't be faulted, when he's trying to figure out which take on religion is actually accurate and comes to a conclusion that he thinks is right. Why is that considered arrogant? This is the way people actually deal with it a lot. It's dismissive.

As a Christian, I can say there's a reason why Jesus is the only way. He solves the problem. He's the only One who did. Every one of the other religious leaders had the problem. Therefore, they couldn't solve it. Jesus didn't have the problem. He wasn't a sinner. He wasn't under judgment, but He could take the judgment, okay?

Now, there's a lot more detail to all of that stuff, but the point here is the problem is religious pluralism. The problem of evil, the problem of religious pluralism, Jesus being the only way, that's another objectionable element. I just want people to see, well, there's nothing odd about thinking you're right about a religious point of view. Everybody thinks they're right about the religious point of view that they hold, or else they wouldn't hold it, you know? Why is it the Christian, generally, is the only one that's faulted for thinking he's right? I mean, it's just crazy.

In any event, so that addressed two of the main issues, okay? The-

Patrick Gentempo:

I guess, there's a derivative one that comes from this, as you're bringing up people maybe from the East or from other parts of the world. The derivative issue is what of the person, the human being, that's never exposed to Christianity? That's also a problem, in the sense of, okay, well, nobody ever spoke to them about Christianity. What is your view on that?

Greg Koukl:

Yeah, that's a common question that's brought up. Just a little side observation, that's a problem for every religious view.

Patrick Gentempo:

Of course.

Greg Koukl:

If every religion claims their religion is correct, then what about the people who are never exposed to their religion. Now, I think Hinduism,

in some forms, can get around that, because what they can say is, "Well, here's the way reality is structured, so to speak, that we're all part of an illusion, and we all are part of God, and we just have to get back to God. Whatever religious enterprise that you're pursuing will probably get you back there sooner or later."

Hinduism seems to people to be a little bit more expansive to others. It has its own difficulties in its overall claims of reality, like that we're just part of an illusion. I don't know how I could know that. I mean, does Charlie Brown know he's a cartoon character? It seems to me there's a built-in difficulty there.

In any event, the fact is that this problem you're raising applies to other religions. How do Christians respond to it? As a general response, I'll say that God judges people according to the revelation that they have, okay? They can't be held responsible for information that was never given them.

Now, before I just leave it at that, I want to say, but there's a catch to this one, and that is that the story makes it clear. Here, when I say the story, I'm talking about the story of reality that the Bible gives us. The story makes it clear that every single person, who is reasonably developed intellectually, and I don't mean smart people. I mean that you're not a baby or you're not mentally handicapped. Every single person is in possession of information about the truth about God, such that they can be held responsible for that.

That information is twofold. It's information inside of them, and it's information out there in the world that they can see, okay? Those two things ... Maybe they don't know about Jesus, but, as one put it, they don't know about the Son, but they do know about the Father, whose presence is everywhere. On the one hand, God will judge them according to the light that they've been given, but everyone has been given enough light to be considered guilty before God.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, and that goes right to the heart of ethics, doesn't it? Because in the absence of choice, there is no ethics.

Greg Koukl: Yeah, that's right. There's no ethical choices. That's for sure.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, well, a shark's not unethical for attacking a human.

Greg Koukl: No, that's ... Yes, but that's because ethics don't even apply to sharks or lions or anything.

Patrick Gentempo: Exactly, because they have no choice, right, [crosstalk 01:29:52]

Greg Koukl: This is another point, that humans are special in this regard. Clearly, they apply to us, but they apply to nothing else in the created realm.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: I know there's some Darwinists, who want to argue differently. It's a different issue, but certainly objective morality is not something that

other creatures are aware of. Even the Darwinists, all they can produce in Darwinism is just another form of subjective morality. That's another issue.

Patrick Gentempo: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Greg Koukl: We've got Jesus being the only way and the problem of evil, as religious pluralism, these are big deals. Another big thing is Jesus Himself. I mean, Jesus is under fire. Since Jesus is the center of Christianity, He's a sine qua non. He's a that without which you don't have it. You take Jesus out, no more Christianity.

What happens if Jesus never existed, okay? Okay, well, okay, we're pretty much dead in the water. What if He existed, but He wasn't anything like the person you claim? Maybe there was some guy, who was an itinerant preacher, but this miracle-working Jesus, born of a virgin, 12 disciples, all this other stuff, this is just a rehashing of the ancient dying, rising Messiah myths of the Egyptians and the Roman mystery cults, and stuff like this, so a very popular claim here. A lot of people are making it today. You can find it easily on the Internet.

