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Jesus' Bodily Resurrection - A Legendary Development Based on Hallucinations - Licona vs. Carrier - Part 2

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Risen Jesus - Mike Licona

In this episode, a 2004 debate between Mike Licona and Richard Carrier, Licona presents a case for the resurrection of Jesus based on three facts that are strongly evidenced and acknowledged by the majority of scholars: 1) Jesus' death by crucifixion, 2) the empty tomb, and 3) the experiences of Jesus' disciples and his enemy Saul that they believed were appearances of the risen Jesus. Carrier contends that the earliest Christians only held that Jesus' soul was exalted and that the idea of a bodily resurrection, and the gospel testimony in favor of this, came later through Paul. Who makes the stronger case?

Transcript

Welcome to the Risen Jesus Podcast with Dr. Mike Licona. This is Kurt Jarrus welcoming you to the podcast. In this episode, Mike Licona and Richard Carrier square off at UCLA to debate whether Jesus rose bodily from the grave.

Dr. Licona says that while 100% certainty is rare in any historical investigation, the bodily resurrection is the best and most plausible explanation for the events following Jesus's crucifixion. Dr. Carrier contends that the belief in a physical historical resurrection was a legendary development based on the religious dreams and hallucinations of Jesus's grieving followers. See what you think.

Thanks for listening. We had the text number up on the screen. I see some heads nodding.

Great. Thank you. Okay.

Well, we're going to be getting some text questions, I think. And before as those come in, we're going to launch this with a question from each speaker to the other. And so let's just begin with that with Dr. Licona.

Okay. Well, thanks, Courtney. This is fun.

And we had dinner last night and we just had a really great time. And, you know, you can see he's a fun guy to be around, but what you don't know is he's even more fun once he has a couple of beers in him. Just easy.

Just easy. All right. I did want to clarify something.

You did say groupings that you wouldn't agree with my third point that scholars agree that groups solve Jesus. And I didn't say that scholars agree that groups solve Jesus. What I said is that scholars agree that groups had experiences in a group setting that they believe were appearances of the reason Jesus.

And so for the historian, they have to be able to count for what those experiences were. Okay. So just out of curiosity.

You said that we can verify Jesus is death by crucifixion because we have it's multiply and tested by pacifists. Jesus resurrection is multiply a test that you could say by Paul, Mark and John. So if you like multiple attestation, why would you reject resurrection? Yeah.

So, I mean, that's there is, there is, of course, no question that we have lawful sources and we can conclude almost every book of the New Testament. Not really. I'm saying multiple independent.

Yeah. So you're right that the gospels oftentimes give us independent access station to certain events. And so, but by the time the gospels are being produced, clearly they are being written by individuals and in communities where the resurrection is taking for granted.

So that wouldn't necessarily, to me, there's an ad verification in the same way that tasses his reference to the court fiction. Well, how many casters know about the court? That is a good question. I'll put it back to you.

But my assumption is that he didn't read it from the New Testament. I agree. Okay.

So I would suggest that he, I mean, he, by the time of tasses, since there are now Christian communities around the Roman Empire who are well known enough that the contours of their beliefs are out in the past is, of course, writing in the early where Christian communities are now known to those outside. So, sorry, you're saying that you think Tassa has got his information that pilot crucified Jesus from the Christians, probably not from the Christians. Well, I, it's true this.

I don't know where he got it from, but I would suggest that he probably didn't get it. What are you moving towards here that tasses is not independent either? And he probably got it from some, you know, imperial records. Do you think he might have had records? Yeah, I don't know that he would have cared about the Christians big through records to figure out about what happened in around 30, probably by the time of tasses it would have been mentioned in reference to Nero, you know, being in the room or the past.

So by this time, I suspect that people knew enough about Christianity that that point would have just been something that. So I guess what I'm getting around to is multiple out the station. Of course, you've got Paul.

And I think you'd agree with me that Paul knew Peter, James, and John. So he's talking about them. They're, you know, they're telling him they saw him as well.

When it comes to John, the majority of New Testament scholars today would say, even though they don't accept the traditional authorship of John's gospel or John's sonship, the majority do think that they're telling him they saw him as well. That the author was either one of Jesus's minor disciples or that whoever the author was, he had his major source, one of Jesus's disciples. So John is going to be providing independent testimony to Paul.

So there's at least two right there. Yeah. So multiple individuals.

Yeah. So I mean, the circle of people that includes the gospel authors and Paul are all people who were aware of the belief in Jesus's resurrection claiming to be eyewitnesses. So that's that.

I mean, that doesn't quite rise to the level of independent attestation in the same way from sources that are not already convinced that Jesus is a resurrection son of God. So if we have multiple independent sources for Caesar's assassination, which we have, Mandy, and they're already pre convinced that he was assassinated. Does that qualify? It's a worthwhile question to consider.

Okay. Last question. That was a little over the time.

So I'll give you the grace as well. So Dr. Friesen, do you want to ask Dr. Laikona question? Okay. So let's think about the resurrection appearances in the gospel since we're on that topic.

