

# OpenTheo

## Licona vs. Shapiro: Is Belief in the Resurrection Justified?

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### Risen Jesus - Mike Licona

In this episode, Dr. Mike Licona and Dr. Lawrence Shapiro debate the justifiability of believing Jesus was raised from the dead. Dr. Shapiro appeals to Bayes' Theorem and the unverifiability of the alternative hypotheses for the post-death appearances to argue against justifiability. Dr. Licona retorts that Bayes' Theorem, which states that the less likely something is to happen, the stronger the evidence for it must be to convince us of its truth, is primarily inapplicable in historical studies since it requires that the probabilities for an event's prior occurrence to be known. He also disputes Shapiro's claims that the alternative hypotheses are as adequate as the resurrection hypothesis.

### Transcript

Welcome back to the Risen Jesus podcast with Dr. Mike Licona. Today, we hear Dr. Licona and Dr. Larry Shapiro in their second debate on the resurrection. The two scholars gathered at Finley University in Ohio to consider the question, is belief in the resurrection justified? Join us as they discuss Bayes theorem, inference to the best explanation.

Paul's writings, super powerful aliens raising Jesus to life, and more. Thank you for joining us and for listening to the Risen Jesus podcast. Thank you for joining us this evening for what will be the first of, I think, of many exciting conversations on this topic, but I'm very pleased that the University of Finley is able to offer you this observation.

Of a debate, a respectful discussion of a very important topic, and that is, did Jesus rise from the dead? We don't start small at the University of Finley. You all may be worried about Michigan and Ohio State or Republicans and Democrats. Those are trivial, trivial matters.

But we go to the heart of it. The University of Finley is dedicated to certain principles that got our work. One of those is that we are grounded in Christian faith and welcome all people.

Another of those principles is that we will engage in reasoned, respectful dialogue, easier said than done. But we do it here. I wouldn't say we do it perfectly, but we try.

We're working toward it. And tonight you'll see an example of just that reasoned, respectful dialogue. And you will, as an audience, will have an opportunity to ask questions and offer some commentary in reasonable, respectful ways.

And if you don't know what those two words mean, I'm here to tell you. But I'm very pleased to introduce our three participants this evening. Our moderator will be Dr. Bacho Borjazzi, an alumnus of the Ohio State University, who received his Ph.D. and Old Testament at Durham University.

His book, *Darkness Visible*, a study of Isaiah 14, 323, as Christian scripture, was recently published in the Princeton Theological Monograph Series. He is currently working on a commentary on the book of Job for the Apollo's commentary series. A native of the Republic of Georgia, Dr. Borjazzi serves as a mission team leader of crew at Ohio State.

He's married to Laura and has four wonderful children. Dr. Michael Lacuna, Associate Professor of Theology at Houston Baptist University, is a preeminent scholar whose expertise lies in the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus and the historical reliability of the Gospels. His academic books include *The Resurrection of Jesus, A New Historical Approach*, and *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What we can learn from ancient biography*.

Dr. Larry Shapiro is Professor of Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Psychology at University of Wisconsin, Madison. Professor Shapiro's research spans Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Psychology. Within Philosophy of Mind, he is focused on issues related to reduction, especially concerning the thesis of multiple realization.

His books, *The Mind and Garnet*, MIT, 2004, and the multiple realization book co-authored with Professor Polger at the University of Cincinnati, as well as articles in the *Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophy of Science*, and *Philosophy in Phenomenological Research*, examine these issues. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our participants this evening. I think Dr. Lacuna is going to go first.

Well, thank you, and thank you for having me here. I'm just very happy to be here at the University of Findlay. And it's great to see Larry again, and Bacho again, and you guys have the President that's been so warmly welcome.

So, thank you so much. Well, this is kind of like tonight's a kind of clash of worldviews. On the good side, you have Christianity.

And on the side of the devil. I don't believe in the devil. So, now Larry's a great guy, I really like him.

We'll have a good time tonight. But there is a clash of worldviews here. So, if atheism, let's just say for a moment that atheism is true, then astronomers tell us that sometime in the future, in the distant future, our universe is going to die a cold death, that every star is going to burn out.

And when the final star has burned out, our universe will enter into an eternal cosmic night in which all life ceases to exist. Nothing will be remembered. All of human history will be gone.

No one will be left to remember. And so, you think about it, we can have meaning in our lives in so far as something is meaningful to us. Something is valuable to us.

It's a subjective thing. But ultimately, there is nothing that is of value or meaning to human life because it's all going to perish. And it's really not going to matter whether you are an Adolf Hitler or a mother Teresa.

The end of human history is the same if atheism is true. Now, if Christianity is true, it's a little bit different. That would mean that God exists and it would mean that we have been made in God's image.

And so, therefore, humans have intrinsic value. We have value. And meaning in life is more than just subjective.

There is real meaning, true meaning, real meaning in life. So, which worldview is correct? Well, I'm going to give you some evidence that Christianity is true. And I'm going to base that on the resurrection of Jesus, the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

Now, I've written a book on it's a little over 700 pages and it's going to be impossible to summarize all that for you in 20 minutes. So, what I want to do is I just want to take a simple argument. Something that I can just break down and maybe see if that makes some sense to you.

Now, maybe you think that I'm going to start with the Gospels because those the Gospels are the one that gives us a narrative of the resurrection. I believe that the Gospels are historically reliable. I could give you some reasons for that.

But I'm going to go and talk about some literature that existed before the Gospels. And that's the writings of the Apostle Paul. Now, to give you an idea who Paul was, Paul by his own testimony was a zealous Jew who thought that Jesus was a false prophet and a failed Messiah.

And so, what he did, he thought it was God's will to go out and persecute Christians to arrest them, to imprison them, to consent to their execution for being Christians. And then, all of a sudden, by his own testimony, while he was out on one of these trips persecuting Christians, he had an experience that he believed was the risen Jesus who appeared to him. And that experience radically transformed his life from being a persecutor of the church to one of its most able defenders.

Now, three years after his conversion experience, Paul tells us in his letter to the church at Galatia, chapter 1. And that's an undisputed letter of Paul, meaning virtually every scholar, atheist, agnostic Jewish Christian scholar who studies the subject agree that Paul wrote Galatians. And in chapter 1, he says that three years after his conversion, he went up to

Jerusalem and he spent 15 days with Peter, the lead apostle, and also saw James the brother of Jesus. And the term that he uses there for visit or meet with is the Greek word, *hysteresai*.

What English word do you think we get from that? History, you're right. So, he was getting a history, he was getting an account of Jesus. He hadn't, he had good chance he saw Jesus, good chance he heard him during his lifetime, they were always going up to pass over in different feasts.

But he really didn't know all of Jesus' teachings. He knew enough about Jesus' teachings to think that he was a heretic and that he wanted to destroy the movement that Jesus had started. But now he wanted the whole nine yards.

He wanted to hear first hand from those who had walked with him and who better than Peter and also Jesus' brother. Then Paul says in Galatians 2 that 14 years later he returned to Jerusalem and this time he met again with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, and then he had John, the apostle. So you have Peter, James, John, and Paul, the Fab Four.

And they're talking about theology, they're talking about Jesus and what he did and what he taught. And Paul said that the reason he went up is because he wanted to ensure that he was preaching the same gospel message. I want you to remember that.

Not just the same message, but the same gospel message that he had been preaching. And he said, after talking about it, they certified that he was preaching the same thing they were preaching. Now as a historian, I look and I say, well how do we know Paul wasn't lying here? We want some external sources to corroborate that, if possible.

Maybe he's telling the truth, maybe he's not. We look for corroborating sources. Did you know that some of Jesus' apostles had disciples of their own? Peter had one named Clement of Rome and John had one named Polycarp.

Some day many of you are going to get married, you're going to have kids, if you have a son you're going to be thinking about names, just remember Polycarp. It's a cool name, isn't it? So Polycarp, the disciple of John Clement, the disciple of Peter, it'd be interesting to see what they had to say about Paul if they wrote letters and they did. We have one letter that has survived from each of them.