Let me just say this, that, with regards to the idea that Jesus never existed, and that He is just a fabrication of these ancient myths, there is no credentialed historian in the world that believes this. Now, when I say none, I mean, you might find an outlier, but you can always find somebody to say something that's odd.

They don't believe this. The reason they don't believe this is they are working with bonafide, primary source, historical documents about the life of Jesus of Nazareth. They're solid, and they're good, and you can [inaudible 01:31:48] lots of information. In addition to those documents, which we commonly know as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and some of the things that Saul of Tarsus wrote, and some of the others, James, who knew Jesus, and New Testament documents, which people need to remember are not just part of the Bible ... They think of it that way. These were separate documents that were circulating in the first century. It wasn't until the fourth and fifth centuries that they bound them together in a book called a Codex, okay?

You can't just say, "Well, that's the Bible." These are the sources that historians use, and they take them seriously, because they're good sources. There's also something like 17 or 18 extra-biblical references to Jesus, that give us substantive information, that corroborate what we find in the more detailed narratives of Jesus' life, okay?

When you look at this particular challenge, this is an example of a tactic I call "just the facts, ma'am." All right, okay, I get what you're saying. Do the facts support that claim? The answer is no. In fact, the similarities that are claimed between Jesus and these ancient myths of Osiris and Mithras, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, there is almost no similarity between the life of Jesus and these ancient mythologies. These have been trumped up radically on the Internet, and what happens is these stories keep going in a circle.

I remember, I was lecturing at Purdue, and there was another big, giant audience there, a bit more hostile that night than that wonderful crowd at Berkeley, but there was a whole group of atheists that showed up with their T-shirts on. During the Q&A, I had two questions on this same issue. I wasn't actually trying to be glib at all, but when the first person asked the question about Jesus being just a rehashing of these old mythologies, I said, "You know, you've been spending too much time on the Internet."

What happened is that everybody started laughing, and I didn't at all mean to embarrass him, but this is what happens. Somebody publishes this crazy story, and it really goes back to late 19th century, with a book called *The Golden Bough*, B-O-U-G-H, and then that got some traction, and now these stories are circulating all the time, but when you go back to the primary source document, the old sources that tell the original myths, you don't see the kinds of similarities that people are claiming. This is a vacuous kind of charge.

When you talk to real historians, you get some entirely different story. We are on really good, solid ground, when it comes to the historical evidence for Jesus of Nazareth. Frankly, that's the only evidence we need. We don't need a perfect Bible to make our case. What about all the contradictions? Those don't matter to making our case.

Now, I want to be careful when I say this, because Christians might misunderstand. I do believe in an inerrant Bible, but when you think about the Gospel going out in the first century, you didn't have the apostles and all the evangelists and everybody sharing their faith carrying around codices of Scripture that they were trying to convince people were the inspired, inerrant Word of God, in order that they can get saved. They were telling people about Jesus, who lived, who died on a Roman cross, and who walked out of that grave three days later, and who was seen by many witnesses, which witnesses had their lives completely transformed as a result, went to their death in many cases with this testimony on their lips, "I saw Jesus," and also skeptics like James and also outright hostile enemies like Saul of Tarsus. They were changed, because they encountered the risen Christ. This becomes powerful evidence.

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, and when you look at the history to match that evidence, because some of the detractors would say, "Well," ... because you were using the term of the first century, that the Gospels, as far as dating them, some people think they came much later.

Greg Koukl: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: When you really look at the balance of what the scholars have found in the data and research relative to dating the Gospels, what is the conclusion that you've drawn based on what you've seen?

Greg Koukl: Well, yeah, this is a good question, because times have changed, in the last 50 years, there's been a significant shift in the opinions of scholars, and the tendency in the past was to late-date the Gospels, put them early first century to late first century, or I'm sorry, second century, I

mean, way after these events took place, long after the witnesses could have testified to anybody copying the information. This, of course, impugns the credibility of the accounts themselves, if this is the case.

I have asked scholar after scholar, why do you late-date the Gospels? What are the reasons for it? Now, I'm prepared to give a number of arguments for an early date. These are strong arguments.

One of them, for example, is that one of the most important events in the first century, regarding spiritual things and Christians and Jews and everything, was the destruction of the Temple and all of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Titus of Rome. This is huge. None of the writers mention it. How could nobody mention the destruction of Jerusalem, especially if they're trying to make a case for Christianity, and this would be a great dig back at the Jews. "See what happened? God destroyed Jerusalem, because you rejected the Messiah that we just invented," right? In the late Gospels, nobody mentions it. Here's a good reason they didn't mention it. It hadn't happened yet, okay? This is one line of argumentation for earlier dates for the Gospels. There's a whole bunch of others that are very good.