So we have, at least in one tradition, the tradition is preserved by Mark and Matthew, the notion that Jesus would appear to his disciples in Galilee. And probably not, this might be an overstatement, but only in Galilee, or only after they had gone to Galilee. And in the Luke and tradition, gospel of Luke, we get a strikingly different notion that in contrast to Matthew and something that was predicted in Mark, but not narrated in Mark, that they would only see him after they had made the journey to Galilee.

Luke has him appearing to two of Jesus' followers and disciples on the very day as they're apparently on the road away from Jerusalem. And then immediately back into Jerusalem. So I guess my question is, is your, when you draw on those texts as evidence for the resurrection, for the eyewitness accounts, are you interested in harmonizing those? Do you have a sort of a historical scenario that can make sense of those? Or do you treat one of them as historical over against the other? That's a fair question.

It really is, and it's a difficult one. I learned that it was more difficult than I originally thought. So first of all, I didn't appeal to Matthew and Mark for my case for the resurrection.

So even if they were wrong, it's irrelevant for what I presented. But let's just take it anyway, what we're saying there. I don't know what's going on with, you know, you've got Matthew and implied with Mark that they're first going to meet in Galilee, whereas Luke and John is Jerusalem.

There are a few details in the resurrection narratives that I just can't recognize. I don't know what's going on. Even the use of compositional devices, which I've really spent a lot of time with.

I can't figure out what's going on there. If I had to take a guess, you know, like when Caesar was assassinated, Plutarch, you know, you've got Appian, Dio, Cicero, Nicolaus, Livy, Plutarch, Swaytonius, and Velias, who mentioned it. And they disagree with one another.

Plutarch has multiple reports on it, and he disagrees with himself. And I think in many of those cases, you have compositional devices going on like abbreviation, time compression, you know. But they disagree with one another on did the Brutus Cassius and the conspirators when they fled after a killing season, they fled to the capital.

Did they come down that day, or was it the next day? And when did they have the trial? And you got the same thing going on with the Catalinary and Conspiracy in 63 BC. And, you know, when did Cicero present the letters before the Senate, and then they arrested the conspirators that they execute on that day, or was it the next day? So you've got this. They know what's going on, but there is some time compression happening.

If I had to guess, and I wouldn't bet, I wouldn't bet 50 bucks on it. Correct. I might think that what happened is Jesus first met them in Jerusalem, and the reason Matthew and Mark, implied in Mark say Galilee is maybe there was something up in Galilee, because that's where Jesus' ministry began.

But I really don't know. But I don't discount Caesar's assassination, or that the conspirators came down and spoke to the Senate and gave a speech to the people, or that the Catalinary and conspirators were executed, because I can't reconcile when and where certain things took place. The survivors of the Titanic disagreed with one another on whether the Titanic broke in half before sinking, or it went down in tag, and they were eyewitnesses.

But we don't conclude that the Titanic didn't sink. We just have these discrepancies, but we still get the gist of what happened. All right.

Well, we can tell that the main thrust of what's been discussed here, I think if I could summarize a little bit, Dr. Lycona, that you came up with facts and methods. So there's four facts that you're relying upon to accommodate the most plausible exploratory, or the explanatory power, less at hoc, and you had the criteria for the plausibility and whatnot. And then Dr. Friesen, you said that there are central claims to Christianity that fall outside of history, and that some more minor events in the New Testament may fall within the historical method, but you allege that

they could actually be proven false and true, so it doesn't help the case.

So with that, I'd like to invite questions from the audience. This is the real fun part, not to take anything away so far, but we'd like to hear from you. And if you could make your ways down to the microphones, we'll start there and interspersed them with some questions here.

Okay. Maybe start with a live question. I'll go to the one on the screen in a minute.

Is there anybody ready? Waiting for the brave souls to come up to the mics. Don't be shy unless everybody texted their questions. So maybe we'll go back to the text question and then come back to the audience.

Okay. The question directed for Dr. Lycona is, who's nation really one of the two leading hypotheses for the resurrection? It seems like an agreed upon live by all the writers of the gospels is more in line with what many atheists would espouse. Are there other hypotheses for the resurrection and what are their significant shortcomings? Okay.

So, yeah, believe it or not, it is the leading alternative hypothesis. And when I say this, I'm saying this is what scholars offer. Honestly, I don't know of any scholar out there who would say that the gospel authors were in this conspiracy to lie about the whole thing.

I don't know if it's a single scholar who would say that. Now maybe someone outside the field of history or New Testament studies would say it, but I don't know of any scholar who would say it. And publishing on the worldwide web does not make you a world-class scholar itself.

The last part of that, are there any other hypotheses for the resurrection? Yeah, there's like George Nicklesburg, I don't know if he's still Harvard, but he would say that resurrection was a metaphor. That just signified that God had vindicated Jesus in heaven, just like he vindicates every Jewish martyr, and Jesus is the most recent one. Well, I think that's the most easily refuted one out there.

