

# OpenTheo

## Interrogating Jesus - Veritas Forum Lecture at Texas A&M

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### Risen Jesus - Mike Licona

In this lecture at Texas A&M University, Dr. Licona discusses whether we can rationally believe in the resurrection of Jesus. He then engages with a panel of prominent students who ask tough questions about the resurrection.

## Transcript

Hello and welcome to the Risen Jesus podcast with Dr. Mike Licona. This past weekend, February 23rd, 2025, Dr. Licona had the pleasure of speaking at the Veritas Forum at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. He presented a rational defense for the resurrection of Jesus, and then engaged with questions from a panel of four of us.

We're prominent Aggies. Oh, good evening everyone. So, all of us want to make wise decisions.

It helps us to have a better life. And so, for example, you were trying to figure out which college you were going to go to. You did a lot of research.

You looked at all the data, and you made a wise decision. And that is why you were here rather than Austin. Whoa! But there is another decision that you will be called to make sometime in the future.

That is more important than the present one that you made in the university to attend. That decision will be, should you get married? And if you want to get married, who should you marry? And that is a tough decision. It's an important one.

And I can tell you, when I went to college, I was really excited. I wanted two things. I wanted a good education, and I wanted to find a good wife.

And the priority wasn't necessarily in that order. Now, I came from a family where my dad cheated on my mom, and so she divorced and left him when I was five. And she married my stepdad a few years later.

And he was a good man. But he came from marriage a divorce because his wife had cheated on

him. So I knew, based on those two, plus the fact that the divorce rate in the United States was so high, that marriage was not going to be one of the easiest things in life to do.

So I wanted to make a good decision, a good choice about my spouse, and I knew I needed to get some wisdom on this. So when I went to college, I began asking married couples about what should I be looking for. Now, some married couples are going to be very happily married, and I'm saying, why do you think you made a good choice? What were you looking for? And then other married couples, they weren't so happy.

And I'd say, tell me what you wish you had been looking for. What did you miss? Let me learn from your mistake. And so a lot of the same answers were given over that time.

And by the time I finished my undergrad work, I took all those answers and I found, you know, I could really put them into five different categories, which I came to call the five C's of complete compatibility. This relationship brought to you by the letter C. And then when I started grad school, then I got even more analytical. So when I'd asked if you were on a date, I would, after the date, I would drop her off at her apartment, then I'd come home to my apartment and start a file on her.

And so I had these five categories, and I'd list these five categories and how I thought we connected in each of them. Now, you can only know so much about a girl after one date. So I would put my impressions there, and I thought, okay, well, here's some other areas I need to investigate on.

And so I'd write out questions or some way to kind of find out some things on our next date. And then after a few dates, even if I were developing some affection for her, if I didn't feel that we were connecting adequately, I stopped pursuing the friendship. And then I met Debbie, and 18 months later, we got married.

And in a month and a half, it will be 38 years ago that we got married. Thank you. So there's value in getting wisdom in making decisions.

But there's another decision that you're going to make in life that's even more important than the one about the selection of your spouse, and that is your worldview. Because the worldview is going to determine and influence you on how you are going to live your life. You're going to make a lot of decisions based on your worldview.

And it's not only this life, but it could definitely have an impact on your eternity. What eternity is going to be like for you? Where are you going to be? So it's really important. I wanted to make the right decision because I figured I may only have one chance to get this right.

Now, of course, if Buddhism or Hinduism is correct, I'm going to have many chances to get this right. But if Islam is correct and I'm a Christian, well, I'm in deep kimchi when I die. So I wanted to get this right.

So how do you do this? So I looked and Christianity, Jesus offered a test by which we could know that he is who he claimed. So he would do miracles or he would confront his interlocutors. They would confront him and say, show us a sign.

Give us some evidence that you are who you are claiming to be because he was making some really radical claims. And he basically said his resurrection would be that sign. So the bottom line is if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then it's he's a false prophet whom no rational person should follow.

But if he did rise from the dead, its game set match Christianity's true, period. And so that gives us something very serious to think about. But that test that Jesus gave about his resurrection is meaningless to us today unless we can actually test it.

It's not a matter of just why he gave that test and only the people in his day could test it. I mean, well, that might be good for them, but it doesn't help us today. But can we test it today? So this is the thing I set out to do when I enrolled in a doctoral program.

I said, I'm going to investigate that as a historian. I spent the first two years studying the philosophy of history, historical method, and I said, I'm going to apply this to the resurrection of Jesus. And then during that period of time, I figured, well, I need to subject this to unsympathetic experts.

So you do that not only through peer-reviewed process with journal articles and things like that, but I wanted to get into debate. And so I decided that I'm going to debate some of the top skeptics out there today and see how they would respond to this. And so I've had like 37 public debates.

Most of those have been on the resurrection of Jesus. And the more I've done it, the more I've become convinced that the resurrection actually happened. It's not because I'm special or anything like that.

Because I'm not. I have an average IQ. My dad told me what it is.

I share it with you. But I forgot the number. I am a gifted student.

So in school, when they gave me a C, it was a gift. I'm really honest about this. I really am.

So I got C's all the way up through college. I think my final GPA was 2.8. But I finally understood later on I found I got ADD. And so I started through some medication for that.

It really helps. So anyway, so what I'm going to do is I'm going to share with you some of my journey and what I learned. All right.

So the first thing I want to talk about is the practice of history. What do historians do and how does it work? Well, my friend here, she could tell us about that. But she's not on the mic.

So I am and I'm going to share it with you. So some preliminary issues is the practice of history as Richard Evans at Cambridge, a professor of history there, says, doing history is like looking through a window. You're looking through a window into the past.

And that window isn't always clear. A lot of times there's dirt and there's fog on it and you can't see things clearly. And the reason being is because sources and we're missing some things and sometimes the sources.

We don't know how much we can trust them and sometimes the sources don't agree with one another. So some things are clear. Some things aren't that clear.

So the historians objective is to arrive at an essentially faithful representation of what occurred. We're not looking for exhaustive accounts. We're not looking for something that we can say.

This absolutely happened as it said. We're looking for an essentially faithful representation, an accurate gist of what occurred. And because none of us can get into a time machine and return to the past to verify our conclusions, we are looking for a description of the past that's probably true to various degrees rather than we can be certain that it's true.

Now, a lot of times in our present day, if we're looking at something in the past, we can get additional confidence because we have videos. We have audio recordings. We have all this kind of stuff.

So we can get to things a little better than we can in the distant past. So the greatest hindrance to understanding the past is that historians have what are called horizons. And horizons are based on our race, our gender, ethics, nationality, our political, religious, and philosophical assumptions.

The way we were raised, the academic institutions we attend, and the very group of people whose acceptance and respect we desire. There's just no way around it. And all of us have these biases in our horizons.