Clement places Paul on par with his mentor Peter. That's pretty cool. And then Polycarp quotes from Paul's letters, refers to them as part of these sacred scriptures, and he also says that Paul and I quote accurately and reliably taught the message of truth.

Of course those aren't the kinds of things you say about Paul if he was teaching differently than your mentors Peter and John, but it's precisely the kind of things that you'd say if Paul was teaching what they were teaching. Now I could give more, but I'm limited in time, but that should be sufficient to show that when we are talking about the gospel message at least, that's not to say we can prove that everything Paul was teaching is what the Jerusalem apostles were

teaching. But it is to say that when we are hearing Paul on the gospel message, we are hearing the voice of the Jerusalem apostles.

So even apart from the gospels, we can get back to the basic gospel message that Jesus apostles were preaching through Paul, our earliest writer in the New Testament. Now wouldn't it be great if we could find that gospel message somewhere? Wouldn't it be neat if some archaeologist all of a sudden turned up a manuscript and that manuscript lost writing a poem. So I went to the church at Laodicea.

What? That's not my New Testament. It's because it's been lost. Wouldn't it be great if they found that? There's a reading through it.

It says, I want to remind you the gospel message that I preached to you. It's like, whoa, now we could know with certainty, historical certainty, we could get back to what the Jerusalem apostles were preaching. Well, we don't have to uncover something like that because we already have it.

And it's 1 Corinthians, written around the year 51-52. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 1 says, I want to remind you of the gospel message I preached to you. And then verses 3 through 8, he says, for I deliver to you a first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared.

And then he lists six post-resurrection appearances. He appeared to Peter, Paul had already met him, to the 12, to more than 500, to James, he already met him, to all the apostles, and then Paul talks about how he appeared to him. So we have three individual appearances, three group appearances.

We'll get back to the group appearances and why they're important in just a moment. So what do we get from this? Well, we get Jesus died. This is something that historians don't dispute.

We get that Paul, who was an enemy of Jesus, had a conversion experience when he believed he saw the risen Jesus who appeared to him. And then we know that he had connections with the Jerusalem apostles who actually knew and had walked with Jesus, and we can certify that he's preaching the same gospel message they're preaching, the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus, and appearances to individuals and groups, friend and foe alike. Those are the facts.

And those facts, we could give some others, but those are some basic facts, and those facts are accepted across the spectrum, atheist, agnostic, liberal, conservative, modern, Christian alike, virtually 100%. Except the group appearances, you only get about 90 to 95%. And if you were to eliminate all the Christian scholars from those, even for the group appearances, you'd still have about 80% of them grant that the evidence is strong enough to suggest that these groups had experiences.

They won't say it was the risen Jesus, but they'll say that these groups had experiences that they believed was the risen Jesus. It convinced them that Jesus had raised from the dead and had

appeared to them. Now, as historians, we got to look and say, those are the facts.

What do we do with these facts? And so what historians do is they put together hypotheses that attempt to account for those facts. And since we can't get into a time machine and return to the past to verify our conclusions, they say we will assess these hypotheses to see which one accounts for the facts. It can account for all of them, can account for it without forcing the facts to fit and without excessive speculation.

And the one that accounts for the facts best is regarded as what probably occurred. And that's pretty much what we have to do with history. There's no such thing as absolute certainty when you look at history.

It's probability. Which one is the most probable explanation? Now, with that in mind, let's look at the two leading hypotheses that historians, I mean, I don't have time to go through all of them, of course. So let me just take the two leading ones, resurrection, of course, and then the other one is the hallucination hypothesis.

And that is to say that shortly after Jesus' death, his disciples were traumatized. And what do you do? You typically drink, go to the bottle, or you take drugs. There were hallucinated drugs back then.

Maybe there was another reason they called Jesus the Most High God. No? So they're grief-stricken. They get high on something.

They have these hallucinations, and they think they see the risen Jesus. The problem with that are multiple. Number one, through psychology, mental health profession, we know that hallucinations are private events in the mind of an individual.

They have no external reality. So, they're like dreams in that sense. I can't wake up my wife in the middle of the night and say, honey, I'm having a dream.

I'm in Maui. Go back to sleep. Join me in my dream.

And let's have a free vacation. You can't do that, right? Now, she might go back to sleep and dream she's in Maui, and I might dream I'm in Maui, but we're not, it's not the same dream. We're not interacting with one another actually in that dream, because it has no external reality.

Same thing with hallucinations. I used to know Navy SEALs, a number of them when we lived in Virginia Beach, and they'd tell me about going through Hell Week, and it was like, and lots of them hallucinated. And they would see weird things.

One guy said he thought he saw an octopus come out of the water and wave at him, and another thought he saw a train coming across the ocean and he rolls out, and the other one was swinging, he said he saw some guy wildly swinging this ore in the air while they were

paddling out in the ocean, and they said, what are you doing? He said, I'm trying to hit these dolphins that keep jumping over the... I said, you didn't see him? No, he was the only one. Nobody else thought? No, but they were having their own hallucinations. So they're not collective, they're not group, or you experience the same thing.

And remember in that early tradition that traces back to Jesus' apostles, he appeared to 12 to more than 500 at one time, and to all the apostles. Three group appearances, so that doesn't work. Moreover, multiple studies on hallucinations over the years have revealed that only about 7% of those most likely to experience hallucinations, only 7% of them experience a visual hallucination.

But yet we're saying 100% of the disciples did? That goes against modern medical research. And then you have to explain how Paul... What happened? He's not grieving over Jesus' death. He thought Jesus was a false messiah and a failed messiah and a false prophet.

Jesus would have been the last person in the universe that Paul would have expected to see or wanted to see. And so it doesn't account for that. The hallucination hypothesis can only account for Jesus' death by crucifixion, the very event that would have caused the disciples to be grief-stricken, but it doesn't account for any of the other facts.

What about resurrection hypothesis? Well, resurrection hypothesis accounts for all of them. All of them. And you don't have to force any of them to fit.

No excessive speculation. Here's another thing we do in history. We go by predictability.

So if it's called explanatory power, so given the truth of a hypothesis, just say hallucinations hypothesis is true, what would we expect? And to what degree do we get it? Well, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, and the hallucination hypothesis is true, based on what we know about hallucinations, we would expect one at the most two of the disciples to experience visual hallucinations of Jesus. But then just like every other failed messiah-neck movement, we expect it to fall apart, and Christianity at best becomes a footnote in future history books. Obviously, that's not what we get.

We get appearances to all of them. And we see that Christianity becomes the world's largest religion. So whose nation hypothesis does not fit the predictability mode? What about resurrection? Given the truth of the resurrection hypothesis, if Jesus actually rose from the dead, what do we expect? We expect for his followers to have experience.

We expect that he would have appeared to his followers, and they would have said so. And we would expect, if God was behind this, for the movement to grow. So we get what we expect with the resurrection.

We don't get what we expect with the hallucination hypothesis. Now, we could go on and look at things such as, yeah, but what about the... That would require God. That requires a supernatural realm.

And is it really even plausible or reasonable for us to believe in miracles and spirit beings and supernatural things in the 21st century? I think so. I think we got some really superb evidence for a supernatural dimension of reality. Things like well evidence near death experiences.

Now, not all of them are well evidence, but there's about 300 of them out there in which a person who was clinically dead had an out of body experience and they got some information while they were out there. They saw something or heard something going on at some other place outside of the building they were in, and they got accurate information they could not have otherwise known. Pretty cool.

Suggest some life after death, at least for some people, at least for some period of time. What about radically answered prayer? I've got a friend named Lloyd Reed in Florida. And back in June of 1970, it's involved in a horrible car accident that put him in a coma.

On the 21st day of his coma was July 4th, 1987, and he was in the hospital with numerous other coma patients in this room. And at four o'clock in the afternoon, his church, a bunch of the members went out for a church picnic, fourth of July church picnic, and at four o'clock in the afternoon they got together to pray for Lloyd. And miles away back in the hospital at four o'clock in the afternoon, Lloyd came out of his coma.

