

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

The Case for Heaven with Lee Strobel

(October 15, 2021)

Ladies and gentlemen, is there an afterlife? Is there a heaven? Is there evidence outside of the Scriptures, that there's an afterlife, that we actually persist after our physical body dies? Well, ladies and gentlemen, the best apologetics books that have been written over the past 25 years have been written by Lee Strobel. Why? Because you get, not only Lee's great insights, you get all the great scholars that he has interviewed. And he's our guest today with the brand new book, *The Case for Heaven: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for Life After Death*. You know Lee Strobel's, *Case for Christ*, *Case for Faith*, *Case for the Creator*, and many other case books, *Case for Miracles*. Lee was on just a few years ago with that. This new book, *The Case for Heaven*, I've read every chapter except the reincarnation chapter. I think I'm gonna read that in my next life. It is an excellent book, ladies and gentlemen. Here he is, the great Lee Strobel.

Lee:

[laughing] You're awesome.

Frank:

Well, Lee, another great book. And you've got great scholars you're interviewing here, but this book really came out of an experience you had not long ago. What was that experience?

Lee:

Yeah, I almost died. My wife found me unconscious on the bedroom floor. She called the paramedics, I woke up in the emergency room and the doctor looked down at me and said, you're one step away from a coma, two steps away from dying, and then I fell unconscious. Again, I had an unusual medical condition called hyponatremia, which is a severe drop in my blood sodium level. I lost a kidney as part of this process. And what happens in that situation is, your brain begins to take in moisture, your brain cells taking moisture, and your brain expands within your skull. Well, there's no room for it to do that and so, I had hallucinations, paranoia, and then fell unconscious, and the next steps would have been seizures, coma and dying. So, I hovered for a while there, quite a while, on that fuzzy border between life and death. And that was a new experience for me, a very clarifying experience. I recommend it to people, that they have an experience where they're, kind of, hovering over that border between life and death, because it brings great clarity. All of a sudden, the most important thing in your life becomes, what happens if I close my eyes for the last time in this world? That becomes paramount. And if

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it's important then, it ought to be important now. And so, that's what led me to do the research to write the book, *The Case for Heaven*.

Frank:

Now, Lee, you have a whole chapter in here on near death experiences. Now you didn't have one yourself, did you?

Lee:

No.

Frank:

Okay. Well, there's an entire chapter on near death experiences and I think this is sort of an overlooked field for many. I know Gary Habermas, and I think it'd be JP Moreland, and others have done some research on this. And you did.

Lee:

Right.

Frank:

You've done some research on this. What do NDE's [near death experiences] tell us about maybe the fact that we might live after our bodies die?

Lee:

Yeah, that's a great question, Frank, because I was a skeptic about this. I thought the near death experiences were explainable as oxygen deprivation, or the last gasp of the dying brain. Turns out there have been 900 scholarly articles written in scientific and medical journals over the last 40 years on this phenomenon. This is a well-researched area of study. First of all, yes, why is it important? It's important because the Apostle Paul says, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Jesus said to the repentant criminal on the cross, today, you will be with me in paradise. And so, this suggests that, according to Christian theology, there's two aspects, or two phases to the afterlife. The first is the intermediate stage, the present Heaven. It's where we go when we die, and we either go into the presence of God in paradise or absent from God in Hades. And then at the consummation of history, where Jesus returns, we're given our resurrected bodies, we go through final judgment, and then we spend eternity in a very physical place, whether heaven or hell. And so, the question is: What evidence is there that our consciousness Spirit, our soul, does indeed live on after the physical demise of our bodies/ And near death experiences are powerfully persuasive.

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Because here's the key, we have several cases, and I [unintelligible] them in my book, where we have corroboration. In other words, people who die, they're clinically dead...by the way, near death experience is a little bit of a misnomer. These people aren't near dead, they're dead, rather clinically dead. And yet they say that their consciousness lives on and they see things and hear things and experience things that they otherwise would not be able to see or experience or hear if their out of body experience wasn't true. So, for instance, there was a heart attack of victim by the name of Maria. She's flatlined. She's dead. She describes later how her consciousness, or spirit, or soul separated from her body. She watched the resuscitation efforts, her soul floated through the floors of the hospital and out of the hospital. And then when she was revived, her soul comes back into her body. She says, oh, by the way, on the roof of the hospital, on the third floor ledge, there's a man's tennis shoe, and it's left footed, it's dark blue, there's some wear over the little toe, and the shoelace is tucked under the heel. And sure enough, they go up there, and they find it exactly as she described it.