They're like a pair of sunglasses we put on, and each of them, each of our glasses are tinted a little differently. That's how why in politics or in religion or whatever, we can all be looking at the same thing and arrive at radically different conclusions. So it's not, I realize that as a Christian, when I'm embarked in this investigation on the resurrection of Jesus, I've got my own biases.

I want it to be true. I want my faith to be confirmed. And I understood at that point that I was not exempt from that and that this bias on my part definitely had the potential to compromise the integrity of my investigation.

So if I really wanted to do an investigation, I had to put some kind of a check on my horizon. It's not just a matter of recognizing that I've got this problem. I had to take steps to work through it.

But it's not just the Christian who has this challenge. It's everyone. Dale Allison is one of the most elite New Testament scholars in the world.

He teaches at Princeton. And here's what he writes. Some we might think of as having no theological agenda are partly motivated by an animus against traditional Christian doctrine, which is in reality just another sort of theological agenda.

The trite truth is that none of us is without philosophical bias or theological interest when we sit down to study Christian origins. I remember in one of my debates with the, with Bart Ehrman, perhaps the most influential skeptical New Testament scholar in the world. And he accused me of bias and I said, well, of course, yeah, Bart, I'm biased.

But you're biased too. And he said, well, of course I am. I said, so what's your point? We're all biased.

Now I've taken five steps in order to manage my bias and to put it in check. What have you done? So, Chris Lorenz, he's a professor of philosophy of history and historiography of just general, he's a general historian. He's not studying Jesus or religion or anything like that.

He's just studying philosophy of history and history in general. And here's what he writes. A proper philosophy of history must elucidate the fact that historians present reconstructions of a past reality on the basis of factual research and discuss the adequacy of these reconstructions.

At the same time, it must elucidate the fact that these discussions seldom lead to a consensus and that therefore pluralism is a basic characteristic of history as a discipline. We shouldn't be surprised then since pluralism is that basic component of history, of even modern historical things. Like you were telling us at dinner tonight about some discrepancies in the accounts of, oh, I forgot what it was now, about Gettysburg, yeah.

And even you go back even something more recent, like the burning of the Reichstag in Munich, 1933. Some say it was the Communists who did it, some say it was the Nazis who did it. Historians are, we don't know.

Some say one, some say the other, but we can't know for sure. So pluralism is a basic characteristic of history as a discipline. We don't require consensus.

So in summary, and there are preliminary issues here, all historians have biases and a consensus of historians on a topic is often absent. Now with that in mind, let's jump into the case for the resurrection of Jesus. Tonight I'm going to build, I'm going to construct a historical case for the resurrection of Jesus using two major building blocks.

Facts and Method. Now that's so simple that even those in Austin can understand. Let's start with the facts.

And here I'm going to focus on what we're going to refer to as historical bedrock. That's a term

that Paula Fredrickson, she's not a Christian. She teaches at Boston University.

She came up with that. I like this term because historical bedrock, she calls facts passed down. Now there are things that we look at and some things are better attested than others.

So when we come to Jesus, his death by crucifixion is better. We've got better evidence for that than we have for his resurrection. That's the way it is in history and all of history.

And so bedrock would be those that are so strong that virtually all historians would grant. They'd agree on this because the data is so compelling. So if a hypothesis cannot account for the historical bedrock, then that hypothesis needs to be revised or abandoned.

So let's look at the bedrock when it comes to Jesus related to his fate. Here's a timeline. Most scholars today agree that Jesus was crucified in either April of the year 30 or April of 33.

It's about 50-50. It really doesn't matter. I kind of lean toward 33, but 30 is around number.

Let's just go with that. It doesn't really matter. Then they say that the first gospel to be written was Mark, the gospel of Mark.

And Mark wrote between the years 65 and 70. Some scholars go later. Some go earlier than that, but the vast majority say between the years 65 and 70.

Then they say Matthew and Luke wrote between the years 70 and 85, and John somewhere between the years 90 and 95. Now again, some scholars disagree with this. I'm not saying this is correct.

We just don't know for sure. Good arguments can be made I think for before, but we just don't know. This is where the vast majority hold today.

Now, I want to focus on that period between when Jesus was crucified and when the first gospel Mark was written. All right. Now, why is that? We'll get into that in a little, but here's the thing.

If we can establish a number of this historical bedrock that occurred before the gospels were written, then any kind of objections that one might give to the gospel, such as, I mean, it's common for skeptics to say. We don't know who wrote them. They're biased.

They contain contradictions. They were written too long after the events they described. They weren't written by eyewitnesses.

I'm not saying those things are true, but those are the things skeptics will raise. But all of those are irrelevant if we can establish these things from sources that predate the gospels. So let's look at some things.

There was a guy named Paul, and we've got there's like 13 letters attributed to Paul in the New

Testament. And of those 13 letters, the vast majority of scholars today, critical scholars will say Paul wrote at least seven of those. And then there's split 50-50 on two of them.

And then the remaining four, the majority of scholars say they don't think Paul wrote those. They think maybe one of his students or someone else wrote those. I'm not here to say whether he did or not.

We'll just focus to make things real simple and to make other things irrelevant. I'm just going to focus on those sources that everyone agrees Paul wrote. Now, one of those letters that he wrote that everyone agrees he wrote is Paul's letter to the church in Galatia.

It's called Galatians in our New Testament. And Paul in there in chapter one says that three years after his conversion, and most scholars think Paul converted to Christianity. By the way, he'd been out persecuting Christians.

He was a Pharisee, a leader in the Jews in Jerusalem. And he's out persecuting Christians and he's arresting them, he's consenting to their execution for being Christian. And then one day, according to Paul and his own letters, while he's persecuting Christians, he has an experience that he believes is an appearance of the risen Jesus to him.

And that experience radically transforms his life from being a persecutor of the church to one of its most able defenders. Okay, so this is pretty interesting stuff. So anything he's writing, it's not because he was a biased Christian to think this, it was precisely the opposite.

He was biased against the Christians to a point where he was arresting them and persecuting them. Now, Paul says that three years after his conversion, he went up to Jerusalem and he met with Peter, the lead apostle, and he also saw James the brother of Jesus. And so we can imagine what were they talking about? Well, of course, you know, he's meeting with him.

He's like Pete. You know, I wasn't with Jesus during this time. I knew some of the things he was teaching, but tell me what was it like to be with him? Pete, I heard you walked on water.

Is that true? Pete, did he really raise people from the dead and give sight to people born blind? And he's getting in the whole nine yards from from Peter who had been there. And again, he saw James the brother of Jesus. Now, this is Paul, first-hand testimony saying this in one of his undisputed letters.