Every time I ask about why you late-date, I get the same answer: because you have what theologians call a high christology in the Gospels. High christology means Jesus wasn't just an itinerant preacher who said some nice things and happened to get Himself killed. Who knows why anybody would kill a guy like that, but that's all He was. Later on, everybody started developing Him into this supernatural Son of God, only way of salvation, miracle worker, risen from the dead. That's mythology, and mythology takes time to develop, and so we must have ... The Gospels must have been written much later, because it takes time for that kind of mythology to develop.

Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "Wait a minute. That sounds like cheating a little bit. You're assuming that Jesus wasn't this person, for what reason? You're assuming that there was no miracles. You're assuming there is no Son of God. You're assuming" ... The fact that it shows up that way in the accounts must be proof that they were mythological things developing over time.

Patrick Gentempo: It's a confirmation bias.

Greg Koukl: Exactly right. That's exactly right. Now the trouble, one trouble, with that way of looking at it is not only the circular reasoning, but Paul's writings ... There's not a lot of contention about the basic writings of Paul. He was a huge player in the first century, and everybody knew it. Certain things, like Galatians and Romans and Corinthians, and these are major contributions of Paul to the literature of that day, and it's not contested as being written by Paul, all right? We know these things are in the 50s, right? Paul was executed around 63. That's the end of his life, so he's writing in the 50s. Okay, Jesus died in 33, so within 20 years, we have Paul writing in Romans, saying that He was declared with power to be the Son of God, according to the resurrection. That's the third verse in the Book of Romans. He launches the Book of Romans with this statement. That is high christology in the 50s. Wow!

We have good reason to believe this didn't develop through mythology. This was the earliest testimony that the people who were defending Christianity gave about Jesus of Nazareth. All that to say, we have good reason to believe the historical reliability of these texts. There's a lot of detail in them. There's a lot of things that are embarrassing to the people who are recording these and writing them down. I mean, the disciples, they didn't look good. They looked pretty stupid, pretty dumb, unethical at many points, you know? "Let's call down fire from heaven on them and destroy them." This is James and John, John the beloved disciple, sons of thunder. Jesus said, "No, no, no, no, no, no."

Women are the first witnesses to the empty tomb. Why is that significant? Because they didn't have women's lib back then. They didn't trust women. If you're going to write a story that you want people to believe, but it's false, make women the first testifiers to the risen Christ. That's dumb!

Patrick Gentempo: Okay, so it's interesting, because I guess there's two things here. One is, say, archeological evidence that would corroborate, but-

Greg Koukl: Yes, that's another stage of corroboration to the testimony.

Patrick Gentempo: I want to ask you about that in a second, but the second is the fact that, if somebody has an agenda to get an outcome that is separate from what's true, that's not the way to get it is what you're saying.

Greg Koukl: That's not the way to get it, right.

Patrick Gentempo: They weren't being cunning. They were being reporters.

Greg Koukl: Well, see, this is the conclusion, when you look at the details, because you'd think, if the writers were being cunning, there's certain things that show up in the account that wouldn't show up there, okay? There are lots of other things that also show up that are odd. For example, Jesus is struck in one of the accounts. The soldiers strike Jesus, and then they say, "Who struck you?"

If you're a reader of that account, you're thinking, "You struck me. I just saw you hit me." Why is that in there? Well, you don't know, until you read one of the parallel accounts where it identifies that Jesus was blindfolded by these soldiers. Now, these are two separate accounts, and the second account makes sense of something that seems unusual in the first account. These are odd ways that you see these accounts supporting each other, and then you see, well, this wasn't fabricated. Okay, this is an argument against the fabrication thesis. There's lots of things like that, too. They weren't cunning. This gives you reason to believe the accounts.

Now, one objection that could be raised is, "Oh, well, you're saying that these scholars have a bias, and that's why they put it" ... Well, the Christians had a bias, too. They believed in Jesus, and so they were trying to put forth an account that made Jesus look good and Christianity look good, so they had a bias. Now, and to this I say that there are ... Yes, okay, I understand the point you're making, and I guess

the Christian did have a bias, if what you mean is a point of view, but there's two types of biases. There's a bias that is a bias to distort, and then there is a bias in which you have a point of view in which there's no evidence of distortion, okay?