But it gets even better, because before midnight everyone else in that room came out of their coma. And they'd been in their comas between one and six months. I could go on and talk about some other things as well.

I've got a friend named Pat Ferguson, about my age, on 56. And when she was a junior in high school, she was awake in one Sunday night, or Sunday morning, around early. And a face of a friend of her was right there in front, about three feet away.

And it frightened her. She hadn't seen this friend in several years since middle school. And she closed her eyes, and when she opened it, she saw that face, and she saw what appeared to be the face of the demon right by it.

And it really terrified her. She closed her eyes. She pinched herself, bit her tongue, opened it still there.

Did this a couple of times. Finally, she closed her eyes. She did the only thing she knew to do to pray the Lord's prayer.

And when she opened her eyes, the faces were gone. She looked over the clock. It was 2.30. That's Sunday morning 2.30. Then when it came up, and it was, I think, Monday morning, she gets up and she goes down for breakfast.

Her dad's reading a paper, and as she walks in the kitchen, he turns the paper around, pushes it towards her. She says, do you know this girl? She said, yeah, and it was that girl. Well, she had been at a concert.



She fell over, fell two stories down, and they took her to the hospital and she died at 2.30. Those things don't work with atheism, but they happen all the time. They work well with Christianity. They fit right in with the plausibility, and to the extent we have a supernatural dimension, it increases the plausibility of resurrection.

So in the end, we've got really good evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. And historical evidence, and it fits right in plausibility with the spiritual dimension, supernatural dimension of reality. So I look forward for the rest of the remainder of this evening.

Do you want a vantage point where you can see these lines? Yeah, thank you. I'll go down. Good evening.

Thanks to Finley for putting on this demonstration of two different world views in conflict, I guess. I'd like to start this way. How many of you out there believe in the resurrection? Raise your hand.

How many of you, no matter what I say tonight, will continue to believe in the resurrection? Okay. That's good. That tells me something.

That tells me that your belief in the resurrection is based on faith and not on justification. Because if you wanted to believe based on justification, you'd have to be open, and I'm surprised to see, well, Mike put his hand down. You have to be open to the possibility that the evidence or reason might grow in strength to the point where you're no longer justified in believing in the resurrection.

So when you tell me that no matter what I can possibly say here tonight is not going to shake your belief in the resurrection, you're telling me that you have faith. And I don't want to do anything to discourage any of you from having faith. I think faith serves an important role in a lot of people's lives, and I don't want to take that away from you.

My target tonight, though, is the claim that belief in the resurrection is justified. Okay. So you could believe some things on the basis of faith, but other things you might want to believe on the basis of evidence.

So let me spend a minute talking about what I mean by justification. When a belief is justified, we have good evidence for thinking that it's true. Evidence that maybe raises the probability of the truth of that belief to something like over 0.5. That's a picture of my daughters.

I have a justified belief that they're mine. Justification is different from knowledge also, right? I know that they're mine, but I have a very strong justified belief. Justified beliefs are not the same as true beliefs either.

So we may not be justified in believing something that's true. Was there a rainbow over Finley, Ohio a thousand years ago? Maybe. And if so, and you believe that there was, your belief is true, but you're not justified in believing that because there's no evidence for such a thing.

We also might be justified in believing something that's false. Here's something that people believe for hundreds of years.  $F$  equals  $ma$ .

It's what we all learn in physics classes, but it turns out, despite all the justification for this law, it's false. Einstein showed us that it breaks down. And finally, we may never be justified in believing some things.

And that's going to be my claim about the resurrection. You're just not justified in believing it. Maybe it happened.

Maybe it didn't happen, but you're not justified in believing that it happened. Here's an example of that. Scientists say 500 million planets might support life.

I bet I'll never live to see that claim justified. And maybe no one will ever live to see that claim justified. But there's a fact of the matter there.

They either support life or they don't. Just like there's a fact of the matter whether Jesus was resurrected. It just is, we'll never be justified in knowing whether it happened.

That's my contention. Here's a fact about justification that I don't think Mike appreciates efficiently. The evidence necessary for being justified in believing in some proposition varies inversely with what's known as the prior probability of that proposition.

So why? Well, there's an important mathematical result that anyone interested in issues involving confirmation and the relationship between evidence and hypotheses has to attend to. It's known as Bayes's theorem. And what this theorem tells us is the less likely something is to happen, the stronger the evidence needs to be in order to convince us of its truth.

This is why if you have a disease that's fairly common and a test that goes wrong occasionally for this disease, you can trust that test usually. But if the disease is extremely rare and you take a test of the same reliability, you shouldn't trust that test. Here's another example.

This is intuitive I think. Because alien abductions, assuming that they occur, which I don't believe they do, are so much rare than ordinary disappearances, if you have testimony on behalf of an abduction, you should be held to higher standards than testimony that's just on behalf of some ordinary disappearance. Or think of another example.

This guy, right? Now, Bigfoots, big feet, they're very rare. Right? I actually don't believe they exist at all, but if they do exist, they must be very rare. So now a friend goes out of the woods and tells you, hey, I saw a bear and you think, oh, okay, there's probably a bear there.

But a friend goes out in the woods and says, I saw Bigfoot, that reliability of your friend, although it might have sufficed to convince you that there's a bear in the woods, doesn't suffice to convince you or shouldn't suffice to convince you that there's a Bigfoot in the woods, because the same amount of reliability doesn't measure up the same way given the extreme

rarity of Bigfoot. Okay, so this is an important point about justification. Now, what does this mean for the resurrection? I take it that resurrections are improbable events.

Of all the billions of people who have lived, how many have been resurrected? Not many, right? It's less common an event than pretty much anything I could think of. So what does that mean? Take another uncommon event, the destruction of Pompeii in 1879, kind of rare. Why do we believe that it happened? Well, we have really good evidence for it.

It's not as rare as a resurrection, so our evidence for the resurrection better be better than our evidence for the destruction of Pompeii. It better be better than our evidence for the existence of a comet that flies to the universe every 76 years or so. And it better be better than our evidence that the Eagles won the Super Bowl, which I'm glad I'm old enough to have seen it happen.

Okay, so one burden on Mike is to tell us why the testimony of the people that he was mentioning is of the quality, so much better than the evidence we have for something like the destruction of Pompeii. I can't see how it possibly is better than that evidence. Okay, now here's some other thing we have to think about, inference of the best explanation, which is something that Mike introduced the notion of for us.

Here's how an inference of the best explanation works. Given that it's very hard to know how to evaluate evidence for very improbable events like a resurrection, what we need to do is ask some sort of comparative question. Given the evidence that we have, let's consider various hypotheses that will help us explain that evidence.

Okay, and we're going to choose the hypothesis that somehow makes more sense of the evidence. This was what Mike was doing for us earlier when he was comparing the resurrection hypothesis, let's call it, to the hallucination hypothesis, and his claim was that given the evidence, the resurrection hypothesis does a better job making sense of all that evidence. Okay, now there are some features of inference of the best explanation that he didn't spend time developing.

I don't think he'll disagree with me about these features, but he'll disagree with me about where I take them. Okay, so you want to start with a hypothesis that needs some justification. Let's think about the hypothesis, the resurrection.

That's a hypothesis, and we want to know what justifies it, or what evidence that explains. Then you consider how probable some collection of evidence is, given the truth of the hypotheses, and this is crucial independently verifiable background assumptions. Why is this important? Well, suppose I say this.

I come downstairs to my kitchen one day, the cookie jar is empty. I have two daughters, Thalia and Sophia. I have two hypotheses, what happened to my cookies.

One is that Thalia, Stolum, one is that Sophia Stolum. Who do you think it was? I mean, you're

right, but how could you possibly know? You don't know until I tell you something about Thalia and Sophia, until I tell you that Thalia can't stand chocolate and Sophia loves chocolate. Until I give you some assumptions to work with, those hypotheses predict nothing.