So that's an example of corroboration. We have a lot of corroborated cases that indicate that indeed, at the time of clinical death, our soul, our spirit, our consciousness does separate from our physical body and continue to live on. The other key aspect of this is, I interviewed for my book, John Burke. I've actually known John, for probably 25 years. We used to be pastors together at a church many, many years ago. But John is, not only a Christian pastor of a wonderful church in Austin, Texas, but he has spent 35 years researching a 1000 cases of near death experiences. And his conclusion, and this is so powerful, his conclusion is, if you look at what actually takes place during a near death experience, not how its interpreted by the person involved, but what actually takes place, it is consistent with Christian theology. That that was a real eye opener for me.

Frank:

Now, I've heard of this remote viewing that you mentioned here, Lee. That people are, are outside of their body somehow and are witnessing things that they couldn't otherwise witness. I've heard other cases. I think Gary Habermas has mentioned this too, where there's someone on an operating table, and after they're revived...you know, they flatline...after they're revived, they said, there was just an accident on Third and Main...

Lee:

Yes.

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Frank:

Right. I just saw it. And then the doctors verify that at that time, there was an accident on Third and Main. And there's no way that person on the table could have known that. They were on the operating table the whole time.

Lee:

That's exactly right. We have a seven year old girl who was drowned. She drowned in a YMCA swimming pool in Idaho. She was flatlined. She had no brain activity. She had no heartbeat for 20 minutes. She did finally recover, and when she recovered, she said oh, by the way, I was conscious the whole time and I actually met Jesus. And she, not only was able to draw a picture of the emergency room where she was taken when she was dead, and she placed everything exactly where it was supposed to be, but she said, one night I followed my parents home from the hospital, and she described what took place in that home on that evening; how her brother was playing with the GI Joe Jeep on the floor of his room, how her sister was combing the hair of her Barbie doll and singing a specific song, how her mother was, was cooking a specific meal, rice and chicken, how her father was sitting on the couch and staring off into space. She described exactly what they were wearing at the time. These are things she had no way of knowing, and yet, she was 100% accurate.

In fact, they did one study where they looked at 93 cases of people who made these kind of verifiable observations during their out of body experience. 92% of them were absolutely 100% accurate. Another 6% were almost 100% accurate. So, there's a high degree of accuracy involved in what these people are experiencing. What's more, one guy studied 31 cases of people who were blind, half of them blind since birth, and yet, during the near death experience they were able to see. They had visual, and visual like experiences, and saw things they otherwise could not have experienced.

Frank:

We're talking to the great Lee Strobel. His new book, *The Case for Heaven*, you need to get right now. We're talking about near death experiences. What do these tell us about Christianity? Or what do they tell us about naturalism? More right after the break. You're listening to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You're listening to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. My

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guest is the great Lee Strobel. Yes, that Lee Strobel: Case for Christ, Case for Faith, Case for Creator, Case for Miracles, Case for Heaven, the new book, you need to get. Very intriguing. Lee, we were, just before the break, talking about near death experiences. And I think we've got to be very clear when we're talking about these things. We're not saying that they're necessarily proof of Christianity, but they do appear to be proof that the spirit survives after the death of the body. And it certainly seems to disprove naturalism, doesn't it?

Lee:

I think it does. You know, you bring up a good point. Let's not base our theology on near death experiences. I take a minimalist approach. My approach is to say, I'm only going to buy into that which I can corroborate. What can I corroborate? I can corroborate the fact, beyond a reasonable doubt, that after clinical death...and that's important, clinical death. You know, the Bible says we are appointed once to die, and then the judgment. This is not permanent death. People are going to come back. This is a clinical death. So, I think we can say that, beyond reasonable doubt, near death experiences tell us that at the time of clinical death, our spirit, our consciousness, our soul does continue to live on. We can't say for how long, but we can say it does live on. And so, I think you're right, I think that's a huge challenge to naturalism. Interestingly, 13% of atheists and 27% of agnostics believe in some sort of afterlife.

Frank:

Yeah, isn't that weird? I noticed that in the book, Lee. You've got that in the book.

Lee:

Yeah. It's like, I'm not sure what they believe, and I think they're just kind of confused. But so, I think this is a real big challenge. And the other thing is The Lancet, which is the prestigious medical journal in England, carried an article on near death experiences in which they concluded that none of the alternative explanations for near death experiences stand up to scrutiny. They all fall short, none of them can fully explain this phenomenon, and the best explanation is, indeed our consciousness, our self, our soul, our spirit does continue after our clinical death.