First of all, you got to show some evidence for it, not just say it, but Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, 20 says Christ is the first fruits of those who sleep. In other words, he's the first to be raised from the dead with the resurrection body. And then three verses later he says, well, each in his own order Christ, the first fruits, after that those who belong to Christ followers of Jesus act as coming.

So Jesus first for resurrection and then all followers when he returns. So Jesus isn't the most recent Jewish martyr to stand in a long line who's verified. And there are others, but they're just weak.

They're free from the evening then? Well, I mean the gospel of Matthew gives us one that the body is stolen. So we would have advocates for that view also. Yeah, maybe in the past, but as far as I know today, I couldn't name a single scholar who says that fraud was involved, that the disciples were lying or stole the body.

I don't know if a single scholar would say that Gary Habermas is actually done bean counting on this. The disciples actually believed the risen Jesus had appeared to them. So you have to account for those and they do in various ways, but at least they would acknowledge those experiences that convinced them.

So they weren't to see it set up a long way. Well, if I leave it there and go to the last question, the first personnel there, go ahead. This is directed to Dr. Friesen.

Concerning God told me to marry you. I know of two couples in which both parties got direct personal revelations, audible, visual and situational, from God to marry each other. My own parents and my good friends, Winston and Christina now fiance.

My question is, if several people have consistent, divine personal revelations, do the personal revelations become verified? Yes. Did everybody hear that? Okay, so the question was back to the guy told me to marry her or him question. So if that happened, can that be verifiable or considered verifiable is his question? Well, I hope they're happily married.

I would submit to those individuals that if you are making your choice on that basis, alone, you probably will have some second guessing. In other words, it would be surprising if that voice from God didn't confirm the intention that you may already have felt that I can't speak to the individual situation. But I think in the manner that I am deploying the term verification, I wouldn't take that to the verification in a sort of strictly scientific context.

If God tells me to marry somebody, then I go and approach that person and she says, oh yeah, God told that to me also. Well, then you can set the date for the wedding at least. But it doesn't satisfy me.

I'm just a skeptic for those sorts of things. Now, the voice of God speaks to people in all kinds of different ways. And I wouldn't want to suggest to such happily married couples that what they experienced wasn't true and genuine and meaningful.

Simply that it isn't the kind of thing I would admit into, well, a court of law, for instance. God told me to divorce you, you wouldn't pass the test. Either.

So, yeah, I mean, those are interesting. I mean, clearly those sorts of experiences are held just like the first century Christians really genuinely had experiences. I don't disagree with Dr. LaCoto on that point that there was something that there was some kind of transformative experience.

All particularly had one. Whether, you know, so I'm just suggesting that the nature of that kind of experience of private revelation is difficult to rise to the level of verification. I hope that helps a little bit.

One may respond. Yeah, sure. I agree with them actually.

Without hearing the details of the two things that you gave. Now, I had an old friend back when we lived in Virginia Beach, Mike Kowoski, and he and his wife Rebecca had an experience like that. They hated each other.

They worked with each other. They hated each other. I mean, it was just they robbed each other the wrong way.

And Mike told me that one morning he woke up and he was spending some time in reading scriptures and praying. And he said, though God spoke to him and said, I want you to marry Rebecca. And he said, oh, you got to be kidding.

I don't want to do that. But he just really felt it. He goes into work that day and he passes by Rebecca and she's crying.

He says, you okay? Yeah, I'm okay. And then he ends up asking her out at one point. And she goes and she says, I got to confess to you why I was crying.

Because God had just told me sitting there that he wanted me to marry you. So I look at that and I say, she, well, there's no sense. There's no scientific way of verifying that.

But the coincidence seems to me to be good enough to say, I mean, I would ask her to marry me at that point if I had that. We often decide for ourselves on that one. Let's go over there.

Jason, number two. So I have two questions. The first is rather minor.

I mean, it addresses whether or not these claims are verifiable. You've done a great job of presenting textual claims and textual evidence. But I'm wondering what your physical or material evidence is for these claims.

That comes from me personally as an archaeologist. I'm very rooted in a material culture background. But more importantly, I'm interested in the second half of what this talk was about, which is, does it matter? You're addressing a group of academics who are very aware of the process that goes into constructing a religion.

And at least since the Reformation, the major issue in the Christian faith has been faith, not necessarily knowledge and scientific evidence. So what does it mean for a modern society to care whether or not these claims are verifiable? And what is the role of faith? Well, in your own studio, I'm guessing right. No, I'm not asking both of you actually.

I'm a classicist and a classical archaeologist. I'm sure Dr. Friesen can address this as well. You want to go first? Well, I mean, from archaeological evidence, there is none.

But on the other hand, I mean, just what kind of evidence would we really expect to have? I mean, so, you know, we don't know where the tomb is, and so we can't verify an empty tomb. So, you know, those are really things that are beyond... You know, I don't expect that that's going to change any time in the near future. But in terms of how it matters, and I tried, did try

briefly to speak to this at the end, because I think for many Christians, evidence matters a lot.