Okay. What you're not allowed to do, though, in making up and providing these background assumptions is, you're not allowed to just make up stuff, right? That's ad hoc. If I want to establish that some hypothesis explains the evidence, I don't then get to assume basically that, oh, this hypothesis explains the evidence.

That would be ad hoc reasoning. Okay. And then what we're going to do is we're going to say belief in the hypothesis is justified when it's better than all the other hypotheses, only when it's better.

It could still be unjustified even if it is better, because it could be implausible for other reasons, but we're going to believe the hypothesis only if it's better than the others. If it's not better than the others, you're not justified in accepting it. Here's an example.

What killed the dinosaurs? I'm assuming that we don't have young Earth creationists out here. If we do, just accept this as an example of how the inference works. So we know that about 66 million years ago, 75% of all species on Earth were destroyed.

We have four hypotheses to think about. Virus, climate change, asteroid, impact, and God. Okay.

Now, as with my daughters, we have no grounds for choosing any of these hypotheses at this point, because we need some independently verifiable background assumptions to let us know what these hypotheses will predict. Virus. Here are some background assumptions.

They tend to infect single species or just closely related species, and they wipe out entire, and that they would wipe out an entire species is rare. Okay. Given those background assumptions, it looks like the fossil record doesn't support the virus hypothesis, because the fossil record is, of all these things, dying at once.

All different species. So we throw out that hypothesis, and we move on to climate change. We know we can verify that climate change occurs gradually, and then it leaves various sedimentary traces, and then we can look at the fossil evidence and see that these species didn't die gradually.

So this evidence isn't consistent with that hypothesis, so we throw it away. Then we get to asteroid impact. It's also known as the Alvarez hypothesis.

And we independently verify all these things. We know that asteroids leave craters. How do we know? We check.

We know that asteroids contain high levels of iridium. How do we know? We've examined them.

We know that large impacts in the ocean cause tsunamis, that a larger impact will cause a lot of ash in the air.

We know that if there's a lot of ash in the air, plants will die. If plants die, herbivores die, if herbivores die, predators die, carnivores, we can verify all these facts. We verify them all, and then we look around, we find a huge crater just off the Yucatan Peninsula.

We find layers of iridium in clay, about 66 million years old. We find evidence of tsunamis. This is the hypothesis that's explaining everything for us.

And it's generating these predictions about what we should expect in virtue of having these background assumptions that we can test. Okay. What about God? This is a tough one.

What does God predict about the death of species 66 million years ago? Well, in order to generate a prediction about that, we need to make some assumptions. What assumptions? Well, maybe he hates life. Maybe he wanted to make room for mammals.

Maybe he wanted to create fossils. How do we test those? Do we ask God, hey, do you hate life? Let's with all the fossils. It would be nice if we could ask God and if God could answer, but God's ways are mysterious.

We have no understanding of what goes on in God's mind. So, without being able to verify those assumptions, we just don't know whether God is a good explanation for the death of all those species and to assume what we need to in order to make it a good explanation is ad hoc. Okay.

Well, now, let's talk about the big one, the resurrection. Here's what we're trying to explain. We're trying to explain why the New Testament reports what it does about the sightings of Jesus.

I'm not going to disagree with any of Mike's historical points. He's an historian. I'm not.

I lose automatically if the debate turns into one about history. So, here are some hypotheses. First, witnesses were confused.

Second, gospels misreported the testimony. I have those blocked off from the other three because these hypotheses answer our question. Why does the New Testament say what it does? Without assuming that Jesus actually came back to life.

But we also have hypotheses that are going to sound silly, but to my other no sillier than the God one, which says super powerful aliens raised Jesus. Jesus just came back to life. We don't know how or it was God who raised him from the dead.

These hypotheses, and Mike doesn't address these, answer the question why does the New Testament report what it does by assuming that Jesus did return to life. It just is maybe he didn't return to life because he was divine. Okay, so we can look at each of these hypotheses.

We do know that the typical Judean believed a lot of silly things. They believed that a little boars urine in the ear will clear an earache. They believed that a little menstrual fluid spread on a knife will dull its blade.

I can go on and on about all the silly things they believed. So, we know they believed a lot of silly things. Maybe they believed silly.

That's an advert. That guy who walked out of the tomb had been dead. Okay, maybe the gospel narratives differ a lot.

Mike describes them as having elasticity. We know that there have been redactions. We know that there have been additions.

Maybe the reports that we have in the New Testament just aren't accurate. And if so, then we shouldn't believe what the New Testament says. Okay, so that's the stuff Mike will focus on.

But here are things that he doesn't think about. Maybe they're aliens. Maybe they're aliens monitoring earthlings.

And what they've decided to do is convince them that Jesus is a Messiah. Ridiculous, right? How could we ever know such a thing? There's no way to verify this assumption. So, to suppose it is ad hoc.

Okay, well, unknown natural causes. Lots of things go on that we can't explain. Maybe Jesus did die.

Maybe he came back to life. For what reasons? We'll never know. And if that's the case, then we can explain, yeah! He walked out of the tomb.

Weird. Finally, we can look at God. Maybe God thought it was a good idea to bring Jesus back to life.

Well, how do we know that? In order to verify the assumption, we have to be able to verify that this was God's intention. But we don't know how to do that. And so we can't draw from the God hypothesis the prediction that Jesus would have returned to life.

Now I can hear the buts. But, but Jesus described himself as divine and said that he had returned. How do we explain that? Well, we can explain that with any of those other hypotheses.

I just mentioned they all do the same explanatory work. But what about all the other miracles that Jesus performed? Don't they justify our belief that he be resurrected? Well, all the other miracles are as endowed as the resurrection. If you doubt the resurrection for reasons I've been covering, you should doubt the other miracles too.

One minute, I'm going to need two. But if Jesus were the son of, sorry, if Jesus were the son of

God, and if God wanted Jesus to return to life, and if Jesus wanted to be witnessed, then we could explain what the New Testament says. Yes.

And thank you for that great example of an ad hoc argument. You can't assume what you're trying to establish. Okay, I'm going to now conclude here in my conclusions.

We know from our discussion of justification that the evidence necessary to justify belief in the resurrection has to be very strong. Stronger than the evidence we have for things like comets and Super Bowl victories. That's one point.

Second point. We know from our discussion of inference to the best explanation that a hypothesis is justified only when it does a better job explaining the evidence than competing hypotheses. And what I'm concluding now is that the evidence for the resurrection hypothesis is not stronger than the evidence for more common events.

And the resurrection hypothesis does not explain the evidence better than numerous other hypotheses. And the resurrection hypothesis requires ad hoc background assumptions in order to do any work. So was Jesus resurrected? Maybe if you accept it on faith, you're free to accept it on faith, but you're not justified in believing so in the sense of having enough evidence.

Thank you. We're going to transition into time of rebuttal, so each of the presenters will get six minutes. Dr. Lacono goes first.

Well, thanks, Larry. So, Larry says we are not justified in belief in the resurrection because he says the resurrection is improbable. Why is it improbable? He says that we should look at things through the eyes of Bayes theorem.

And he says when we look at this we have to consider the prior probability of Jesus being raised from the dead. And the prior probability would be exceedingly low that would require such great evidence to overcome it. Historians don't use Bayes theorem in order to figure out well, I should say the overwhelming majority of them reject the use of Bayes theory theorem for several reasons.

Number one, the background knowledge is rarely known. For example, what's the prior probability of the Big Bang? What's the prior probability that the U.S. dropped nuclear bombs on Japan in World War II? You can't calculate that. It's impossible.

And many times in history you can't calculate it, especially because history, when you look at it, it involves free beans. It's not like in physics where it's like a slot machine. You put some money and push the button in the product you want comes out almost every time.

History involves free beans who many times act in ways we don't expect. Moreover, prior probability many times is easily overcome by the evidence. What's the prior probability that you will win the lottery big tomorrow? Well, if you play, you know, it's still really low.