Now, I know that maybe you're thinking, well, that's the Bible, you know, we just, you know, we can't try, I'm not a Christian, I don't believe the Bible. But I want you to step back for a moment and try to look at this as a historian. And if you can do that, you say, here's a guy persecuting the church who becomes a Christian because he says the risen Jesus appeared to him.

And he's meeting with the lead Christian, Peter, the leader of the church at that point, and James the brother of Jesus. This is huge, historically speaking. In fact, Bart Erman, I mentioned him a moment ago, here's what he says about it.

Paul was personally acquainted with Jesus' closest disciple, Peter, and Jesus' own brother, James. These are two good people to know if you want to know anything about the historical Jesus. I wish I knew them.

So even Erman agrees, we've got some pretty, pretty cool source here. In Galatians chapter 2, Paul says that 14 years later, he goes back up to Jerusalem. Why? He says, I met with the pillars of the church.

That's the term he used, the pillars of the church, and he names them. Peter, James, and John. So it's the second meeting with Peter and James.

And now he's meeting with John the son of Zebedee, another of Jesus' three closest disciples. So you have two of Jesus' three closest disciples in Jesus' brother he's meeting with. That's pretty amazing.

Peter, James, John, and Paul. And they're talking, and Paul says the reason he wanted to run the gospel message past him, that he had been preaching, to make sure that he hadn't been working in vain all these years. He wanted to make sure that what he was preaching is what they were preaching.

And Paul said they added nothing to my message. They gave me the right hand of fellowship. In other words, this month, Paul, your good brother, keep up the good work.

Now, for all we know, we got to ask his historians was Paul telling the truth. I mean, he could say he was, but was he really? Well, here we want to look at some people who knew Peter and John. And so there's some guys called the Apostolic Fathers.

I don't know why they call them the Apostolic Fathers. They were church leaders who came after the Apostles, but they knew the Apostles. And one of these guys' name was Clement of Rome, and he, Clement of Rome, was probably a disciple of the Apostle Peter.

And then a guy named Polycarp was probably a disciple of the Apostle John. And so we want to see what they wrote. Well, Clement places Paul on par with his mentor Peter, and he refers to Paul as the blessed Paul.

And then Polycarp says that, and I quote, Paul accurately and reliably taught the message of truth. And then he calls, quotes from one of Paul's letters and refers to it as part of the sacred scriptures. Now, they're both writing this after Paul's dead.

These aren't the kinds of things you'd write about Paul if he had been lying and teaching a gospel message different from what Peter and John were. It's precisely the kind of things we would expect if Paul had been telling the truth. I could give you some more information on this, but that should be sufficient that when we are hearing Paul on the gospel message, we are likewise hearing the voice of the Jerusalem Apostles.



Now, wouldn't it be cool if we found a lost letter of Paul? Now, we know Paul wrote some other letters we don't have. In first Corinthians, he said, I previously wrote to you. I wrote to you.

So we know he wrote another letter to the church at Corinth that we don't have. In Colossians, he says, read my letter that I wrote to the church of Laodicea. What letter to the church at Laodicea? That's not in our New Testament.

Well, what if we found one of those letters and it said, I want to remind you of the gospel message I preach to you? It's like, whoa, that'd be historical gold. Because apart from the gospels, we wouldn't need that. We could know from this what the Jerusalem Apostles who had actually walked with Jesus in a nutshell what they were saying about the gospel message.

Well, we don't need a lost letter of Paul. We actually have one of his undisputed letters that says that in its first Corinthians. And in there Paul says, now I want to remind you of brethren of the gospel message I preach to you.

And he's going to give this to us. Now, he starts off, he says, this is 1 Corinthians chapter 15, he says, I delivered to you what I also received. Now, these were two technical terms used for the imparting of oral tradition.

Back in antiquity, only 10 to 20% of the people could read and write. And about half of those could read. And only about half of those could write.

So the way people learn was through oral tradition, oral storytelling. And it's not like today you play the game of telephone where you whisper someone and it goes to the backing and get a different story. They had ways, controls to make sure that these stories stayed intact.

And they had people who would ensure this kind of stuff. It's a whole thing to get into. It's kind of really interesting.

So this is oral tradition that he's given to them. I delivered to you what I also received. Now, when did he deliver to them? Most scholars agree that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians somewhere between the years 52 and 57.

So he delivered it to them when he established the church in Corinth. The first Baptist church of Corinth. And most scholars believe that he did that in the year 51.

So he delivered it to them in 51 what he received beforehand. No later than the year 50, of course. And probably even before then.

We don't know when. He doesn't tell us. And there's a number.

There's numerous opportunities he could have received. He could have received it immediately upon his conversion. He could have received it when he went to see Peter three years later or 14 years or in between.

And afterward he was with apostles doing like Silas and Barnabas on their missionary journeys. He could have received it during any of that time. But he's getting it from one of the other apostles from Jerusalem.

So here's what this oral tradition says that goes back to the Jerusalem apostles. 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.

Notice it's long short long short that was there to assist in memory memorizing. And then he's so he's got the death burial resurrection and appearances of Jesus. And then he provides a list to Peter to the 12 to more than 500 at one time.

And Paul adds most of these people are still alive although some have died. Then he appeared to James and to all the apostles and then Paul adds his own name to the list. Notice you got three individual appearances and notice who they are.

Peter and James who he met with twice so he gets it from them. And Paul his own eyewitness testimony. And then you got three group appearances.

Those are important we'll get to those in a moment. And then Paul says whether I or they that is the other apostles this is what we preached and this is what you believe. So we know from Paul in this oral tradition we can know with certainty something that historians don't often get.

But we can know with certainty that the disciples of Jesus those who had walked with him were out preaching that he had risen from the dead and had appeared to them. That's pretty cool stuff. But we can go further.

We've got numerous reports from antiquity that these disciples were willing to suffer intense persecution and even willing to die for their gospel proclamation. Now some of those reports are kind of unbelievable to be honest with you. They come later and we know from other reports from Jewish martyrs that there was a tendency of time to be able to amplify or embellish those accounts, to glorify the martyr or to maybe give confidence to others who may be put in a similar situation.

But the early reports are usually unadorned. So we've got five reports from the first century alone that talks about how these disciples were persecuted and how some even endured martyrdom. So why is that important? Let me go back to that.

Why is that important? This doesn't prove that what the disciples were claiming is true. But it strongly suggests that they believed what they were claiming is true. It's like even Muslim jihadis who die in jihad.

They do it because they believe what they believe Islam is true. Even Christians who die at the hands of these jihadis by being beheaded, they're dying as martyrs for what they believe to be true. But with the Muslim it's like for all we know what we believe could be false.

It's possible. It's false. We don't know for sure.