But I did try just briefly to articulate my own worry about an undue recourse to evidence. And in fact, it might just be that, you know, a self-perception or an understanding of Christianity, that does not hang and fall on one's ability to demonstrate the scientific nature of the beliefs that one holds, is actually potentially a liberating moment for people, potentially, right? What I try to argue or what I try to suggest is that, conversely, the real core of what is in the Nicene Creed and what sort of stands at the heart of historical Christianity is just not part of this kind of field of inquiry. And I suspect that some Christians will find that to resonate with experience, right? That what convinces people of the resurrection is not something that we can point to scientifically.

Well, I would answer about the archaeological evidence for the resurrection, that we don't have an archaeological evidence for a lot of things. So, for example, when Alexander the Great finished his conquest and went into India, he set up 12 altars, each of which were 75 feet tall. You know, the scrap of evidence for those? When the Roman general Crassus defeated Spartacus in 71 BC, Plutarch says he built a wall that was 40 miles long in order to hem in Spartacus in his army.

It may have been an exaggeration by Plutarch, but it was still a very long wall, not a scrap of that remains. In 48 BC, you had Caesar defeated Poppy at Farsalis, where tens of thousands died, and archaeologists have never found anything. We don't even know where Farsalis was in terms of the battlefield, he had tens of thousands died.

So, we don't look for archaeological evidence to verify certain things. Most things in history are verified by documentary evidence. Now, in terms of, does it matter, you ask about faith since the reformation? Yeah, as a Protestant, I do believe that salvation is by faith, but that doesn't mean that I can't have a reasonable faith.

If you look at Paul and the Book of Acts and the Sermons in it, they would present the truth to Christianity based on the miracles and resurrection of Jesus. So, even the apostles were preaching, hey, you can believe because this is true, and here's some evidence for it. Now, Courtney did mention doubting Thomas in his rebuttal, and there, Jesus says, hey, Thomas, you've seen him believe, but blessed are those who have not seen and still believe.

Well, the term blessed there in Greek, the word is *macarias*, it's the same Greek word used in the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, et cetera. And the Greek word does not mean that God is going to bless you or you receive a blessing because you do these things. *Macarias* means joyful, free of care or concern, many scholars today are using the term flourishing.

So, in essence, what Jesus is saying to Thomas, Thomas, you've seen and yet you believe because you've seen, but people can flourish in their walk with Christ, they can flourish in their Christian life without seeing. They can still believe and flourish in their faith. Good.

We're going to do one more round of the live questions and then go back to the screen. Go ahead. First, I'd like to say, I'm Mike Lykona, it's nice to meet you in person after all this time.

Eric, loud spirit. Oh, wow, okay. Good to meet you.

Dr. Friesen, a couple questions if you want mine. Let's just tell me. Let's just do one question.

That's okay. Okay. Do you believe, can you tell me, do you believe that Jesus sinned and can you name one if so? You know, I'm not qualified to answer.

I mean, does your second question illuminate that a little bit? What's your answer? I may have to allow it. Why don't you ask a follow-up question? Well, when the Old Testament was written, God spoke to the prophets and he gave them, that he gave them word as to certain conditions that the Messiah would fulfill so that we could recognize him. And imagine if one of those conditions was that the Messiah, when he came, we know that the Scripture says he would be born in Bethlehem, that he would have to come before the destruction of the Second Temple.

But what if one of the conditions was that he had to be able to run a thousand miles an hour? Now, that wasn't one of the conditions, but if that was a condition, that would certainly set him apart from every other person and allow us to recognize him if we had somebody that was born in Bethlehem that came before the destruction of the Second Temple and was able to run a thousand miles an hour, would you not agree? If he could do that. Okay, are you aware of the fact that one of the conditions that absolutely, positively had to be fulfilled in the Messiah is that he had to be whole. He had to be without sin.

Isaiah 53 says he would die for the sins of the people. Now, stop and think about this. Hold on.

Just one second. We want to try to avoid the lengthy questions. And I think what you're getting at, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that the power of prophecy or the non-power of prophecy in predicting Jesus is a historical figure.

Are you asking the relevance of prophecy in the historical verification? No, actually, that's not at the point. Can you try to do it one sentence? Okay. One condition was that he would be without sin.

The only person that the vast majority of the world accepts that has ever lived without sin, including those who do not follow Christ as apparently yourself, but the entire Muslim world, no person who's ever lived has been accepted by his enemies as to be a man without sin. Okay, listen, I'm just going to cut you off there and get the bad guy so I have to do that. So I'll let you respond, Courtney, and then Mike afterwards.

We'll go for a minute. We'll go for a minute. Okay.

Thank you for your comment. Mike, do you have anything to say? I mean, I don't know that we could verify that Jesus was without sin. I mean, scripture says that I don't know that that's

capable of verification, though.

Thank you for your question. We're going to go over there and then up to the screen. Quick question.