I don't know. It's different for every one, but maybe one chance in 300 million. But what if you were to come in a couple of weeks from now and you quit school? You dropped out of school.

You don't need a job anymore. You went from driving a beater to a Bentley. You moved out of a mobile home into a mansion.

Well, then we got some evidence and his testimony that he won the lottery bears a lot of credibility at this point to overcome astronomical improbabilities, just a little bit of evidence. So it's not that difficult. It's not used by historians.

Why is the resurrection improbable? He used the warmed over use of Hume's balancing argument to say, look, we got on the one hand, we've got this testimony or the laws of nature which shows that people do not come back from the dead. It just doesn't happen, okay? And we see this with an exceptionalist regularity. On the other hand, we've got evidence for the resurrection that comes from human testimony which can be reliable, but many times it's not reliable.

And so on balance, when you look at these, you say, where does the evidence lie? Well, you go with the exceptionalist regularity with which natural law works that people don't come back from the dead and that trumps the testimony that they did. The problem with this argument is that it's based on a faulty premise over here, faulty statements over here that says the exceptionalist regularity that we witness is that corpses don't come back to life. Well, they don't come, we know from science and natural law that they don't come back to life when left to themselves or by natural causes.

But if God exists and wanted to raise Jesus, that's a game changer and all bets are off in regard to natural law because natural law informs us what typically occurs when the universe is left to itself. If I were to take a pen and drop it, it followed the floor, I could do that a million times over, it's going to do the same thing because of natural law. But if I were to drop it and all of a sudden my hand comes in and grabs it, my hand comes in and alters the normal course of events.

A miracle is just simply when the hand of God enters our universe and alters the normal course of events. So it's like, okay, we notice with an exceptionalist regularity that corpses don't come back to life by natural causes. Well, we're not saying Jesus came back from natural causes.

We're saying God raised him from the dead and that changes everything in terms of this balancing argument. Well, then he says, hypothesis has to have the prediction properties, explanatory power, I went over that and showed how you've got to explain how these guys came to have these experiences that convinced them Jesus rose from the dead. I compared the two most popular ones used by scholars, resurrection, hallucination, hypothesis.

I showed that hallucination hypothesis doesn't get us what we would predict. It would give us if it were true. In fact, just they opposite.



The resurrection hypothesis gives us everything that we would predict would be the case if it were true. So then he brings up all these other things like, well, maybe they were confused. Really? Well, confused.

How? Explain. Don't just say they were confused. How did they get confused? What did they give us some hypotheses here? What happened? Were they hallucinating? Please say they were hallucinating.

Or what was it that caused them to be confused? You just can't say they were confused. That is just to be so ambiguous and vague about something. It's not really a hypothesis at all.

What about super powerful aliens? Well, if you want to accept that, you're still granting that Jesus rose from the dead. You're just disputing the cause now, aren't you? And besides, it is entirely ad hoc and it doesn't dispute the resurrection. Believed silly things? Yeah, some of them did.

So do we. That's why we fall prey to fake news. That's why people believe in crystals and don't break this email chain.

We're superstitious as well, but that doesn't mean that Larry is. It doesn't mean that I am. It doesn't mean that Bacho or anyone in this room is.

And the fact that they were superstitious in antiquity doesn't mean they all were. Or discredit the fact that they thought that they saw Jesus. So let's hope that makes sense.

First point. We all use basis theorem even without knowing what that's called or knowing the proof behind it. We use it whenever we think about why we should want more evidence for some sort of claim than another.

If my daughter comes home from school and tells me that that our neighbor came into our classroom today, I'm going to say, oh, if she told me that the president of the United States came in the classroom today, far less probable, I'm going to say, are you sure? I want better evidence than you simply saying, yeah, the president walked into my classroom. That's the sense in which lower probability events always need better evidence. It's completely intuitive, I think.

And the point about the lottery is the red hearing because although it's vastly improbable that any one of you win the lottery, it's probability one that someone will and someone's got to win. But it's not as if someone has to be resurrected. The point about confusion, I think, was also a fairly intuitive point.

People were confused when they saw other suffering epileptic seizures. They thought they were possessed by the devil. That's the sense of confusion I had in mind, although the main point I want to make right now is this concession that Mike surprised me with.

He was willing to grant that even if it were super powerful aliens who brought Jesus back, Jesus was brought back. Fine. But that's not a miracle because if super powerful aliens bring someone back from the dead, it's via their advanced medical technology.

If something is to qualify as a miracle, it has to be the Lord God who's intervening in nature to bring someone back. So I think that the God hypothesis, it's one way of explaining why it is, there were these visions of Jesus. And correct me if I'm wrong, but no one actually talked to the masses who experienced these visions, but it was reported that masses experienced these visions.

Yeah, the eyewitnesses, yeah. Right. So there was no interview with masses of people who confirmed that they had these visions.

But be that as it may, what Mike hasn't shown and what he can't show, and which is why belief in the resurrection can't be justified, is what that causal process would have been that started with the death of Jesus and ended up with his being alive again if you grant that he was alive again. Given that we have no understanding of that process, any kind of explanation is going to be ad hoc. We're going to be saying, well, it must have been God because what else could have been? Well, it could have been super powerful aliens.

It could have been unknown natural causes. We have no idea if Jesus had come back to life what the causal epigenesis of that process was. And that's enough to cast out on the claim that it was a miracle.

And so that's my case. Not justified. Well, this is a point where we're going to enter into moderated dialogue.

And just as a side comment, it's been a year since we've done this. And I'm glad to report that there's been some changes. Dr. Shapiro dressed down while Dr. Lacona dressed up.

But then there's a reversal in presentations. Dr. Shapiro's slides are much more sophisticated and complex than our last time, and Dr. Lacona just decided to skip the slides completely. So there's changes on the horizon.

Well, 18th century French philosopher Voltaire once said, or at least it was attributed to him, and I don't know if we can historically verify this, that we have to judge a man or a woman, an individual, but he's or her questions rather than by their answers. And we've been hearing lots of answers on both sides. What I want to ask is, if you could pose one question to your opponent to continue to move this conversation further along, we'll be the question you would want to ask.

And we can arm wrestle, or we can just click. Well, first I'd like to ask him. So, Larry, in your book you say, and I quote, Miracle should be completely overwhelmingly awe-inspiringly improbable.

They should be the kinds of things that only few people in the world have ever witnessed. So rare are they. They should be so absolutely incredible that they make the mind leap to the conclusion that supernatural forces are at work.

And you still hold that because that was just two years ago, right? I stand by that. Okay. Now, so you want these things, and it seems to me that if someone actually rose from the dead, that would seem to meet that.

That would, yeah. I mean, that's a necessary condition for a miracle. But just earlier in the book, just a few pages earlier you wrote, and this is what surprised me.

Quote, we might also consider the possibility that on very rare occasions, very, very rare, dead people simply come back to life as the result of natural causes. Perhaps Jesus was one of those very rare people. So it seems to me that the very thing that it would take to be a miracle, when you get it, you say, oh, yeah, but maybe it's just one of those very, very rare things.

I know I said it would take a supernatural event to do this, but maybe it wasn't supernatural at all. Maybe it's just this very, very rare things that a person for no reason whatsoever comes back from the dead. To me, I just wanted to, when I read that, I wanted to say, stop playing with these arguments that you're given here about improbable and just admit, you don't want Jesus to be raised from the dead, and you'll just use any argument that works.

Is that your question? Yeah, like, why? I didn't hear a question work. Why? So my question is, why not just admit you don't want to think Jesus was raised from the dead, and so you end up contradicting yourself and coming up with all kinds of like, I mean, there's just nothing that would ever convince you. Nothing! Oh, that's not true.

What would convince you? Here's, I'll start with what would convince me. If I could take a time machine and go back and examine the dead body and then see him alive again, I'd be convinced. How do you know you weren't having a hallucination? It's possible, right? Maybe you're one of those very, very rare occasions, right? No, I'm saying I would be convinced.