I imagine that Kobe Bryant's mom thinks he's a pretty good basketball player. You could say, "Well, she's biased," but she also happens to be right, all right? She has a point of view, but that doesn't mean she's false in her assessment.

Patrick Gentempo: Right.

Greg Koukl: Okay, now in the case of the scholars, now, we can see it's pretty obvious that they are late-dating, because they are committed to a point of view regarding Jesus, before they view the evidence. Okay, that sounds suspiciously like a bias to distort. Okay, what about the early Christians? What about the people who gave the message first, "Well, I saw Jesus," and they proclaimed this kind of message? Did they have a bias to distort? Were they lying?

Well, the rule about lying is this. If you want to tell a lie, you tell a lie that benefits you, not a lie that gets you beaten, stoned, whipped, or crucified upside down, all right?

Patrick Gentempo: Right, yeah.

Greg Koukl: This is not smart, all right? This is what happened to these guys. If anybody knew that the story was false, it was these apostles, who testified to having seen the risen Christ, but these guys, in many cases, went to their death, with this testimony on their lips, and certainly, all the rest of them, had the sentence of death hanging over them for making such a testimony, and Saul of Tarsus is an example of the executioner. He was the one who was going around collecting these guys and putting them to death, hauling women and men off to prison and overseeing their executions.

This was serious business for these guys. Where is the evidence of bias to distort, in the case of the disciples, who wrote the Gospels? There's no evidence, and if there's no evidence, then we have no reason to impugn their character on this account.

I once saw a video on YouTube, and it was talking about that there is no evidence purpose in the universe. You look around the universe. You look at all this empty space. There's no evidence of purpose. Now, apart from particular instances of teleology you might point to, like, well, what about this thing that's designed this certain way, and there's great arguments there, but it strikes me that just the ability to look around to see if there's evidence of purpose is itself an example of teleology and purpose.

Patrick Gentempo: Yes.

Greg Koukl: Who does that? Only people who have this capability to see purpose are people who are made to see purpose. There's a purpose built into that. You know what I'm saying, certainly?

Patrick Gentempo: Yeah, well, I mean, the person who's making the assertion has a purpose in doing so.

Greg Koukl: Yes, that's right. In this particular case, though, he's looking for purpose of the universe, so it's not just localized purpose. It seems to me that, unless there is purpose, you wouldn't have the machinery to be able to look for it, you know?

Patrick Gentempo: That's right.

Greg Koukl: Like you said, dogs don't do that, but anyway-

Patrick Gentempo: Right, well, that's what distinguishes a human being from every other for of animal on the planet. We can choose a purpose.

Greg Koukl: Yes, that's right.

Patrick Gentempo: When you choose that purpose and you align with it, suddenly now you have energy-

Greg Koukl: You have meaning. Now, it may just be small M meaning, because you can do that kind of thing without God, but the big M Meaning, you can't get without God. That's another element.

Patrick Gentempo: Now, I want to ask you a personal question that's experiential in nature.

Greg Koukl: Okay.

Patrick Gentempo: Your career has spanned many decades now, and you've really put a lot of effort into organizing your thinking and your intellectual life and creating this view that you're sharing with us here. Along the way, during this period, when you look at the Bible, and you look at the New Testament, and there've been archeological discoveries that corroborate what was there, so basically there is the acceptance of this, already, and then there's physical cooperative evidence this many years later. My question is, and it's on the personal level ... I mean, we can have the intellectual conversation, saying, well, this increased validation, this increased conviction, all these great things that that does, but I'm wondering what that feels like, for you, when these things would unfold, with all ... You've committed your life to this, and then these things emerge.

Greg Koukl: Yeah.

Patrick Gentempo: What did that feel like?

Greg Koukl: Well, I imagine it's something like when you get married, and you are obviously convinced of your choice, which is why you walk down the aisle and say "I do," and your spouse has all of these virtues that you are now beginning to enjoy, but you know, once you get married, that there

are going to be a lot of surprises, things that just simply don't present themselves in single life or dating life, but when you're living together over time, you see these little things blossoming, and they're an added bonus, if you will. You think to yourself, wow, that's nice. I didn't know this came with the package, too. Well, that's great!

I think something like that is going on for me, when I see these other things happening. There's a massive body of evidence, multiple lines of reasoning, that I think bring justification, validation, to my confidence and my convictions, but when you start to see these little surprising things pop up, then you think, wow, that's great. In the area of archeology, for example, there's been a lot of work that's been done just on the Exodus. One of the difficulties with the Old Testament, in particular, and history and archeology is that there didn't seem to be much evidence for this massive event called the Exodus, and if it really took place, boy, you would think there would be some footsteps in history, like that, in the sand, so to speak, that they'd uncover.