What would it take for you to take the other person to you? For Dr. Lyklon, I know you mentioned in your book, both you just commented. What would it take for you to accept the resurrection and for you to reject the resurrection? I can go first. Yeah, so I think thank you.

That's a really useful and interesting way to frame the question. I should just, I mean, just as a point of clarification, in the comments that I have made this evening, I have been careful to steer away from rejecting the resurrection merely that the resurrection is not the sort of thing that lends itself to verification. So that is to say that the evidence that we have available to us doesn't amount to the, for me, to the level of confidence of, say, the execution of Jesus under Pontius Pilate.

So on that point, I mean, I don't think Dr. Lyklon and I are in fact necessarily sitting on two opposite poles here in the pit. We agree on the same bedrock, historical material. And we agree that it would be nice to be able to explain how you get from a dead Jesus in the grave to the conviction held by many people within a few years of his death that he was risen from the dead.

It's simply a matter of, as the debate was framed tonight around whether or not the linkage between those two points is verifiable. And that's really part of the disagreement in that I just don't think that the evidence that's available to us allows us to claim that kind of verification in a strictly academic historical sense. So in order to take Dr. Lyklon's position, I guess what it would request.

So to try to finally answer your question, if I may, although I don't know that I'm quite able to, but in order to take the view that the resurrection is verified, I would want to have an unbiased, independent source. So, in other words, as you've seen over the course of our discussion, I think that the testimony of Christians, even if it includes several early, presumably independent ones like Paul, Mark, and the gospel writers, those sources just aren't detached enough from what they're describing in order to count as verification. Well, yeah, but Paul, he was biased at the time of writing because he was a Christian, but he was biased in the opposite direction when he had the appearance, he was actually hostile to Christianity.

So if we actually had a document from a non-Christian that said, hey, Jesus rose, I saw him, I'm not a Christian, we would think such a person was a moron and not a good source. So I think with Paul, we kind of had the best, very best we could ask for. In terms of what it would take me to say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead, I would want to see when you subject it to strictly controlled historical method use in arguments of inference to the best explanation.

I'd want to see a hypothesis that was significantly superior to the resurrection hypothesis, or for the woman who asked the question, and she likes arching artifacts, I would want to have

archaeologists discover an ossuary, a bone box in Jerusalem. And it says, Jesus, son of Joseph on it, when you open it up, there's the bones of a crucified victim, and with a manuscript on it that says in Greek, we fooled the world until today, and it's signed by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and I'd want to be able to verify that those were, the bones of Jesus, so if he put to that, then I would give up the Christian faith for sure. Fair enough.

We'll get right to you and we're going to go to the screen for this one. And what, okay, this one is for both of you, so both pay attention here. In what balance should the verifiable and the unverifiable aspects of Christianity be held? In other words, you both stated it matters if we can verify the Christian claims, but how much verification is necessary and or reasonable in the personal faith of an individual to accept Christianity as truth.

Dr. Friesen? Well, toward the latter part of this question, I can't, I mean, I can't answer on the basis of any individual. So that's very much up to the question here. What I try to do is to frame the discussion around a couple of historical points of reference, you know, notably the Nicene Creed, and to try to make the point that those central Christian notions are really not verifiable.

Now, whether they are reasonable is a different question entirely, right? Do they make sense? And that's something that could be pursued and is worth pursuing further. We won't get to that tonight, but does the theological notions that are presented in the Nicene Creed stand up to your or my own experience of the world as we see it? And those are questions that are worth thinking about, but again, they're not part of this process of verification. They're out to sorts of things that we amass evidence for.

For many people, they're deeply personal. For others, they're philosophical and ethical. And so that very, I think that very much comes down to the individual who's asking question.

I agree with the entirely. It's impossible to verify theological claims. I mean, you don't put your laptop in an MRI in order to diagnose why it's running slowly because the MRI is the wrong tool for that, and you just can't use historical tools to verify a theological claim.

There's just no way to do that. For me, whether Christianity is true makes a big difference because if you are going to be a true and authentic follower of Jesus, it requires sacrifice at times. And in many places in the world, it means persecution and even martyrdom.

So I don't want to just embrace a worldview, Christianity or whatever, because that's the way I was raised. I want to embrace it because it's true, especially if it's going to be costly to me. So for me, that's why something like the Resurrection of Jesus is important.

I may not be. I can't verify that Jesus' death at the tones for my sin. I can't verify that Jesus is seated right now at God's right hand or that he's God's divine, uniquely divine son.

But if Jesus rose from the dead, I think I'm rational to believe in virgin birth because if Jesus rose, virgin birth is child's play. And if he rose, then his claims about himself are probably true, and the message that he taught about salvation is probably true if he rose from the dead. So I

don't have to prove those kinds of things, but if Jesus' resurrection probably occurred, I'm certainly rational in believing those theological claims that I can't prove.

Good. Let's go to what might be our last question. Okay.