Frank:

Lee, are there any alternative explanations that you have heard that, at least initially, gave you pause and said, well, maybe these aren't valid? Have you heard of any?

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Lee:

You know, I had hallucinations when I had my experience of almost dying, because of what was going on physically in me. These are totally different than hallucinations. These are much more vivid, life-changing experiences, that people have. I think of the story of Sam Storm. Sam was an atheist, he was the chairman of the art department at a secular university, he died in the hospital, and yet, he said he lived on. He was beckoned by these very friendly guys who said, come with us. He walked down a long, long corridor with them, and then they attacked him. They tore him apart. He said that no horror film could begin to capture the horrific nature of the brutality and cruelty that they showed to him. He called out to Jesus for help. Jesus rescued him. And when he recovered, he not only renounced his atheism, he not only became a follower of Jesus Christ, he resigned his tenured professorship at the university, became an ordained pastor, and today is the minister of a tiny little church in rural Oklahoma, I believe it is. These are life-changing experiences people have. They're much more vivid than a superficial hallucination.

Frank:

And, as we said earlier, some of them can be verified with remote viewing. So, it's not just, yes, I died for 20 minutes and went to heaven. You know, they've had some scams regarding that. These can be verified to be true, which is all the more intriguing.

Lee:

Yeah, it really is. And that's why I said, I believe beyond a reasonable doubt that they do show that there is a continuation of our consciousness after death. And you're right, JP Moreland and Gary Habermas had both been researching this for a number of years, and they would agree 100% with that.

Frank:

Again, we're talking to Lee Strobel. the book is called, The Case for Heaven. Brand new book and a long line of Case books that Lee has written. And again, the best thing about these books is, not only do you get Lee's insights, you get the scholars that he interviews. And Lee, you do a great job of taking what can be academic information and putting the cookies on the bottom shelf, so to speak, so people can really draw some valid conclusions. And I know you interview some great people. You have a chapter in here on the soul. What do you cover in that chapter?

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Lee:

Well, the question is, you know, neuroscientists have a mapping the electrical activity of the brain, of course, for a number of years. And tongue in cheek, they say, well, you know, we haven't found the soul.

Frank:

It sort of sounds like Yuri Gagarin.

Lee:

Yeah, the Russian cosmonaut. And he went up and he said, "I see no God up here...", which is a vacuous comment. So, they say that, you know, we are just a brain. We are just a brain. Well, I interviewed a neuroscientist with a PhD from Cambridge University, Dr. Sharon Derrick's. She actually wrote a book called, Am I Just My Brain. And her conclusion is no, you're not just your brain, but you are a body and a spirit, a body and consciousness and a soul, and the physical brain cannot account for the phenomenon of consciousness. Our soul, our spirit, our consciousness is distinct from our physical brain, but it animates our physical brain and interacts with our physical brain. But it's distinct from it.

One of the ways she illustrates this is through a thought experiment. She says, imagine a woman named Mary is the world's leading expert on vision. She understands everything about how the eye functions, she understands how the optic nerve carries impulses, how the brain translate those into images. She understands the physics and the chemistry of vision better than anybody in the world, but she's blind. What if Mary were suddenly given her sight? At that moment that she became able to see, would she learn anything new about vision? And the answer is, of course, she would. Of course, she would. She would be able to see. And so, what she said to me, she said, Lee, that means physical facts alone cannot explain the first person experience of consciousness. No amount of knowledge about the physical working of the eye and brain would get Mary closer to the experience of what it's like to actually see. So, she said, consciousness simply cannot be synonymous with brain activity.

She also made the point, which is a good point, that no discoveries of modern neuroscience have disproven the existence of the soul. You know, we can map the physical, the areas of the brain that light up when certain activities take place, but we can't see our thoughts. We can't see what's actually in our minds. And so this is important because, as I said earlier, according to Christian theology, our consciousness, our spirit, continues to exist after our physical demise.

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Frank:

You know, you also have a quote here from her that I like. It's on page 33, Lee. She said, science could never disprove God. That would be like scientists figuring out how all the programming works on Facebook, and then declaring, so this disproves the existence of Mark Zuckerberg.

Lee:

[laughing] That is a good quote.