I could be wrong, but that would convince me, okay? It might be that the doctor who's been prescribing me morphine thinks there he is talking about the resurrection again, but that would convince me. Well, what's the difference between that then? And then with Jesus, but then you still say, we might also consider the possibility to own very rare occasions, very, very rare dead people simply come back to life. Yeah, I don't.

So the rare thing is that that would convince you and then you say it wouldn't convince you. I'd want to look at the body. I'd want to know that this body was dead, and then I can't say it's impossible for someone who's dead to come back from life.

Right, you're not saying it's impossible. I'm not saying it's impossible. But here you're saying even a dead person could simply come back to life by natural causes.

We have to consider that possibility. Yeah, I'm saying it's not impossible. So we have to consider that possibility, but that doesn't mean we're justified in believing it.

Well, in a book, it seems like you're talking that way. That we are justified in believing? That that would be sufficient to disqualify it as a miracle. As long as there is any sort of naturalistic explanation, no matter how improbable we can't say that a miracle happened.

I agree with that. If there is a naturalistic explanation, it's not a miracle. But here you say, and you said it in your talk, in your rebuttal there, you said, you know, we have to, like you said, well, in your talk, I don't have this thing on me now.

I'll put it away. Oh, unknown natural causes. So, I mean, you can look at that unknown natural causes.

Very, very rare dead people simply come back to life. It's like, just because you can mention these things, it doesn't mean that it's plausible, or can explain the facts as well, or, and of course they're all entirely ad hoc, right? Yeah, it's all ad hoc. That's my point.

Okay. Saying it was God is as ad hoc as saying it was an unknown natural cause. Why? If Jesus comes on the scene and he claims to be God's son, and he predicts his death and resurrection, and then we have evidence that had happened.

And it seems to me that's no longer ad hoc to say God did it if he'd already predicted God was going to raise him. Okay. Tell me why God would have done that.

To vindicate his son for his teachings. He was facing, he was facing opposition, and people calling him a false prophet. And so, when they challenged him, he said, hey, destroy this temple, and three days I'll raise it, or he provided the resurrection sign of Jonah as the sign that he was who he claimed to be.

And that his teachings were true, that God would vindicate him in that way. So, as long as he's claiming his resurrection that God was going to raise him to vindicate him, it seems to me that that just takes away the ad hoc element. It stands to reason, right? What do you mean by that? I think, what I mean is, you're now making up a story that's making it seem reasonable that it was God behind Jesus' resurrection.

But Jesus claimed it would be. Yeah. At least I've got some evidence for saying, it's not ad hoc because I've got evidence, someone's saying, I'm going to be raised from the dead, and it's going to be God that raised me, and then he's raised from the dead.

At least I've got some evidence. When you're talking about super powerful aliens, you don't have any evidence for it. So, at least I would think that the resurrection hypothesis is going to trump super powerful aliens.

They wanted people to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. So, he said all the things that he said

in order to lure people into believing that he was the Messiah. Now, you say, how are you going to independently verify those background assumptions? And I'm going to say, you know, Mike, you're right, I can't, it's a dumb explanation, it's ad hoc.

Now, how are you going to independently verify your background assumptions? Well, as a historian, I can't verify that it was actually God. Well, that's why you're not justified in believing it was the resurrection. Well, but I could say that we have evidence that it wouldn't be super powerful aliens.

He roars as a prominent astronomer, and he says that the closest planet that would be capable of supporting life is 23,000 light years away from us. I don't think you understand how powerful these aliens are. But then he talks about what it would take for an alien capable of, say, abducting a human, what it would take to make that happen.

They would have to be traveling generations to get here for 23,000 years. The alien thing is not meant to be taken literally. Of course not.

So, it doesn't matter how far away they are. I can make up a thousand stories that are as verifiable as your story and no worse than your story. So, your influence is not to a better explanation, it's to an as good explanation.

No, I disagree. I know. You've got good evidence that it wouldn't be the aliens.

And you acknowledge that it's ad hoc, it's meant simply just to answer resurrection. I've got a guy saying he's the son of God. My guy says that too.

He's known to perform miracles. Yeah. So, bottom line, you're not disputing resurrection then.

You're just disputing the cause. The evidence still stands. Jesus rose from the dead.

Thank you, Larry. I don't accept that. Thank you.

But I'm putting a plausible naturalistic explanation. All you did was you said super aliens and you said it works as well as the God hypothesis. Still, we got resurrection.

Nope. Why not? Because you haven't told me why I should believe that your cause is better than my cause. Oh, I showed you why resurrection is better than not resurrection.

By resurrection. Here's Jesus' return from the dead. Okay.

I understand resurrection in a more narrow way. I'm taking resurrection to mean that. And here you'll have to pardon my confusion when I get mixed up with the Trinity, which maybe you can explain to me someday.

But I'd like to think that God decided to bring Jesus back to life. Is that okay? Sure. Sure.

But I could say, tell you what, we can dispute the cause. There's plenty of events in history of

which historians dispute the cause but they don't dispute the event. I presented evidence tonight for the event.

I know. That's why I was continuing for the event, not the cause. So, I'll grant you, super aliens raised Jesus.

All right. So, we're both agreement now based on the arguments and the evidence I provided, Jesus rose from the dead. We just don't agree on the cause.

Okay. Well, I'm glad you agree with the super-powerful aliens. Which, at that point, could I interject? No.

And since we're going the direction- I get a question, don't I? Natural aliens, it might be good for you to pose your question as well. My question's very similar. Mike, what would it take to cause you to doubt the resurrection? Well, I do, honestly, I do doubt the resurrection at times.

I already do at times. And it's not due to a lack of data. It's emotional doubt.

It's, what if I'm wrong? You know, this has- But I want to know about the data. What evidence? Oh, what evidence. I think I might have said this last year, but I'm serious about it.

If they discovered an ossuary, a bone box in Jerusalem, that archaeologists found it, and it had some bones in it, and they could tell that it was the bones of a crucified victim, because maybe a nail was still embedded in the ankle that they couldn't get out. And there was a piece of papyrus written in Greek, and it says, we fooled the world until today, and it's signed by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And they take some DNA off the bones, and they compare it with DNA from the blood samples on the shroud of turn, and they say, yep, this is it.

Well, Paul says, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. There's his bones, my faith is worthless. I would be convinced at that point.

If you could really show that those were the bones of Jesus, no question about it. I'd give up Christianity. I'd say, this is one of those cases where I really looked at the evidence.

I was convinced by the evidence, and I was wrong. But it would have to be that strong to find Jesus' actual bones. Well, no, you ask me if, you know, in what instance I gave you one.

If I could come up with a hypothesis, a naturalistic hypothesis of what happened to Jesus, like if hallucination hypothesis explained the data better than the resurrection hypothesis, then I would take it. If myth explained it better, if metaphor explained it better, if a naturalistic hypothesis could account for the data better than the resurrection hypothesis, then I'd have to go with it. Well, it seemed like Mike was asking the whole series of questions.

So if you have more than one, we might allow for that. No, no, I'd love to have as much time for questions from the audience as we can. Okay.

So then one last question. This is Karl Marx famously stated. The philosophers, sorry Larry, have only interpreted the world in various ways.

The point is, however, to change it. So these words are actually also engraved on this grave. So the question for both of you is, does your view have power to change the world? Or to put it another way, do you think the world will be a better place if more people embrace your view? If so, how? Can I go first? Yes.

Okay. I am an atheist. I regard myself as a good person.

I've been faithful to my wife for over 30 years now. Raised lovely daughters. And I care deeply about people who are less well off than I am, people in need.

People like refugees who, I think it was Jesus said, they should be given water when they're thirsty and when they're hungry and sheltered when they need it. I care deeply about those people. And it's consistent with my worldview that we do everything to help them.