I'm Dr. Friesen. I'm finding myself a little bit questioning about your standard of evidence, what you consider as evidence. For example, I have been told that there is absolutely no archaeological evidence that could be connected to the Peloponnesian Wars.

We have only one source for knowledge of that, namely Thucydides. And here with the gospels, we have at least four or five different sources. And oh yeah, I also want to make one slight correction.

In 1 Samuel, Ahimelik is just one of over 80 priests. And Abhiyatha was another of those priests. Let's pick your question.

But my question goes back to the truth. And then also I find myself questioning, you're saying it's so personal. But when we look at, for example, I think of Daniel 9, there's a prophecy in there where the book is known before Jesus was alive.

But it prophesies concerning the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. So how's that exactly? Is that Daniel 9? 926b through 27, yes. Referencing the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem? Well, referencing the Jewish revolt 6680s and includes the destruction of the Temple.

Okay, so you managed to slide three in there, so I'll go back and take a little reverse order. I mean, clearly the content of the Danielic prophecy is going to be disputed, whether it was a reference to Rome. Abhiyatha was the son of Himmelach and doesn't appear to him later.

That of course doesn't solve the problem that I raised. But you're right. He seems to be identified as the high priest in Mark, which is not found in 1 Samuel, I grant that.

And then, yeah, the first question, I mean, you're right the Peloponnesian War. You're not technically correct, I wouldn't say that that Thucydides is the only source. That's what I was called.

Yeah, so, well, I mean, we have a lot of other ancient references and contemporary references to the Peloponnesian War from literature of the time period. Raging from, you know, material that we find in dramatic productions in Athens, Aristophanes, colonies, we will have Xenophon, others who will have references to it. But you're absolutely right that when we're reconstructing anything from the ancient world, much of it is very difficult to verify.

And we're coming off there. Almost. But on that point, we're in agreement that historical reconstruction of ancient events is very, very, very difficult with what the material, yeah.

Good. And you're taking a pass around. Okay.

All right, let's go over here for a live question. My question relates to the power of personal testimony. And I'll try to make this quick.

In the ancient church, there was an awful lot of martyrdom among Christians. And the ways that they were killed was often, like, brutal. And then there's even Christians saying, like, the doctor was saying that they're martyred for their faith.

My question is basically claims of the ancient martyrdom and modern claims of, like, healings, you know, miraculous healings and stuff. It seems like that's something that could be verified. So is there, are the ancient stories of martyrdom? Is that a type of evidence? And on modern accounts of miracles, does that, can that stand as evidence? All ancient martyrdom of Christian shows is that they believed that what they believed is true.

That's all it shows. They probably wouldn't go through all that suffering for something they knew was false. All the early Christians, okay.

Now, and same thing with Christians being martyrdom today. It's no different than jihadists who are given their lives for their cause or anyone who's given their life. It just shows that they are dying for what they believe is true, but it doesn't mean what they believe is true.

Now, I will say though, for the disciples, it's a little bit different. Because they would have known what they were suffering for was true or false. And liars make poor martyrs.

And this is why the majority of scholars today, given the evidence we have, that they were proclaiming that Jesus had been raised. And they were willing to suffer continuously and willing to die for that proclamation as what scholars to conclude. That they were not only saying Jesus had appeared to them, they actually believed it.

Would you like to address one of those questions? Yeah, so I think I don't disagree with the point in general to say that. I think that it is certainly the case that the people who became convinced of this, of the resurrection, were had a strong enough conviction that many of them were willing to die for it. Now, we should add that the evidence for when these people start getting martyr, of course, comes quite a bit later.

For some of them, for some of them, what we know about Peter and Paul is even quite murky. And, you know, we have reports and acts and so forth. And we've got John who talks about death of Paul, right? Yeah, so Peter, I mean, yes, okay, fair enough.

So we know these people are going to die. But I think I agree with Dr. Lakota that being a willing martyr is not sufficient for me to rise to the level of verification for what the martyr believed that motivated him or her to act in that way. And because, if it was, then we would need to treat similarly all faith traditions which have inspired martyrs, right? So we're told, you know, I mean, we've already, Dr. Lakota mentioned, you know, jihadists.

I think that's a very good example, right? But we're told, according to a certain promise of a

reward in the afterlife, a certain number of virgins that they'll receive in paradise. I feel one of not comfortable to suggest that their conviction to die for that belief establishes or verifies the reality of that belief. I understand that that's mentioned too much further removed from the actual origin of this monopoly.

Right, yeah. Right, and so Dr. Lakota's point is well taken, that these are, you know, these are first, there are people in the first generations of Jesus followers who seem to have given their, or who seem to have died as martyrs. Yeah, I mean, that's not deniable.

All right, one more question here, and then we'll try to get the one on the slide, and then we're going to have to start wrapping it up because we do have a hard stop to get the room back to the University of Sedation. Yeah, I've heard also a theory about the resurrection of the Jews wasn't actually dead that they thought he was but he wasn't. So I was curious if that actually is a government theory and what evidence there is the Jews was actually dead.