Frank:

Yeah. But I want to ask you this, because you know, I've dealt with atheists for many years now, as you know. It seems to me they just don't get the self-defeating nature of materialism. I mean, if our mind is our brain, why should we trust anything our brain is telling us because it's driven by the laws of physics? Have you run into any atheists who will admit, yeah, that's a big problem for us?

Lee:

Well, you know, you look at Sam Harris, and he says, look, if this is true, we don't have freewill.

Frank:

Yeah.

Lee:

Well, if we don't have freewill, how in the world is anybody held accountable for anything they do, whether great or terrible?

Frank:

Right.

Lee:

I mean, we can't live that way. You cannot live as if we have no free will. And so, you're right, there are these internal contradictions. And Alvin Plantinga, of course, has pointed out years ago, that if our brains are merely the product of evolutionary processes, then how can we trust them to know that it's telling us the truth?

Frank:

Right.

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Lee:

You're right. These are self-defeating beliefs that atheists have.

Frank:

Yeah, Lewis did a great job and I think it was in his book, *Miracles*, talking about the self-defeating nature of materialism. Then you have a chapter in here on the pyramid to heaven. Explain what you cover there. What's that about?

Lee:

Yeah, I interviewed Chad...do you know, Chad Meister.

Frank: I don't know Chad. I've heard his name, but I don't know him personally. Yeah.

Lee:

Chad is awesome. This is so cool. Chad was a volunteer in our apologetics ministry, with Mark Middleburg and I, many, many years ago at Willow Creek Church in Chicago. And he got turned on to apologetics. He was an engineer. He was once on the verge of suicide. He had a gun in his hand was going to kill himself because of the meaninglessness of life, became turned on by philosophy, went on to get his PhD from Marquette, became later the vice president of the Evangelical Philosophical Societies, Professor of Philosophy at Bethel College in Indiana. One day, the story is, I was preaching at a church and he was sitting there waiting for me to finish. And a guy came up to me and said, hey, I really thought your talk was interesting, but I'm an atheist. I have all kinds of questions. Could we get together and talk? And I said, you know what, I'm about to leave town for a month, but maybe you'd like to talk to my friend Chad. So, Chad said, yeah, I'll talk to you.

So, they made an appointment, the guy came over to Chad's apartment, and Chad, in order to make the case for Christianity, created this pyramid. And he begins with the question of truth. What is truth? And then he goes to different worldviews, theism, atheism, and pantheism. And then he argues why theism makes the most sense, right. And then he goes to Revelation, he goes to Scripture, he goes to the resurrection, and then ultimately to the gospel. So, this sort of builds a pyramid, starting at the broadest base, which is: What is truth?, right, and then building upward to the gospel. And so, we employ that in the book, and we walk through these various worldviews, the three main worldviews, and look at, you know, the flaws in them, and the shortcomings in them, and demonstrate that theism is the only one that really is coherent. And then the scriptures of the Bible are the only scriptures that that hold together logically, and historically, and so forth. And so, we kind of use that structure to build a pyramid that points

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upward toward the gospel and toward the truth of Christianity. So, I thought was a creative way that Chad came up with to, kind of, put Christianity to the test.

Frank:

Yeah, and it is really our authority, if in fact the scriptures are true. This is where we get the best information on heaven. And when we come back from when we come back from the break with Lee Strobel we are going to investigate that a little bit more. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with Frank Turek on American Family Radio Network. I want to mention I'll be in Myrtle Beach this weekend, with the great Alex MacFarland. We're doing Truth for New Generation at First Baptist Myrtle Beach. Details are on the website. Then Monday night University of Cincinnati, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist Everybody is welcome. Check out our website. If you can't make it, we will live stream it. Pray we don't have any technical difficulties. But we're back on college campuses there, so check that out University of Cincinnati this coming Monday night, October 18 at 7:00pm Eastern. And it will be live streamed. And we will be back in just two minutes with Lee Strobel. His brand new book, The Case for Heaven, you need to get it. See you in a few.

The Case for Heaven. I'm Frank Turek. My guest is the author of, The Case for Heaven, Lee Strobel. His brand new book, which you need to get, has some great chapters in it on many issues. And before we get to the nature of heaven, which is what we're going to talk about here, we want to talk a little bit about the nature of hell. And Lee has a full chapter in here on this. Lee, a lot of people have a problem with hell. What say you about it?