Now, it seems to me, and I'm, as you can tell, a probability guy, there's correlations that I have a hard time understanding with evangelical voters. So we know who our president is. We know, this is not in dispute, that he's a very un-Christian person.

He's a flanderer. He's a xenophobe. He's a racist.

None of this is in dispute, right? Yes, it is. I dispute that. Well, I don't think he's a xenophobe.

Look, my dad was from Honduras, so I am 50% Latino. He would not be led into this country now. Yes, he would.

My dad got here legally. Yeah, when? People can still come here legally. Our president, this is not in dispute, is doing everything in his power to prevent refugees from coming into our country.

Well, I think, but we need to. And let me finish my point. We can get off from this point.

Let me finish my point. So we have ruling our country now, one of the most un-Christian men I can imagine. And yet 84% of the evangelicals who voted voted for him.

So there's a correlation. This is not in dispute. There's a correlation between having conservative Christian views and voting for people who want to make sure that AR-15s are easily purchasable.

That's true. They are voting for candidates who are opposed to gun control. You can't dispute that.

That is true. They are voting for people who want to limit the flow of the worst off in the world into our country. They want to build a wall to separate the poorest, most desperate people

from entering our country.

I can't explain why there's this correlation, but it seems to me that if more people had my values, which seem to me Christian values without the God, then the world would be a better place. I wouldn't say those are necessarily Christian values. I think they're liberal, progressive values.

Feeding the poor? Feeding the poor? Feeding the poor. Is it progressive value? That can be something, it's not certainly not intrinsic to atheism. Atheism has no value.

It doesn't mean it's immoral. It is amoral. It carries no worldview.

Atheism is just simply the lack of belief in God. You have no tenants. It's not like... That's false.

Mal. Polpot. They're all atheists.

They're all atheists. That's not to say atheists are bad. It's just to say atheism does not dictate morals.

It has no morals within there that says, okay, we as atheists believe that you should do this. Christianity, on the other hand, you have Jesus that does say, be kind and good to the poor, that God loves the poor, that God loves the humble, that God loves the downtrodden. You do have these things that Jesus is saying that we should be doing, and as Christians, if we do live according to what Jesus taught, let's say in a terminal amount, we would have a much better world.

But as an atheist, you choose to do these things, which are good. I'm glad you do. And I think you and I can get along.

I mean, I like you. I think we have a friendship here. Yeah, I hope so.

So even though we disagree on the number of things, we can have that. But I'm glad you have these moral choices as an atheist, but it's not because you're an atheist that you have them. There are no morals within atheism, but there are morals within Christianity.

I think... Why can Stalin and Mao and these guys... Should I name some evil Christians with that? Yeah, but they're going against what Jesus taught. When Stalin and Mao and Pol Pot do those things, they're not going against atheism anymore, then you are doing things for atheism. Atheism is not a moral code, you're right.

Right. That doesn't mean that atheists can't have moral codes. Oh, agreed, but it's not intrinsic within or built into atheism.

It's a personal choice you're making. So at least we have the agreement that an atheist and a Christian can be friends. I hope so.



And that we could have even a very spirited and yet cordial conversation. And now I think we're going to hand it over to Pastor Matt. By the way, we should go to the range and go shooting some time.

It's fine. Fine. Okay.

Well, our thanks so far. Dr. Borjati, thank you for moderating. Dr. Shapiro, Dr. Lacona, thank you.

And thank you to the audience. I know you were engaged in the conversation, but I was very impressed as we... As the conversation went forward, there was... What could only be characterized as a spirited murmur started to rise, right? And response to different points. So we really appreciate that.

You guys set the stage for us to engage. We want to give everyone an opportunity to engage with some questions. You know, both Mike and Larry are going to hang around afterwards and they'd welcome some questions as well after things are over.

But we'd love some questions here in the context of the group as well. We have about 15 minutes that we can do that in. For about two minutes, though, we'd love your feedback.

We'd love to know what you think. There should be cards on your chairs. And if you'd give us just some feedback, this is something that we had worked.

We're very gracious to Bacho and to the Campus Crusade Ministry down in OSU's campus for helping to bring this here. This is a wonderful event, wonderful time to be able to engage in topics like this. So they highly prize feedback in their process there and we'd love your feedback here as well.

So we're going to cue music for about two minutes so that it's not more awkwardly quiet than it needs to be. So for about two minutes, we'd love for you to fill out the feedback cards now. Whatever you're comfortable sharing, I don't feel as compelled as if you have to write more than you'd like to.

But about two minutes from now, we'll have individuals collect them on the outside, rose up in the balcony. We'll have our sound guy go out and collect them as well. So think about two minutes and then I'll come back up and we'll initiate the cue and answer.

But in order to ask questions, we're going to ask the following because we do want to continue to model respectful dialogue. So in order to ask a question at the mic, what we're going to ask is, I'm going to be in the back of the room. If you'd like to ask a question, I'm simply going to screen the question for you and then we'll send you up to the mic.

So we would love to do that and we're going to ask that you sit through just a moment of maybe awkward silence here. We'll let Bacho begin to moderate this time. But if you'd have a

question you'd like to ask, I'll be in the back.

Just check with me and then I'll send you up to the mic and we'll go from there. Alright, I think we got our first question. Thank you, gentlemen.

It was really a wonderful. Could you speak up, please? That was a wonderful debate. I'd like to ask you how each of you feels about the fact that the apostles were willing to die for that belief.

If I knew that something was a sham, I don't know if I'd want to give my life for that sham, but obviously all but one of them did not survive. Thank you. I agree with you that no one would want to give their life for a sham.

So people give their lives for causes they believe in. The apostles believed that Jesus rose from the dead. We see martyrs in all religions.

So the fact that the apostles died is evidence for the fact that they believed in Jesus. It's not evidence for Jesus. I agree with that.

I think Larry's right there. I would only add one point and I think it's an important one. There is a difference between Christians and Muslims and atheists and people who die for their worldview today and when the apostles died for their worldview.

The apostles died for what they believed was true, but they would have known whether it was true or false. They would have known if Jesus did not rise from the dead. In other words, they weren't lying, but they would have known whether he rose or not.

Whereas say Christians who died for their faith, their belief today are dying for what they believe is true, but for all we know it could be false. There is a significant difference between dying for what you believe to be true and dying for what you know to be true or false. Liars make poor martyrs.

The disciples actually believed it and they would have been in a position to know as well. Next question. This is for Dr. Shapiro.

You are evidence based, obviously, by wanting to take a time machine back to see the human body of Jesus to see it resurrected. But yet you haven't addressed credibility. So you want evidence.

So you've done this trip. You've come back to your family and you've said it's true. I've seen it.

So what's your credibility? How is your credibility to your daughters or your family any different than the apostles? I would hope my family would not believe me. Although, if they should be skeptical, right, but I hope that they would say to me, let's go back in time again because I don't believe you and I want to see it with my own eyes. And a few selfies would help too.

Yeah. That's right. Yeah.

No one should be willing to believe vastly improbable events like someone coming back from the dead without a lot of evidence. I think it's only vastly improbable by natural causes. But again, Jesus, nobody was claiming he was raised by natural causes.

So if you're committed to atheism, of course, it's going to be impossible for you because there's no God. So it's going to be vastly improbable. But once you see that there is a spiritual dimension, reality is evidenced by well-evident, near-death experiences, viridical apparitions, extreme answered prayer, paranormal phenomena, you start to look at the evidence for Jesus that he not only existed but that he claimed to be God's uniquely divine son, that he predicts his imminent death and resurrection, and then all the evidence points that way.

To me, it's not improbable at all. I agree with Mike that the resurrection is very probable given God's existence. And you said that in your book, too.

In fact, I think you said in your book, the probability is won. Yeah. Next question.

So my name is Tim, and I admire you for your moral codes, but I am a Christian and I am a horrible person. But for Christ, I wouldn't be the way I am selfish and I lie and I cheat and I steal and all kinds of stuff. So glad that you could do it on your own, but it took Christ for me.