We're believing it by faith. But you wouldn't accuse the Christian martyr or the Muslim martyr of, well, they know what they believe, what they're saying is false. It's like you don't walk into al Qaeda and say, hey, what do you want me to do? Oh, go strap a bomb on your back and go blow up these people.

Ah, let's see. Muhammad was a false prophet. The Quran is not from God.

And if I kill all these innocent people, I'll go to hell. Sign me up. That's not what's going on.

They really believe it's true. The disciples willing to suffer and die show that not only were they proclaiming Jesus' rose from the dead and appear to them, they truly believed it. And there is a difference between Christians and Muslims who died today for what they believe in the disciples.

We may endure persecution and die for what we believe is true, but we can only say we believe it. They were dying for what they knew was true or knew was false. Liars make poor martyrs.

The disciples were not only proclaiming he rose from the dead, they actually believed it. So immediately it can rule out that they were lying. Okay.

What do they mean by resurrection? Well, let me show you just a couple of things. In 1 Corinthians Paul says, now Christ has been raised from the dead the first fruits of those who are asleep. To be asleep was a euphemism then to say you're dead.

Like today we say he passed away rather than saying he croaked. Back then you say he fell asleep and went to be with his forefathers. The first fruits, what that means, you had the Jews and the Christians, they believed in what's called the general resurrection.

On the day God comes to judge the world, all the dead are going to be raised, they're going to be judged, some will go into damnation, some will go to eternal life. Okay. So that's the general resurrection.

What Paul is saying here is Christ is the first to be raised in a general resurrection with an immortal body. When are the rest going to be raised? My parents are both dead, they both were followers of Jesus. When are they going to be raised? Christ, when are we going to be raised if we die before he returns? Paul answers that three verses later.

Each in his own order, Christ the first fruits, then those who belong to Christ at his coming will be raised when Jesus returns. All right. Now with that in mind, so the thing here is we're going to be raised as Christ was raised.

He's the first fruits were coming later. We're going to be raised as Christ was raised. So now look what Paul says in Romans, and this is another of Paul's undisputed letters.

He says, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies. He raised Christ's mortal body, he will raise our mortal body. So resurrection was a physical bodily event.

In Romans 8:23, just a few verses after that previous verse, he says, when Christ returns, we will experience the redemption of our bodies. So it's a physical thing. Another thing, the apostles meant for Jesus resurrection to be understood as a historical event.

It has been common for skeptical scholars of the years to say, well, it was just a metaphor. It's just resurrection was a metaphor to say, Jesus teaching still live on. But that doesn't really work.

Paul makes the statement in 1 Corinthians 15, he says, look, if the dead are not raised, then Christ was not raised. And if Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins, then also those who have died in Christ have perished.

And then he goes on and he says, look, if I fought while beast and emphasis with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Did all the ice cream you want? Take weed, cheat on your test, get all the sex you want, do whatever you want now, live for today because there's no tomorrow, Paul says. If Christ was not raised.

So remember, he's undergoing all kinds of persecution. A few verses earlier, he says that he's under the threat of death on a daily basis for preaching the gospel. Why do that if Christ was not raised? And this life is all there is.

So his argument is, if Christ was not raised, we're not going to be raised. If we're not going to be raised, the Christian life is not worth living. But Christ was raised, therefore we will be raised, therefore the Christian life is worth living.

And that argument makes no sense. If they meant by the resurrection, it was just a metaphor. So our six facts, Jesus died by crucifixion.

A number of his disciples had experiences, they interpreted as the risen Jesus appearing to them. They claimed the risen Jesus appeared to groups. Paul had an experience, he interpreted as an appearance of the risen Jesus to him.

The apostles believed Jesus was raised bodily, physically from the dead, and the apostles believed the resurrection of Jesus was a historical event. These are pretty much undisputed by scholars today, these six facts. So what do we do with these? This brings to the second major building block.

Oh, what we could rule out, it wasn't a legend that developed over time, because it can go back to the eyewitnesses. They weren't lying, they really believed it. They understood it as bodily, physical, and it was not a metaphor.

So that brings us to method now. And this is really short. I mean, I could spend a whole lot of

time with this, but I'm going to make it really short.

Alright, so you got the tools of the trade that historians use. And one of those would be explanatory scope. So think of a jigsaw puzzle.

And I want you to think of each of the jigsaw puzzle pieces as a historical fact. So what historians do is they try to take these puzzle pieces and form a puzzle solution that you're able to use all the puzzle pieces. If you can come up with a hypothesis and you can include all of the known facts, then that solution, that hypothesis has a much better chance of being correct than if you have to leave some of those facts orphaned, because your hypothesis cannot account for those.

So with that in mind, let's look at the resurrection hypothesis. Does it account for Jesus' death by crucifixion? Sure. Does it account for the appearances to the apostles? Or let's say this, they had experiences they perceived or interpreted as appearances in the risen Jesus to them.

Absolutely. What about their claims that he had appeared to them in groups? Yep. What about a skeptic, a persecutor of the church Paul converting to Christianity, because he believed Jesus rose and appeared to him? Yep.

Would it account for why they perceived this as a physical resurrection? Yep. And why they thought it actually occurred, of course. So we can see the resurrection hypothesis does a beautiful job of explaining the historical bedrock.

Now let's look at one other hypothesis. There's a number of others, but I'm only going to take the one that is the most popular one held by skeptical scholars today. And that is the hallucination hypothesis.

Now the hallucination hypothesis, we have to acknowledge, it sounds plausible. I mean, multiple studies by professionals have been done on hallucinations for more than a century, and they have found that about 50% of those grieving the loss of a loved one experiences, they experience a hallucination of some sort. But there's all kinds of hallucinations.

Visual hallucination, auditory hallucination, olfactory, gustatory hallucination, hallucination where you feel a sense of motion, like we've all had an experience where we're dreaming and we have this dream we're falling and we wake up. That is called a kinesthetic hallucination, sense of motion. Or remember when you got your first cell phone and you came into a meeting like this and you put it on vibrate and stuck it in your pocket, and in the middle you thought you felt it.

And you pulled it out and nobody loves me. That is called a tactile hallucination, a sense of feel. So what mental health professionals have found is when we experience a hallucination, we do so in a single mode.

Maybe we see something but we don't hear it. Or we hear something but we don't feel it. The

only two exceptions of that are people high on drugs and those schizophrenics.

Other than that, we experience hallucinations in a single mode. What they also find is that hallucinations are private occurrences in the mind of an individual. It's a false sensory perception.

You believe you're perceiving something that isn't really there. You're seeing something but that's not really there. It's going on in your mind.

And so because of that, it's like a dream. I couldn't wake up my wife in the middle of the night and say, Hi, I'm having a dream. I'm in Maui.

Go back to sleep. Join me in my dream. Let's have a free vacation.