Lee:

Yeah, there's a lot of controversy, especially these days, when you have a lot of younger pastors who are embracing what's known as annihilationism. And of course, the evangelical Pope of the 20th century, John Stott, bought into this toward the end of his life. Annihilationism teaches that there is no eternal conscious existence in hell for the unrepentant. But at the time of death, they are snuffed out of existence, perhaps after a short period of punishment. But essentially, they're snuffed out of existence forever. And in the minds of some people, this is a more humane approach. Now, what kind of shocked me, Frank, was the fact that, if you read what annihilation is, they can make a pretty darn good case.

Frank:

Sure. What would be some of the points they make? I know the word destruction is used, and perish is used, and these kind of words. So, it's not a case that's completely out of left field, right?

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Lee:

That's right. They focus on words like destruction and perish and say that that means that something will be snuffed out of existence, even though in the New Testament, there's a reference to the world being destroyed at the time of Noah. Of course, we know it wasn't destroyed, right. We know that the Greek word for destruction can also be translated as lost, as in the parable of the lost coin in Luke chapter 15. But they can build a pretty good case. Here's the problem. I don't think they can build a convincing case. It falls short to me. And a lot of the reasons it falls short to me is because, if you look at the Old Testament and the New Testament, we have examples of parallelism. In Daniel 12:2, it says, "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." So, if life is everlasting in heaven, then it must be everlasting in hell as well. There's a parallelism there. And we see this also in Jesus in Matthew 25, in the teaching of the sheep and goats, where Jesus said, then they [referring to the unrighteous] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. And even Augustine points out that, you know, this parallelism suggests that, if there is an eternal consciousness for those in heaven, it implies in that parallelism, you can't get away from the fact that it would be true of those in hell as well.

Frank:

How did the annihilationist's deal with sort of the strongest argument for eternal conscious torment? Those arguments right there, the parallelism, did they try and rebut? thos, or what did they say to those?

Lee:

I think, basically, they try to overwhelm it with counter arguments about destruction. And they'll say something like, well, everlasting contempt...you know, in Daniel it says that some will wake to everlasting life, others to everlasting shame and contempt. Well, if you're snuffed out of existence, your shame could last forever. See what I mean?

Frank:

Is that what they would say?

Lee:

I think that's what they would say. Yeah. So, you know, what was interesting to me is, I was interviewed by a journalist who happened to be in annihilationist, and he said, by the way, I just want to say thank you for doing a fair job in your book of presenting our position. You didn't caricature it, you really presented it well. I understand you don't believe the case has been made, but at least you present our position well. So, I found that encouraging.

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Frank:

I think you interviewed Paul Copan on that, didn't you?

Lee:

I did. And Paul, of course, you know is a philosopher and great guy. But the other thing that, to me, mitigates the idea of hell, or at least puts it into context, is the understanding that one size does not fit all in hell. And we see two examples of this. We see it in Matthew chapter 11, where Jesus said that certain cities are going to suffer more than others, because they refuse to repent, even though miracles were done in their cities. And then we see it in Luke chapter 12, where Jesus tells a parable, where the servant who understands what his master wants, but refuses to do it, will suffer more than the one who didn't quite get what his master wanted in the first place. So, I think that's a very important teaching that not everyone will experience hell in the same manner. That Adolf Hitler's experience in hell, it's not going to be the same as my next door neighbor, who is an atheist, who hates the idea of God, and for him, heaven would be hell because he doesn't want anything to do with God. But his experience in hell is going to be different than Adolf Hitler's. Now you know, the Bible says, will not the judge of all the earth do what's right. And I think it makes sense that the reaction of God would be proportion in hell. And I think that helps. It helped me, anyway, really understand the justice of hell.

Frank:

You also distinguish in the book, and again, the book is called, The Case for Heaven. My guest is Lee Strobel. You also distinguish in the book, Lee, and this needs to be pointed out because you hear atheists say this all the time. Well, God's torturing people in hell.

Lee:

Right.

Frank:

And you draw the distinction between torture and torment. What's the difference there?

Lee:

Yeah, torture is externally imposed cruelty. Torment is internally generated. It's a regret, it's a sense of anguish over what someone has done. And so, you know, hell is not a torture chamber, but yes, people will feel torment, they will feel a regret. It talks about a gnashing of teeth, and we see that phrase also used when Steven is stoned to death, and it refers to anger. And there will be anger. People in hell will remain unrepentant, and they will be angry, and they will feel a sense of torment over their situation.

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Frank:

Hmm. And let me just throw a couple of quick objections at you that you do deal with in the book, through you and Paul Copan. One is, well Lee,, it's overkill to have an eternal punishment for a temporal sin. How do you respond to that?