Well, I'm glad you found something. My question is for you, Dr. Shapiro, and I think Dr. Lacona kind of alluded to it when Christ said he was going to raise from the dead. But not only that, but we can go back thousands of years in the Old Testament.

It's all the prophets predicted that this was going to happen also. So I just kind of wanted to get your thoughts on I don't know how much more evidence you would need that we're talking ancient times that we would expect to see that this was going to happen. There are different ways to understand what you're talking about as a kind of evidence.

There's lots of myth in every culture, right? So there's nothing especially unique about the existence of mythology and prophecy. Now, one way to understand the effect of this is contrary to the direction you want to go. Let's start with an example.

Suppose you go to a house one night and you hear a bump up stairs, your first thought would be something like, I wonder what fell. And that would be, I think, a reasonable attitude to have. But if you were told that the widow of Jones had been viciously murdered upstairs and the house was known to be haunted, when you walk into this house you hear a bump, your first thought is, oh my God, it's haunted.

So what's happened is you've immersed yourself in a kind of environment in that second case where you are primed to believe something, although the evidence for what it is you're primed to believe is no different from the evidence you had in the first scenario where you simply walked into your house and heard a bump. So my thought about the sorts of phenomena that you're bringing to our attention is that this is in fact prejudicial in a way, and it makes me more suspicious that when the apostles were reporting what they were reporting, they were like the

people had walked into the haunted house. All right, next question.

So this is a question mainly for Dr. Shapiro. How do you explain the generations of people that have believed and can testify to having effects of God in their life? Christianity is a very compelling worldview. It's a very comforting worldview.

In my view, I'm going to be on this earth for another 15, 20 years, and then I'm going to die, and I'll never see my love once again. This isn't happy, it's not happy news, but a lot of people might find that so unsettling that if someone told them, here's a view you can accept where once you die, you'll come back to life. You'll see all those people you loved in your lifetime.

I mean, how can I compete with that? So I think the growth of Christianity, I mean, think about the wild spread of Christianity. It's spread like wildfire, and while it was spreading like that, Judaism was going down. Judaism isn't that popular religion when you think about what it has to offer.

It's no wonder, I think, that so many people find comfort in Christianity, and I have nothing bad to say about that, but the fact that so many people find comfort in Christianity just speaks to its attractiveness as a way of believing about things, it doesn't speak to its truth. This will be our last question. Hello, this question is for Dr. LaCoya.

If we do reject your hypothesis, the resurrection hypothesis, what does that imply for the majority of people who concern themselves with Jesus in the world, and that is the members of the other Abrahamic religions, the Jews and the Muslims who do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead, but also call themselves Abrahamic religions. Okay, let me just make sure I understand. What does that imply both theologically? If he actually rose from the dead, what does that imply theologically and geopolitically for the relationship? If he did not rise from the dead? No resurrection between Christians and then the other parties, Jews and Muslims in the world that don't believe, that believe Jesus existed, of course, but did not rise from the dead to cure humanity of its original sin.

So I just want to make sure, please stay by the microphone for a moment. I just want to make sure I understand your question. You're saying if Jesus did not rise from the dead, not that person... If you look at the power, go ahead, go ahead.

You're not saying if a person doesn't believe Jesus rose from the dead, but he did, what does that mean for that other person? You're saying if Jesus did not rise from the dead, what does that mean for others of the... The relationship of Christians to that of Jews and Muslims who all believe in the same God, they have different interpretations. The relationships between Christians, Jews and Muslims. Which, if you look at the current power struggle in the world, it does speak volumes about the relationships between America, the Middle East, and particularly Jerusalem.

I think the problem with some of the relationships, and listen, I'm not a politician, so I don't get

into this. I was telling Larry a little earlier, I went to Israel last year, my wife and I did, and not only did we visit many of the really cool sites, but we talked to Palestinians, Palestinian Muslims, Palestinian Christians, Palestinian agnostics, Jewish Christians, and Jewish Jews. What about Arabic Jewish Christians? What's that? I've never met a Jewish Christian.

Messianic, oh yeah, I mean, over in Israel? Yeah, we met an attorney over there who is a Messianic Jew, he's Jewish, and he's a Christian. Anyway, as far as Christians are concerned, I'd say we're fine with getting along with Jews and Muslims, because we are supposed to, Jesus tells us, I mean, he tells us we're to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. So for Muslims and Jews who aren't even our enemies, of course, all the more, we're supposed to love our neighbor, let me finish, we're supposed to love our neighbor, whether they're believers or not, and he gives us the parable of the good Samaritan, you know? So we're supposed to get along.

I think some of the problem, and at least when we were in Israel, when we talked to Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian agnostics, they were saying the major problem over there was the corruption of the Palestinian Authority, and that was preventing a lot of the tensions that Israel wanted to get along in peace with a lot of the Palestinians, but it was the Palestinian Authority that was being pressured by some of the neighboring Muslim nations that was causing some of the problem there. With Jews, man, I love Jews. I have no, it's from, I mean, we're all from the Judeo-Christian thing.

We just believe that Jesus was the Messiah, Jews don't. But within Islam, however, when you look at the Quran, there are verses that say, don't take the Jews and Christians as friends. If you do, Allah will look at that as though you are one of them, and that you are not to be friends.

In fact, you're to ambush and kill the disbelievers. So, I mean, this is the teachings of Muhammad in the Quran. It is not a religion that is friendly toward non-Muslims, but I think in terms of Jews and Christians, we're fine with getting along with the others.

But what in the very improbable event that your worldview is wrong? Does that mean that Christians and therefore Christian nation should have no say in what's going on in the Middle East during conflicts? Well, whether the U.S. gets involved in Middle East conflicts, that's not a Christian matter right there. But we do have 84% of evangelicals that voted for Donald Trump, who then moved the embassy to Jerusalem and caused the lives of 20 Palestinians. Well, I mean, come on.

That kind of political thing can be disputed. We can talk about these things. But, I mean, this debate is over whether Jesus rose from the dead, not whether you're a Republican or Democrat.

But what does it imply then if people do believe that Jesus rose from the dead, but he doesn't, but he doesn't. Is this a fairytale that is ascribing very much power to everything and every interaction around the world? Yeah, and what if Christianity is true? Then the Christian ethics

and what atheists and like Larry and others are pushing against an ethic which would go against a biblical ethic, well, then they're wrong and they're causing authority of culture to go in the way that God would prefer. So, I mean, we can play these counterfactuals and stuff like that.

But look, I don't want to talk about political stuff. I'd rather talk about, is Christianity true? Basically, did Jesus rise from the dead? That's the question we're talking about here this evening. I just wanted to point out that it was unfair of this dialogue to exclude a majority population of the world nearly who do believe in God but don't accept the fact of the resurrection.

And you're talking about Muslims. Muslims and Jews. Listen, I have debated Muslims.

I think it's one of the most easily refuted religions in the world and I'm happy to say that whether it's in this country or in South Africa or where I've debated. It's bankrupt of evidence. Okay, and many think that is true of the resurrection.

Okay. Okay. Well, and we appreciate that.

Unfortunately, we can't include every voice on every topic, so we appreciate the feedback and appreciate the other questions that were individuals were longing to ask in the back. Thank you all for engaging in the discussion. I'm encouraged just to know that as we sit here, right, on both sides, we can hear things articulated that a lot of times we can't put into words ourselves.

I think that's incredibly encouraging. If I could be so bold, though, Dr. Lacona, you have to study up on aliens. You just the deficit of knowledge.

And Dr. Shapiro, I hate to contradict anything, but I had an earache the other day and a little bit of boars urine. And it felt immeasurably better, so. Thank you so much.

Gentlemen, both of you, thank you, Bacho, for moderating the discussion. Thanks for joining us today. If you'd like to learn more about the work and ministry of Dr. Mike Lacona, visit [RisenJesus.com](http://RisenJesus.com), where you can find authentic answers to genuine questions about the reliability of the Gospels and the resurrection of Jesus.

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