Now she might dream that she's in Maui. I might dream I'm in Maui, but we're not having the same dream. If I gave all of us a sleeping pill and you're all volunteering, I give you all a sleeping pill.

Let's all go to sleep and dream we're in Maui. Now, not all of us would have a dream that we're in Maui. And even those of us who did when we talked about those dreams, they wouldn't be the same dream.

So it's like that's the same way with hallucinations. And so you can have groups experiencing hallucination, but it's not the same hallucination. And not everyone in the group is going to hallucinate.

So now with that in mind, I want you to, does the hallucination hypothesis account for Jesus' death by crucifixion? Yes. Why? Because it would take something like Jesus' death to be an impetus for their grief that would bring on the hallucination. So, yeah, that does it.

Does it account for the appearances? No. And here's why. Only 7% of those who experience a grief hallucination has a visual hallucination.

Our early reports tells us it was not 7%, but an unthinkable 100% for hallucination. That doesn't work. What about the groups? Nope.

That doesn't work either. Because remember, groups can't experience that kind of hallucination, a collective hallucination where 100% of the people in the group experience the same hallucination. So that doesn't work.

What about the appearance of Paul? No. Paul was not grieving over Jesus' death. He believed Jesus was a failed prophet and a false messiah.

So Jesus would have been the last person in the universe that Paul would have expected to see or wanted to see. Would it account for him the physical parent? No. Because when you have a hallucination of a person, you're probably thinking of them in kind of a more of a spirit form.

When my mom died in 2013, my dad died the next year, but before he died, he called me and he said that he saw my mom. He woke up in the middle of the night and saw my mom in a chair. She was kind of glowing and was in the bedroom.

He was experiencing what I think would be a visual hallucination. But I can tell you, my dad would not have thought that if he had gone to her grave and dug it up, that her skeleton would have been gone. Her corpse would have been gone.

A hallucination of a deceased person doesn't lead to the belief that that person was raised physically from the dead. What about would it lead them to believe it was historical? Well, I think we could give that a green light. They would still believe Jesus was raised, but they would say raised in spirit.

He would have been raised. He was still alive and had appeared to them. But even being generous with that, you can look at that and say, when you compare the hallucination hypothesis with the resurrection hypothesis, the resurrection hypothesis is a clear winner.

Folks, that's the number one alternative hypothesis offered by non-believing scholars. That's the leading one. And that's how it compares to the resurrection hypothesis.

So the bottom line is you get the resurrection hypothesis is, by far, the best explanation of the historical facts, the historical bedrock. When you do the same kind of exercise with other hypotheses, whatever they are, the resurrection comes out on top every time. So just from the historical bedrock, we've eliminated hallucination, metaphor, lies, legend.

And I think there was one other, but I forgot what it was. So you can see it's pretty good. So I hope that encourages you.

And what I think is pretty cool about this is when you look at this, yes, we still have to have faith. Anybody with any worldview still has to have faith that that worldview is true. It doesn't matter what it is.

Because again, none of us can get into a time machine and return to the past. But I think what this can show us is that, believe it as a Christian, we've got some good evidence. We've got some really good evidence for the foundation of our beliefs.

And that means that God loves us. It means that He will be with you if you ask Him to. If you want Him and you want to become one of His followers and buy into what He's doing, Jesus will guide you.

He answers prayer. He'll guide you to a spouse if you ask Him to. That's a good thing.

But most importantly, eternal life. So I hope that helps and let's go with the Q&A now. Thank you so much, Dr. Lykona, for that thoughtful presentation.

Now we're going to move into the second part of tonight's discussion. And that is a question

and response period with a panel of students from Texas A&M. We hope that tonight's questions will represent those held by the general student body here at Texas A&M.

The four students that I'm about to call up onto the stage have been meeting and talking amongst themselves and with their peers to try and come up with the most relevant and compelling questions that they could think of. And so we hope that this is a fruitful time for all and I think it really will be. So our dear student panelists, as I start your bios, please come up and join us on the stage.

Our first student is Ethan Lane. There you go, yeah. Yeah.

Ethan Lane is part of the class of 25. A native of Wichita Falls, Texas. All right.

He is the executive officer of Company S1 within the Corps of Cadets, and he is also a dive master with Texas A&M Scuba. If anyone's interested. Yes, two or three very devoted friends.

Our next student to come up is Lauren Tam. Lauren is a senior marketing major at May's business school. She has served as FCA president, sales club president, delta gamma philanthropy chair, and family public relations chair here at Texas A&M.

She is also a former member of the Texas A&M volleyball team. So thank you so much. It's good to see you.

Lauren. Next is Maria Cariamfuzza. She is.

That was to wake you up. She is a junior business honors major and supply chain management student here at Texas A&M, and she is from Tyler, Texas. At Texas A&M, she has served as director of philanthropy for her sorority, delta gamma, and currently serves as a maroon coat for the Texas A&M foundation.

Last but not least is Jake Carter. Jake is a first generation Aggie from San Antonio, Texas. He is pursuing a degree in business management from May's business school.

Jake serves as Texas A&M's head yell leader, and he is a member of the Corps of Cadets in Company E1. Join me in welcoming all of our students. What we are going to do is cycle through our students and allow them to ask questions and have Dr. Lycona answer in turn.

Jake, why don't you get us started. Well, thank you. On behalf of myself and the rest of the students here, this is definitely a very cool opportunity for all of us.

So thank you for taking the time to come this evening. My first question to you is that you argue that historians can assess miraculous events like the resurrection using the same methods applied to any other historical event. How do you respond to critics who say that using historical methods to investigate supernatural claims is problematic because of inherent differences between natural and supernatural events? Yeah, good question.



Ermin raises that quite a bit. So I would say to that, you know, we can, I think we can, if the evidence is good enough, we can arrive at a conclusion that an event occurred, but if it's a miraculous event, historians do not have the tools to be able to ascertain the cause of that. So an example I'd like to give is let's say astronomers know that a, well, we recently heard that there's a 3% chance that an asteroid may collide on Earth, right? But let's say that they know that there's a comet that is going to collide on the moon with the moon on a certain day.

And so when that day comes, you've got the space telescopes that are zeroed in on it and some planetariums, and at the point of time is like, bam, it slams into the moon's surface. And as the lunar dust settles, there's a message written on the moon's surface and it says, Jesus is Lord, and it's written in Hebrew and in Greek. Now, a good scientist would say, wow, that's an extraordinary event.

I have no explanation how that natural explanation know how that would happen. It would seem to require a divine cause. But as a scientist, I don't have the tools to be able to detect a divine cause.

So all I can do as a scientist is I can affirm the occurrence of this event, but I'm going to have to leave the cause of the event undetermined. Now, what a poor scientist would do is the poor scientist would say, wow, that's an extraordinary event. I have no natural explanation as a scientist on how that could have happened.