Lee:

Yeah, I mean, it really doesn't make sense. I mean, how long it takes someone to commit a crime is not necessarily reflective of how serious the crime is. If I pick up a gun and shoot you, that may take 10 seconds. If I were to steal your encyclopedia, one volume at a time over a period of five years, that would take a lot longer, but the crime wouldn't be as severe as that 10 second murder that I committed, right. So, the amount of time it takes is irrelevant. And really, the question is, who is being sinned against? We're sinning against an infinite God. And consequently, the implications, or the consequences of those sins are greater than, for instance, if I were to kill the President of the United States, my penalty is going to be greater than if I killed you, because the law says that, you know, assassination of a political leader is worthy of greater punishment.

Frank:

Or a police officer.

Lee:

Or a police officer, exactly. And so, when we're sinning against an infinite God, that suggests that the consequences for that should be substantial as well.

Frank:

How about the idea that actual sin continues in hell, is that scriptural, Lee, that you don't just pay for the sins that you've committed on Earth, but you continue to sin in hell?

Lee:

Well, that's a good question. I think, certainly, the unrepentant nature of those in hell continues, and that's sinful in and of itself. So, I suppose you could say, from that aspect, that a continued hardness of heart, and a continued rebellion against God is sin, and would continue in hell. As one scholar told me, he said, you know, hell is not a place where people just, you know, good blokes, but God isn't good enough to let them go. No, these are people who continue in their rebellion.

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Frank:

Yeah, God is not going to force anybody into heaven against their will.

Lee:

Exactly. Love must require a choice, right. And God gives us that choice that we're able to make.

Frank:

You also explore a little bit in this chapter, Lee, the idea that there could be a second chance in the afterlife, after you die. And people have talked about that. Scripturally, what do you think about that? Is that a possibility?

Lee:

I think it's highly speculative, but I think it's worth exploring. There's a new book out from University Press called, *Post-Mortem Opportunity*, that takes an academic look at this issue. It's interesting that Martin Luther actually opened the door to this in some of his letters that he wrote. And so, the question is: Could this be an explanation for what happens to people who, in this world, do not hear the gospel, or they hear a distorted gospel that's inaccurate? Or what about children who died before they're able to understand the consequences of sin and so forth? Could an opportunity to hear the real gospel after their death be an explanation for that? And the Bible, of course, says we are appointed once to die, and then the judgment, but doesn't say that's immediate, right. And so, I think it's interesting speculation, I think it's worth exploring. I'm not ready to buy into it. But we do explore it in the book and Paul Copan takes this seriously enough to really look at it from a critical perspective.

Frank:

You also talk about: When does the judgment occur for Christians and for unbelievers? I know that probably we're getting into eschatology here, and so, there may be some disagreement. But what's your best assessment of when judgment actually occurs? Is it the minute you die or when does it happen?

Lee:

Yeah, I believe that, ultimately, judgment is going to happen at the consummation of history when Jesus returns. And that's when final judgment will take place. You know, now when we die, and our soul separates from our physical body, we will go to what's called the present heaven, or the intermediate state, which is sort of a holding. It's sort of, you know, if you go to Hades, you're kind of on death row waiting for the ultimate judgment that you're going to be, you know, ultimately and eternally excluded from the presence of God. So, you're sort of in a

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waiting pattern. But the I believe the ultimate judgment is gonna take place when Jesus returns.

Frank:

The book is, The Case for Heaven, with Lee Strobel. And when we come back from the break, we're going to talk about the nature of heaven. What is it? Is it one long church service? Is that it? Gee, many of us can spend an hour in church without getting antsy. What's heaven going to be? Is that going to be heaven? Well, Lee has some answers, so you don't want to miss the final segment with Lee Strobel. Again, the book is called The Case for Heaven: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for Life After Death. This is in the same style as Case for Christ, Case for Faith, Case for Creator, Case for the Real Jesus, Case for Miracles. Lee's making a case, you ought to make the case. So, this book, ladies and gentlemen, and we are back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

The Case for Heaven, the great Lee Strobel, New York Times best-selling author, is the author of this brand new book. He interviews some great scholars who he makes very understandable. And you're gonna want to get the book, The Case for Heaven. Now, Lee, just before the break we were talking a lot about hell and the nature of hell. Why don't we talk about the nature of heaven? Is it going to be one long church service? Are people going to really be excited about that? What is heaven all about, Lee?