All right, fair question. I'm only aware of maybe a handful of scholars who have posited that since 1985. One is barber tearing and she basically says Jesus survived his death.

He's put in the tomb and they used aloe and herbs to heal him and he came back to perfect health and then he married Mary Magdalene and they went off to France and, you know, had children, but nobody accepts that today. Except barber tearing. That's stuff in the Finche Code, not scholarship.

There are kind of others, maybe a handful, but they're typically not scholars in the relevant field. They're philosophers who would say, well, maybe Jesus survived his death. And they're of the uber skeptical ilk.

And again, there's not even a handful of those since 1985. The reason the overwhelming majority of American census of scholars would say today that Jesus died, there's numerous reasons. Number one, it's multiple tested and independent sort, multiple independent sources.

Early sources, unsympathetic sources like Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Marabar, Serapian. You've got the fact that the chances of surviving crucifixion are extremely small. We only have one testimony from antiquity of someone being surviving crucifixion.

And that's Josephus who mentions during the fall of Jerusalem. He saw three of his friends crucified and he went to his friend, the Roman commander Titus. And as a favor, he asked Titus to spare their lives.

Titus ordered that all three be removed from their crosses and provided the best medical care Rome had to offer. In spite of that, two of the three still died. So even if Jesus was removed prematurely and medically assisted, his chances of survival were next and no.

They were very small. Moreover, there's no evidence that Jesus was removed while alive or provided any medical care whatsoever, much less Rome's best. Historians have to go with

probabilities, not remote possibilities.

So given all the evidence we have for Jesus' death by crucifixion, without good evidence to the contrary, the historian at least must conclude that Jesus was crucified and that the process killed him. After freezing this woman theory, what do you think of it? I will... Hurry us along? With one sentence, the Romans knew how to kill people I think. Alright, so this one is back to you, Dr. Friesen.

You talk about how people came to believe Jesus. How would you describe the presence of Christianity not dying out? But instead, you see it expand and spread as we see it now. If the resurrection was not a fact, why is it such a debated topic now? Yeah, so the gospel message of Christianity, which entailed the resurrection of Jesus, was profoundly transformative.

And I suspect radically transformed the way people thought about the world, and the way that they imagined that God was going to bring justice amidst the Roman imperial regime, which they weren't fond of in Judea and Galilee. And that Jesus, the notion that Jesus had raised from the dead convinced many of these people that the end of the age was now emerging, and that God's kingdom was at hand. And it provided them a hope that they themselves would be raised at the end of the age when Christ returned.

And that message, of course, still touches people today and attracts faith and conviction all around the world. And so it doesn't become a surprise that it attracted attention and conviction in the first century. I'm not sure if I've fully answered the question.

I think I'll skip the last part. I don't know that people debate all kinds of non-facts, whether they're in the news or otherwise. And so I guess that's not the new one.

I don't know if I can comment or respond to that, but that was the wrong question. Well, I wouldn't use that as an argument for the truth of Christianity or the resurrection. I mean, I think we could say the same thing about Islam.

And you could say, well, if Muhammad didn't actually have those revelations of the Quran, then how do you explain Islam's explosive growth to where it is today? Well, great. We're up against the time crunch, but before we leave, could either of you please maybe tie up any loose ends or any last closing comments? And I'll pitch it to you, Dr. Friesen, if you want to. Go ahead.

Thank you again for all of you who've made the journey out on this late evening. And just to reiterate that I am here on campus just down the road there. And my email address is readily accessible.

So the conversation doesn't have to stop now. If we'll continue in the fall semester, we'll be offering a course on the New Testament where you can come and look at these things for yourself. So I'd be very happy to talk with any of you about that.

We have, in fact, some students here that I can see who have taken related courses. So don't

hesitate to furnish yourself with the opportunities that Arizona provides you to study. All kinds of matters related to Christianity, including really these central topics that we have talked about today.

So my class will spend quite a bit of time looking at what kind of evidence we have for the historical Jesus and his first followers. So let's have a few just prepared remarks and then I'll pass it back. So the Gospel of Matthew reports that when Jesus appeared to his disciples in Galilee after the resurrection, among those who saw him physically and even literally, quote, some worship, but some doubted, end quote.

So for this crowd, even presented with the most conclusive of evidence, verification did not achieve a successful outcome. And from where we stand, of course, nothing approaching that level of demonstration will be available. Indeed, what I have proposed is that for those Christian claims that have been most cherished throughout history, verification is rarely ever successful or accessible, rather.

So consider Paul's programmatic statement about the Gospel in Romans chapter 1. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed through faith and for faith.

Now Christians have consistently maintained that Jesus' self-giving death broke down the barriers that divide humans. And through the resurrection, God demonstrated that love, justice, peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation have the final say. In these we must hope reside life-giving and transformative power.

Perhaps then these claims, or rather these convictions, are not merely one among many, but rather are so fundamental as to be the basis against which all other claims must be assessed. So Christians might do well to attend the comments of the 20th century Protestant theologian Karl Barth commenting on Romans chapter 1 verse 16. Quote, The Gospel is not a truth among truths, rather it is a question mark set against all truths.