It would seem to require divine causation, but I don't have the tools as a scientist to be able to detect the god. Therefore, I'm not even going to affirm that the comet slammed into the moon's surface. Now, we would say, that's ridiculous, but that's exactly what historians who are refusing to investigate miracle claims, that's the approach they're taking.

So I think that the reasonable historian can look at an event like the resurrection could conclude based on the data, which I think is quite strong, that the resurrection occurred. But then as a historian, you would have to leave the cause of the event undetermined. And that's not to say that the historian couldn't say, well, yeah, I realize that, even though I don't have the tools, god does seem to be the best candidate for it.

But professionally, you'd have to leave the cause undetermined. So that's how I would deal with that. Thank you.

Okay, next question. The proof for the resurrection hinges entirely on the eyewitness testimonies. It has frequently been observed that otherwise competent eyewitnesses to events have lied or made mistakes with a senior experience.

In modern times, there has never been a case of a human rising from the dead. Why is it more likely that the resurrection occurred than the eyewitness testimony was mistaken? Oh, that's good. That's good.

That's like a warmed-over argument from David Hume in what I call the balancing argument.

So the balancing argument, David Hume argued in the 18th century was, okay, human testimony is often reliable. And we know that, but it's not always reliable.

Just like you said, it's very often, it's unreliable. So, but on the other side, you have natural law. And natural law would seem to state that when a person dies, they're going to remain dead.

They're never coming back to life, period, right? And Hume went on to say, we observe this with the exceptionalist regularity here. Exceptionalist regularity, we observe person die, they stay dead. Over here, we know that some eyewitness testimony is good.

A lot of it's good. Most of it is good, but some of it isn't. But on balance, boom, the exceptionalist regularity with which a person dies and stays dead is going to trump the eyewitness testimony, which sometimes is unreliable.

The problem with the balancing argument is the way Hume stated it. And that is we observe with an exceptionalist regularity that when a person dies, they stay dead. They are never coming back to life by natural causes.

That's what Hume doesn't put in there by natural causes. But that doesn't mean that the laws of nature that someone couldn't come back by a supernatural cause. Now you say, Mike, that's a fallacy right there.

You're trying to make an exception out of something that really shouldn't be an exception. But I don't think so. Let's say that you want to see if someone can walk on water.

All right, and we start off and say, well, nobody can walk on water. So all the countries of the world, they decide that they're going to run through and get everybody to live in that country to test to see if they can walk on water. They've got to do it on a swimming pool, a lake, a pond, an ocean, a river, whatever.

And they do it, and there's a government official there, and everybody, nobody can do it. And finally, there's one guy, it's a four-year-old boy, and say, okay, it's your turn. You're the last one.

Well, I can't do it. Seven billion people haven't been able to do it. Well, no, you can do it.

Well, how are you going to do it? Give me your hands. Okay? I hold him over the swimming pool, and I walk along the swimming pool. He walks on water.

So seven billion people unable to walk on water doesn't mean he couldn't. Well, Mike, you cheated. Well, no, I didn't.

If it was, you have to walk on water unassisted. Ah, well, that's one thing. But you didn't say unassisted.

If you could walk on water, that changes everything. The fact that there's an external agent who helped. So unable to rise from the dead unassisted is an entirely different thing that if God

exists and wanted to raise Jesus and Jesus was assisted.

If God exists and wanted to raise Jesus, the probability of him rising from the dead is one. It's a hundred percent. And seven billion people dying and not coming back from the dead doesn't say anything pertaining to whether God could raise someone from the dead.

So, yeah, eyewitness testimony is sometimes wrong, but it's usually right. And if we are going to be so skeptical, I'm not saying you are, but if we're going to be so skeptical of eyewitness testimony, well, then our entire legal system crumbles. Our history departments crumble because nothing can be relied on.

No biographies could be written anymore. Not even an autobiography. So we couldn't trust anything.

But that's why in historical investigation, we looked for multiple independent sources. Because even though one may get it wrong, even a couple more years wrong, we looked for multiple independent sources. We looked for unsympathetic sources, like Josephus or Tacitus or someone like that, who will say some things that corroborate what we find in the Gospels or the Book of Acts.

And we apply criteria of authenticity like this, and the more those criteria that are fulfilled, the greater the probability is that what is being reported can be verified as true. Well, the resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, but it can be a deeply challenging concept for people from different religious or secular backgrounds, and you talk about worldviews. So what advice do you have for students like ourselves who want to discuss this topic with friends, but who maybe have skeptical or differing worldviews, or in other words, how do we balance intellectual rigor with humility and respect in these kinds of conversations? Good question too.

Much better than yours. You know, you've got Peter, in 1 Peter 3:15, he says, set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense for anyone who asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and respect. So I think in all of our conversations with others, we just have to show them love and respect.

And I think that that can go a long way. The reason that I've been able to remain friends with a lot of those that I've debated with. I mean, Ermin and I are friends.

We disagree on so much. He's an atheist. I'm a Christian.

He, politically speaking, he's progressive. I'm a conservative, make America great again, you know? And so it's like we couldn't disagree on more, but we are friends, even though he's wrong. But Bart knows that I love him.

Bart knows that I respect him. Bart knows that I don't talk bad about him behind his back. And so we, no, I'd say this.

I say the same thing to him. Everything I said to you, I'd say right to his face and have said to his face with a smile. But he knows that I care for him, and so I can say those things.

And like, you know, he said, he said in print, and that he often wakes up at night in fear of hell. And I told him you should. You should fear it.

Because you need to change. Or else that's going to be a reality. But I can speak truth to him like that because he knows I care.

I'm not trying to like win an argument for him. I'm not trying to win him to the Lord and put a notch on my belt. I truly care for him.

And because he knows that, I can speak frankly to him. And it's not just Bart. I can talk to Larry Shapiro.

Same thing. He's a Jewish atheist philosophy professor at the University of Wisconsin. I haven't even better friendship with him than I do with Herman.

And so that's how I would suggest if we're going to interact with non-believers. You've heard it. You know, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

And it's true. Thank you. Earlier in your slides, you kind of talked about the church fathers that are not strictly biblical.

I was wondering if you could kind of give a better in-depth understanding of what people like Polycarp and nations of Antioch and kind of Clement of Rome were talking about at the time. What they talked about? Yeah, what they talked about in relation to the resurrection of Jesus. Oh, okay.

In relation to the resurrection of Jesus. Well, Ignatius of Antioch, so he's on his way to being executed in Rome. And he writes several letters along the way.

And I think it's his letter to the Magnesians. He says the virgin birth truly occurred. And then a couple chapters later, he says the resurrection of Jesus truly occurred.

So that's what he says about it. Clement of Rome says that I think it's in first Clement. I think it's chapter 42.