Well, it turns out, and I can't give you a lot of particulars, because I don't remember them, but they've been looking in the wrong time period. If you shift things over to another time period ... There's a reason why they did that. They made a mistake, and it seems possibly that they did. You shift to a different time period, all of a sudden, all these things come together, and there's a tremendous amount of evidence. When I saw that, I thought, that's pretty cool. That was like bonus material, added benefit, or at no extra charge kind of thing.

Not only that, when I'm privy to personal things that happen in people's lives, dramatic answers to prayers, dramatic manifestations of God's power in somebody's life ... Now, these aren't the kind of things that happen in my life a lot. I mean, I'm not having miracles happen all the time. I'm not having miracles happening at all, for the most part, if you think of the standard definition of a miracle, but, at the same time, when I do see these things happen in other people's lives, that is an encouragement to my own convictions. It's great when things like that happen. It's just, like I said, bonus material that comes with the package.

Patrick Gentempo: With that, how do you see conviction? Do you see it as a matter of degree, or you have it or you don't?

Greg Koukl: Well, in my view, the way you put the question, I'd say it's a both and. This has to do with the nature of faith, okay? If you're going to take an airplane ride to go somewhere, you are making your decision to climb on an airplane, based on information that you have, and it may be good information. This is a good airline. Here's the travel plan. They have good employees. The guy can fly the plane, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

You have a kind of faith or belief that comes before actually getting on the airplane, but when you get on the airplane, you do something different, all right? Now you're all in, so to speak, all right? Now, what if you weren't quite so sure about that airplane? What if you were a little nervous about it? You might not put your full weight down on the plane

when you got in kind of thing, but even though you are not as confident, you're still all in when you climb on the airplane, okay?

There is a certain sense in which convictions are all in, in that you're investing your life in it, but then there's another sense where one gets more comfortable that they're in good hands, flying the friendly skies, that kind of thing ... We're going to get to our destination. Now, this is important, because, I think actually an airplane ride is a good metaphor, because when you get in the airplane, it doesn't always go smoothly. You can hit turbulence. We could have problems, whatever. That's when you're wondering, do I have a competent pilot? Did they tighten all the bolts down? Did they fasten the rivets properly? Did they give it enough fuel? Who's running this thing, after all?

That's when your confidence in the whole package helps you through the rough times. Certainly there are rough times in life for everybody. It's the human condition, and so there are going to be rough times for Christians. I think it's both are true in my own life. I'm all in, but there are other things that can happen that increase my confidence and conviction, and consequently, my sense of rest and repose, even in the midst of turbulence.

Gretchen Jensen: I really enjoyed all of those fabulous interviews from episode six. Speaking of great interviews, tomorrow, coming up on episode seven, we will have an interview with Peter Tsukahira. We'll also have part three with Greg Koukl, and Hermana at Magdala. Tell us about what's coming up in seven.

Patrick Gentempo: Well, it's another big day tomorrow. Peter Tsukahira is a Japanese American, who, a couple decades ago, was moved, through inspiration, to go to Israel. What he said up there, up on Mount Carmel, is something that ... I don't want to give too much away here. I want you to see it on the interview, but it was something that was very inspiring. He had some insights into his own experience that I think a lot of people can relate to. I know I did. There were certain things that he said that were profound, and that I very much bonded with.

We also get to round out our interview with Greg Koukl. It's part three of the three-part interview. By now, you realize what an amazing thinker Greg Koukl is and the clarity with which he speaks, and how that really can help to deepen roots into your faith and support it.

Then, lastly, Hermana Viljoen, which of course, I'm saying the American pronunciation of that word, but Hermana is also at Magdala, and she really tells us about the work they've been doing there. You saw the episode with Father Kelly. She works with Father Kelly in that first century synagogue dig there, and she's got the woman's perspective as how she's experienced this and the inspiration it brings in her work. It's something that's really celebrated around Israel, so it's another great interview that I think you're going to get a lot out of.

I definitely look forward to being with you tomorrow. Again, let me just mention that, number one, thank you for taking this journey. It's an amazing journey that we went on with Christ Revealed, and being able

to be with you on the journey is extraordinarily special. Also, I want to remind you that the support of Christ Revealed is something that's very critical to us, and something that helps us get it out to the world, so if you haven't already, pick a package that's right for you. There's a variety of them with bonuses that we have and other such things. Check that out. Find the one that's right for you. Engage in Christ Revealed. I look forward to being with you in the next episode.