Lee:

Well, you know, I think one of the big misunderstandings is, people think that heaven is some sort of ethereal existence up in the cloud someplace, that we're purely spiritual, ghostly souls who are going to be involved with singing hymns 24/7. And that's not the way it's described in Scripture. I interviewed a scholar by the name of Scott McKnight, in the book, and he pointed out that heaven isn't some far off place, it's really here. It's the renewal of our world as a very earthly and physical place, not just for spirits and souls, but for resurrected bodies designed for the kingdom of God. You know, Revelation does not say God is going to make all new things. It says he's going to make all things new, right. And so, heaven is going to resemble our present world, but it'll be a transformed place for transformed people. All of creation will be set free to worship God and praise, everything good about our creation will be like put on steroids. It will be a place of festivals and music and parties and joy and adventure and exploration. And one thing about heaven that a lot of people don't know is that every year the Chicago Cubs will win the World Series.

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Frank:

[laughing] Well, that's not going to be a good thing for New York Yankee and New York Mets fans. What are you talking about, Lee? Come on, somebody's losing in heaven? Come on.

Lee:

You know, it's only fair after all the suffering they've gone through in this world, all the Cubs fans.

Frank:

Well, you interview Scott McKnight, as you mentioned in this book, and he gives nine reasons why he believes in heaven. Of course, the first couple have to do with Jesus. Jesus rose from the dead and the apostles, of course, believed in heaven. He also talks a little bit about the argument from desire that CS Lewis mentioned.

Lee:

Yeah.

Frank:

Why don't you unpack that for us because I think that's pretty intriguing.

Lee:

Yeah, you know, Ecclesiastes says that eternity has been placed in our heart. And we have a desire to live forever, we have something inside of us that wants to experience more than this world. And if that's true then it would make sense that there would be a way of fulfilling that desire. And so, that's one way of looking at how our desire for an afterlife may be pointing towards the truth of an afterlife.

Frank:

He also mentioned the beatific vision This is something that Protestants don't talk about much, but it's really 1John 3:2, that we will see him as he is. What does that mean in your view?

Lee:

Yeah, to see God personally, the beatific vision. My son is a Jonathan Edwards scholar and Jonathan Edwards actually invented a word for this. He called it a happifying experience. It will be the biggest joy of our existence. I love the way Charles Spurgeon put it. I never thought about it this way but think about it this way. Spurgeon said, the very glory of Heaven is that we shall see Him, that same Christ who once died upon Calvary's cross, that we shall fall down and

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worship at his feet, nay, nay, more, that he shall kiss us with the kisses of his mouth and welcome us to dwell with him forever. Have you ever thought about Jesus welcoming you to dwell with Him forever? Welcoming you with the kisses of his mouth? I think that, to me, was the most beautiful expression of heaven that I came across in my research.

Frank:

And yeah, it's often thought of, unfortunately, as we're floating around on clouds, or we're in one long church service, but on the other hand, Lee, the scripture doesn't give us a lot of description about heaven.

Lee:

Yeah. And there's a reason for that. I think the reason is, you know, the Bible says, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has ever conceived of what God has in store for those who love Him. And I think the reason is, we are incapable of understanding it yet, and so, the Bible uses these metaphors to help us get a glimpse of what heaven will be like. For instance, in this world, we have a color spectrum that's based on the light of the sun, but in eternity, the color spectrum we based on the light of God. And so, we will be able to see colors in heaven we can't see in this world. Well, there's no way you can describe that to someone in this world. You have to be there you have to see it.

And so, I think the Bible uses these metaphors...and my favorite metaphor that Jesus uses in John chapter 14, where he says to the disciples, hey guys, don't worry about dying. He says, there's plenty of room for you in my father's home. And I love this metaphor of home, because if you've ever traveled internationally, in a third world country, in difficult conditions, and you're living out of a backpack for weeks at a time, you're eating strange food, and things are tough, and things are hard, you begin to long for home. You have a homesickness. And then when you finally get home, and you walk into your house, and you crawl into your own bed, it's such a place of warmth and comfort and security and love. And Jesus says, that's the metaphor I want you to keep in mind. That is Heaven. This is not our home. Heaven is our home. Eternity is our home. We're gonna spend a lot more time there than we are here, and so, it's worth our time to really, at least understand as best we can, what heaven is going to be like.

Frank:

And we're going to be physically resurrected, and actually be in a renewed heaven and earth, ultimately, but there's a period, an intermediate state...and I think maybe it was Scott McKnight, or you said this in the book there, Lee, that it's kind of an intermediate state. Like,

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you might say to a college student, you're in a dorm right now, but that's not where you're going to live the rest of your life. You know?