He says that the disciples were greatly encouraged when they saw that Jesus was raised from the dead. And Polycarp, I'm pretty sure he says something about the resurrection, but I don't remember right off what it is. Awesome.

That's a good question. Hopefully this next one's better for you. Okay.

My question is, what is the theological and historical significance for the count in Matthew 27 when it says the tomb is broke open and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were

raised. Why do you think that this event is uniquely mentioned only in Matthew's gospel? Good question. Much better than your first one.

Come on. So this is something that the New Testament historians debate on. And there's no wide agreement on this.

A number of evangelicals. I published on this in my large book on the resurrection. Okay.

And I'm an evangelical. A number of my evangelical brothers and sisters took issue with my view on it. Now, here's what I think is going on.

As I read the other ancient literature like Josephus, Jewish historian, he talked about when the importance appeared like omens happened. Like he said, at midnight there was a light that shone down on the temple that was brighter than midday. He says a cow gave birth to a lamb.

He says that there was an eclipse of the sun. There was a comet that fighting was seen in the heavens that the gates, the doors to the temple which took 20 men to open, opened by themselves. Okay.

Now, it's interesting to note that when Julius Caesar died, there were like, I think there were seven ancient writers that talked about that. And they talked about an eclipse of the sun, a comet. They talked about fighting scene in the heavens.

Virgil, who was a poet, he adds a bunch of new ones. He says that black intestines were seen outside of cattle. That streams stopped flowing.

That pale phantoms were seen walking around at dusk. And then when Caesar went into Egypt, Cassius dio reports that fighting was in the heavens, there was a comet, an eclipse of the sun that the gates to the temple of Jupiter which took many men to open by itself. So you start to see this pattern that has taken place.

And I think what was going on was they were saying like we would today. Well, you guys weren't even born at that time. But 9-11, those of us who were around would say that was an earthshaking event.

But we don't necessarily, we don't believe that there was an earthquake that felt around the world. That's just a way of speaking poetically, you could say, to talk about the enormity of the impact of that event. I think, personally, I think that's something similar to that is going on with Matthew.

You got darkness. And the pale phantoms walking around at dusk, well, you know, Jesus is crucified at, he dies around 3 p.m. So you're getting around that time. And so the graves are opened, many states.

They didn't come out until after Jesus was raised. So then you got to be asking, what were they doing in the meantime? If you'd been there and you were there in that graveyard, would you

have seen people pacing back and forth in the graves? They come out after Jesus was raised. They walk into the city and appeared to others.

Now they're homeless. They're raised in the same kind of bodies that they died in, mortal bodies. Because, remember, Paul says Christ is the first fruits and everybody else is going to be raised in their resurrection body when Jesus returns.

So they're going to be raised like Lazarus. And the same kind of mortal body only to die again. So now they haven't eaten anything or drank anything for at least 36 hours.

They're thirsty, they're hungry, they're homeless. They've got some really cool near-death experiences they could talk about. But we really don't even hear about them.

In fact, others that do report the darkness or the temple veil splitting. Interesting, they don't report the raised saints walking around. In fact, the early church father origin says that these saints, they went to heaven and appeared in the holy city there, heavenly holy city, not down here, which would seem to suggest there were no testimonies of people who saw them down here.

So I think there's the theological difficulty of thinking of these people as historical because if they're raised in the mortal body, then you've got the difficulties I just talked about. If they're raised in the resurrection body, then you've got the theological difficulty that they were raised before Christ. And Paul says Christ was the first fruits.

So I think it's more likely that what you're looking at here is Matthew is doing the same thing that Josephus did, that Peter did at Pentecost when he says, you're speaking in tongues, you think we're filled with new wine? No, this is what Joel the Prophet said when he said, young men will have visions, old men will have dreams, the Spirit of the Lord will come, and whoever calls them the name of the Lord will be saved. If you go back to that passage, it talks about the sun going dark and the stars fall and all the skies too. So I think this is like portents, this is poetic language that's meant to emphasize you have just killed the Son of God.

And I think a lot of people in the first century would have recognized that. I try to think of the hardest question I could possibly ask you, but instead of a dinner you've been in 36 debates, is that correct? My wrong. 37.

I guess the challenging question I have is, what was within your debate's most challenging question you've been asked based on what does not believe in the resurrection and how did you refute that? The most challenging question I've been asked about the resurrection by an opponent is the one I never heard before. And I really mean that. I mean, I prepare very seriously for my debates.

I think I was telling you guys at dinner tonight that for my first debates, I prepared more than 70 hours a week for three months. That's how serious I still prepare a lot for my debates. But occasionally I will get something that I've not heard before.

And those are the most difficult to answer. Now, they're not as difficult now because you still know general principles. But at first they were.

So it would have been something like long time ago, probably were talking in 1998. I was interviewed on the radio by an atheist talk show host. And he said, well, was it resurrection just a way of honoring someone to say they were raised from the dead? And I had no idea how to answer that.

But the first thing that came to my mind I just said, well, how does that explain the empty tomb? Which, that's not a bad answer actually. But I would answer it differently today. You know, it's the metaphor thing.

And, you know, I showed how, no, they really meant resurrection. If Christ was not raised, we're not going to be raised. If we're not going to be raised, the Christian life is not worth living.

You know, so, yeah, so it's the one I'd never heard before would be the toughest. Good question. I'm over here trying to match the question.

So, okay, going on, I myself am a Catholic and Catholic tradition places a strong emphasis on both scripture and sacred tradition, since much of your work focuses on historical reliability of scripture. How do you view the role of tradition in supporting the case for the resurrection? How do I put the role of tradition when it comes to the resurrection? And what are, when you say tradition, what do you have in mind? So, kind of in reference to, like for example, the mass. There's sacred scripture, and that's going to be the word.

And then sacred tradition, which is the Eucharist part, which was more into Catholic tradition, but just in general tradition of like carrying on throughout time. Yeah. Well, like the tradition of 1 Corinthians 15 verses 3 through 7, that oral tradition, and we have more of that in the New Testament as well, stuff that predates the writing in which it's in.

Yeah, I mean, that comes from the apostles. So, you know, I'm into that. Now, I'm a Protestant.

I'm not a Catholic. I have Catholic friends. I believe Catholics are believers.

So, I have no problem with that. Not every Catholic is an authentic Christian, just as not every Protestant is an authentic Christian. We might have some minor disagreements on certain things, but all the major things I think we're going to agree on.

But some of the traditions within the Catholic Church, you know, I think that's going to come later. Like, you know, just take, for example, would be a good example. All right.

The perpetual virginity of Mary. Okay. So, the Catholic doctrine is Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life, poor Joseph.

You've definitely got the short answer. The reason we don't hear about him in the Gospels anymore is because he killed himself. What do you mean? What do you mean? This is really

funny.