The person who apprehends its meaning is removed from all strife within the whole, even with existence itself. Anxiety concerning the victory of the Gospel, that is Christian apologetics, is meaningless because the Gospel is the victory by which the world is overcome. Thank you.

Now I just want to thank you for having me and Courtney. I've enjoyed my time with you last night. I've enjoyed this tonight, so thanks.

So in response to one thing, he just said there in Matthew 28 where at the resurrection afterwards when they went to Galilee, it's of some belief, but others doubted, the word that's used there is this *hōdzel*, which means to have two thoughts. It's the same word used in Matthew when Jesus is walking on water and he invites Peter to come. He's walking on water and then he begins to sink and asks Jesus to save him.

And so Jesus pulls him up and says, why did you doubt this hodzel? He's having two separate thoughts. It's like, hey, this is really cool. I believe in you, but then he gets out there and says, but how am I doing this? And he starts to sink.

He's having two thoughts. So if you think about this, my both of my parents have died within the last five years, but when they came in the auditorium, right down, they walked up on stage and said, hey, Mike, we're just proud of you what you're doing here. Nice job.

Mike, I mean, it's like, wait a minute, you're dead. But it's like, I see that. It's this hodzel.

It's thinking two separate thoughts. Luke uses a different term. He uses opposites, unbelieving.

When he says, out of joy and amazement, they were unbelieving when they saw Jesus. It's like the walk-off home run in the bottom of the 1970s series. Unbelievable.

That's what's going on here. I think in Matthew 28. Now, I just want to reiterate why the resurrection is important to me is because all of us have our idiosyncrasies.

I want to mind as I'm a second guesser. I doubt a lot. And it's because it's so important in our worldviews.

If it's possible that eternity hangs in the balance, what we do with God and what we believe. And Jesus claimed, I think, to be the only way. If that's true, then well, I want to know it's true.

And it's not just a matter for me of believing because the Bible said that if I'm going to have to make sacrifices in my life, if I have to be willing to be persecuted and even martyred, I want to know, I want to have some confidence that what I believe is true. And so that's why the resurrection and evidence is important to me. Does it matter? Yes, because if Jesus rose from the dead, and that means I probably was made in God's image, that I have value, that there is real meaning to life.

And for each and every one of us on a practical basis, if we really are that valuable because we've been made in God's image and he loves us, as Jesus said, then we can trust and we can pray. For college students here, you can ask God to lead you to a good spouse. I did, and I've been married for over 30 years.

I married a really great woman. But man, I passed it a lot. I prayed a lot and asked God to help me select this spouse.

And I'll tell you, it made a little difference to my parents when they were dying, to have that confidence. Now, they weren't doing it as a psychological crutch. They really believed that Christianity was true.

And if Jesus rose from the dead, that belief was well founded. So I hope these two men have proven the fact that the New Testament is studied by serious scholars. And throughout the world and throughout the country, there are serious scholars from a fundamental Christian to

a, yeah, a fundamental atheist.

So you have everything in between. So you don't go to the University of Puerto Rico. No, no, I'm not, I was using just hand gestures randomly.

Or subconsciously, I hope not, though. Okay, so you don't go debating the top Muslim of all, just Shabir Ali, or the Rockstar Celebrity New Testament scholar, Bart Airmen. You don't go to get your PhD at the University of Minnesota and then on to Oxford and then come and be one and only premier New Testament scholar here at the University of Arizona.

Unless you're a serious scholar. So there's serious men studying these things. And so I hope that that's a takeaway for you today.

If you like this event, if you like Veritas, it's not only New Testament scholars from the classics or humanities. It's also from all, all different kinds of areas of study. So you'll have biologists or philosophers, mathematicians.

And so I hope you come back and check us out again. If you look at your program here on the back, if you, if you were engaged today, many of you are still here. So I'm assuming you're engaged.

You may want to continue the conversation at these follow-up sessions. They'll be smaller. They'll get to where you're at and be able to really ask questions.

So these gentlemen, I think, offer maybe to hang around for a few minutes afterwards if you didn't get a chance to ask your question. Maybe we maybe kicked out of this room, but we'll have the Foyer out there and then the entrance area. I wanted to thank, at this time, Veritas Forum.

There's a whole committee. We've been planning this for about 10 months or so. I want to thank the sponsors that made this happen.

And last of all, a big thank to Dr. Mike LaCona and Dr. Courtney Friesen. Thank you. Thanks for joining us today.

If you'd like to learn more about the work and ministry of Dr. Mike LaCona, visit RisenJesus.com, where you can find authentic answers to genuine questions about the reliability of the Gospels and the resurrection of Jesus. Be sure to subscribe to this podcast, visit Dr. LaCona's YouTube channel, or consider becoming a monthly supporter. This has been the RisenJesus Podcast, a ministry of Dr. Mike LaCona.