Lee:

That's right. That's exactly right.

Frank:

You're gonna wind up in, hopefully, in a nice house at some point, right.

Lee:

That's right. Exactly. Yeah.

Frank:

Now Lee, you're doing a lot of other work. In addition to writing books, you are also sort of heading up a new college. What is that about? Tell us a little bit about that.

Lee:

Yeah, at Colorado Christian University, we started the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics. I coalesce 40 PhDs, we've created 91 courses, you can get a bachelor's degree or master's degree in apologetics, and or evangelism, all online, all accredited. Or we have certificate level courses for people that don't want another degree, they just want to take a course on the resurrection, or on church based evangelism, or whatever. And so, we're very excited about this. We've got hundreds of students already enrolled. I really see this as my legacy project. And if people go to StrobelCenter.com, it'll take them to all the information they need, if they'd like to take a course or to pursue a master's degree.

Frank:

So, this is not, you're sitting in the presence of these folks. It's all online? Is that you're saying?

Lee:

It's all online. But yes, you do have a professor and it's a zoom situation. So you're in a classroom with other students, you have a live professor who you interact with, and so it's very, you know, personal. And you do it at your own pace. It's designed for people already living a busy life and don't have a lot of extra time.

Frank:

Who are some of your professors? Can you tell us?

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Lee:

Well, we have Melissa Travis, for instance, who is an expert on science and faith. [She] wrote a book. *Science in the Mind of God* was one of them. Clay Jones, who wrote a book called *Immortal*, that I interview him for my book.

Frank:

Yeah, he's in here.

Lee:

Yeah, exactly. So, we've got some really good folks. And I'm excited about training people for the next generation, as you are, Frank.

Frank:

Oh yeah.

Lee:

I mean, what you're doing is fantastic. Going around the country, doing seminars, training conferences, equipping young people, helping them to the foundation of Christianity, the strength of it, the evidence for it. I think it's so important for this next generation. That's why I think that apologetics, as I think our friend J. Warner Wallace said, that evangelism in the 21st century is spelled apologetic.

Frank:

It is. Yeah, you get it. You just can't quote the Bible anymore to most people, because they'll call your names.

Lee:

Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

Frank:

You're a bigot. Wait a minute...hold on. What do you mean by bigotries, says Greg Koukl with his *Tactics* book, right. We're all working together on this. Now, you've got another book coming out in December, *Case for Faith*. It's a kind of a redo. What's new with that one?

Lee:

Yeah, you know, that's a book that looks at the top eight objections to Christianity. Why would a loving God allow pain and suffering?, How can a loving God send people to hell?, What about

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the Old Testament passages of "genocide"?, and so forth. And the book came out originally in about 1999 or 2000. And so, I've updated the book. We have a new chapter because of the problems with Ravi Zacharias. I removed the interview with him, because I didn't want to be a stumbling block for non-believers and replaced that with a different interview. But I also updated all the references in the book, all the next steps.

And I also completed the story of Charles Templeton, who was the pulpit partner of Billy Graham, who lost his faith, became a well-known atheist in Canada, wrote a book called, Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith. And I interview him in this book, and he tells me why he has rejected Christianity. And originally, when the book was published, it ends with me sending the manuscript to him. Well, now I tell the rest of the story, which is that his wife read him the book as he was dying at the time. And at the end of his life...and I talk about the evidence in this book, I believe that he did come to faith in Christ before he died. Which is, I think, just the greatest news, because he's a wonderful, wonderful guy. And I think there's good evidence that he, either came back to faith, or came to faith for the first time before he left this world.

Frank:

Well Lee, again you've done a great, great work for the body of Christ. The new book, ladies and gentlemen, is called The Case for Heaven. And that's where we're all heading if we're true believers in Jesus. So, this is a book worth getting and giving to people who might be skeptical of it. So, Lee, thanks so much for writing it.

Lee:

Well, thank you Frank. Appreciate you appreciate all you do.

Frank:

That's the great Lee Strobel, ladies and gentlemen. Check him out at StrobelCenter.com. Go there, ladies and gentlemen. Don't forget, we've got Sean McDowell teaching a course on how to have constructive conversations with your LGBTQ friends, so check that out at CrossExamined.org. Go there, click on online courses, you'll see it there. And don't forget University of Cincinnati Monday night at 7:00pm. We'll be streaming it. Hope to see you there. God bless. Lord willing, I'll see you here next week.

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