You know, and I wouldn't go with that because it's like, it says in the Gospels that, okay, when he said take Mary, the angel Gabriel said take Mary to be your wife, then he took her, they got married, he says he did not know her until they were married. And I think that preposition until is telling to me. He didn't have sexual relations with her until.

So, there'd be some things with the Catholic tradition that I wouldn't agree with as a historian. In fact, even some Catholic New Testament historians would say, like Paul Meyer and Raymond Brown, both of them are deceased now. Paul Meyer, I think, died last year.

Raymond Brown died about 20 years ago. Both fantastic New Testament scholars, Catholic New Testament scholars. And they said that they thought there were Catholic traditions that they disagreed with historically.

They didn't think it was grounded in history. But the important stuff, I think, we all agree on it. Thank you.

My question was, how does Christian accounts of the resurrection compare to other religions that came before such as Zoroastrianism or like the Egyptian God Horus? And how do you believe that that impacts or doesn't impact kind of Christian claims about Jesus and how that all went down? Yeah, a good question. So, dying and rising gods and pagan myths and other religions, right? So, today amongst critical scholars, there is a universal consensus that the Christians did not borrow from those. In 2001, a senior Swedish scholar named T. and D. Medinger wrote a monograph, the riddle of resurrection.

And he says in there that it is the universal consensus of scholars that the Christians did not borrow from ancient Near Eastern religions and pagan myths. But he goes on to say that there were at least three and perhaps as many as five that predate Christian, where you do have dying and rising gods in these ancient Near Eastern A&E religions. I think he is a very careful scholar.

He argues well. But I don't find a few of his to be compelling. I do think that there are a few examples of dying and rising gods or heroes and pagan myths that predate Christianity.

But there are a number of reasons for saying, for even thinking, for rejecting those, the historicity of those for one thing. But even more important for thinking the Christians did not borrow from those. Let me just give you maybe three reasons.

So number one, think of who the earliest Christians were. They were pious Jews who were committed to even the minutiae of the Jewish law. So they debated over issues.

We see this in Paul's letters and the book of Acts. They debated over whether Christians could eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. They debated over whether Jewish Christians were permitted to eat in the same room as Gentile Christians.



They debated over whether Gentile male Christians needed to be circumcised. They debated over whether Jewish Christians needed to maintain the temple purification rights. So when you're going to debate over the minutiae of the Jewish law to this extent, do we really expect that the same pious Jews are going to engage in wholesale barring from pagan myths to form the foundation for their own? Not a chance.

Especially when we read accounts by Josephus and stuff that by Pilate allowing Roman standards to come into Jerusalem that had depictions of the image of Caesar on them that all these Jews rushed to Caesarea and were willing to be executed by Pilate to protest this. And they put their necks out and they said we'd rather be beheaded right here and right now than for our city to be defiled. So of course the early Christians aren't going to do that.

Second, you can find parallel details in just about anything. So many of us are aware of a plane that took off from Massachusetts one morning and just after 9 a.m. it flew into one of the tallest skyscrapers in the world in New York City killing everyone on board. Between the 78th and 80th floors, I'm referring to the B-25 that flew into the Empire State Building on July 28, 1945.

Probably most of you thought I was referring to the 767 that flew into the south tower on 9-11. But no, this thing I just referred to actually happened and if you do a search for it online, you can find photographs of the aftermath. It took off from the same state, flew into a skyscraper in the same city, the same floors in the same hour of the day, its coincidence, has no relationship whatsoever.

And so I could give so many examples of this. And you could even make it sound good. A thousand years from now it could be a historian says, yeah, 9-11 never happened.

I mean after all, look at the symbolism behind it. The thing at the B-25 actually flew into the Empire State, but 9-11 didn't. The symbolism, 9-11.

Who do you call when you have an emergency? 9-1-1. What was the emergency? Well, the United States was undergoing the greatest economic recession in its history up to that point. So the plane that flew into the world trade center was to symbolize that the economy was bad in the US.

The plane that flew into the Pennsylvania farm field was symbolic that all of this was impact in the average American. The plane that flew into the Pentagon was symbolic of the declining influence of the US around the world. You can modern mythologize and make anything sound right.

But when it comes down to it, it's like, what's the evidence? We've got evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. We don't for these other things. And the final thing I would say is we should expect peppered over time stories of people returning from the dead.

Why? Well, you think about this for a moment. There's a lot of romance novels and romance movies, and they're fictitious. Why? Romance is attainable by most people.

So why do you have the fictitious accounts? Because it's a longing of the human heart. We can't get enough of it. So you make up stuff.

Well, life and antiquity, and in fact, in many places in the world today, is very brutal. I have some friends in Pakistan, and they alert me, and there's this girl. I can't tell you her name.

But in January of last year, she was kidnapped by Muslims. She's like 13 years old. She's kidnapped by Muslims, forced to marry on much older Muslim, who made her beg for money, and trafficked her, put her up for prostitution.

Christmas Eve, they found her, and they rescued her, and brought her back home to her parents. Well, just about a week ago, she got snatched up again. So you can be praying for her.

This happens all the time in Pakistan, and to Christian women. So life is brutal for a lot of people. We want to know that the evil doers are going to be punished.

We want to know that the righteous are going to be rewarded. We want to know that this life is not all there is. That poor girl, if she ends up spending the rest of her life like that, we want to know that that's not at all.

And so you could expect, apart from a real reservoir, we could expect for stories to pop up of people coming back from the dead to tell us there isn't after life. That people are punished. That we could be punished in an afterlife.

And the righteous, those who follow God, are going to be rewarded. So we would expect those fictitious stories to pop up. But that doesn't do anything to discount real romance or stories of that are strongly evidenced that someone actually came back from the dead.

That actually brings us just about to time. Let's thank our panelists. My friends, before you go, I just want to thank you and I'd like to say some thank yous.

Putting on an event like this takes a village and we're so grateful to our co-sponsors, Rachio Christie and the Christian faculty network for their support and time. We're also grateful to you guys, to Dr. Lycona, to Jake, to Lauren, to Maria, and to Ethan for sharing your time, insight, questions and wisdom with us this evening. Thank you so, so much.

Finally, we hope that this is only the beginning of a broader conversation. We would like tonight to be a stoked conversation and we hope that conversation will continue as you leave here and as you walk back with your friends and meet with your social circles and things like that. I do want to say that our panelists will be here and down here available to talk to and shake their hand and mingle with them after we adjourn.

And yes, great, so yes, thank you and we will hopefully see you again next year at the Veritas Forum. Let's thank our panelists one more time. Thank you very much, have a great night.

Thanks for joining us today. If you'd like to learn more about the work and ministry of Dr. Mike

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