

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

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

How the Chain of Custody Affirms the Biblical Jesus

(January 8, 2022)

If I sound a little bit hoarse, it's because for the last three days, I've been doing the audio version of our brand-new book. When I say "our", my son, Zach Turek, and I wrote a book called *Hollywood Heroes: How Your Favorite Movies Reveal God*. It comes out April 5. I'll be telling you more about it when we get closer to it. But we cover some of the biggest movie franchises, particularly in the superhero world. So, we covered movies like, Captain America, Iron Man, Harry Potter...yes, Harry Potter, you'll be surprised...Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings, Batman, Wonder Woman, and a few other characters. And in recording the audio for this, I tried to be in character...I find your lack of faith disturbing...you know, that kind of stuff, so that's why I'm losing my voice here.

So, you're not going to have to hear me for this radio program and podcast very much, because we have someone far more qualified than me to talk about the topic we are going to talk about today. And it's my friend and he's been on this program several times. It's the great J. Warner Wallace, Detective Wallace. You know, Jim has been on the program recently, because this phenomenal new book, *Person of Interest*, is really making an impact out there. In fact, it's making an impact like Jesus has made an impact, in the sense that Jesus is the most influential human being to ever walk the Earth. And that's what *Person of Interest* does beautifully. Jim points out how Jesus has impacted literature and movies more than any other art, music, education, science, and even other world religions. That's what Jesus has done in an unprecedented way. Of all time, this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the most impactful human being to ever walk the earth. The only thing I could say, how this could happen if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, is if somehow the New Testament documents actually put forth a myth somehow, or they were changed in the first three centuries of the church. So, that's what we're going to investigate today with my friend Jim Wallace. Jim, how are you?

Jim:

So, you want us to believe that your voice is hoarse because you were recorded, not because you have this incredible New Jersey delivery system? Okay. Which, basically, you're screaming.

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Frank:

No.

Jim:

Come on, come on, be honest. That's what it is. It's because you've probably had a conversation with somebody, and what your normal conversation sounds like, let's be honest, that's what caused it.

Frank:

Yeah, but try that for five hours a day, for three days in a row, especially when you're trying to sound like Darth Vader, you know. But I was doing Sméagol. I did, "it's precious". I was doing all that too because that's Lord of the Rings.

Jim:

Well, first of all, I cannot wait to get a copy of this so I can use it against you in clips for the next five years because that will be worth the price of admission, I think, anyway.

Frank:

But back to the important topic, and that is, whether or not Jesus really rose from the dead and the documents that we have called the New Testament are actually telling us the truth. And your first book, *Cold Case Christianity*, really gets into that. So, when you put *Cold Case Christianity* before *Person of Interest*, I think you take away the main objection to *Person of Interest*...because the main objection in my mind would be, oh sure Jesus is the most influential human being in history, because people think he rose from the dead, but he really didn't.

Jim:

Okay, so that's a great first claim. And you're right. When I wrote, *Cold Case Christianity*, that examines everything that's inside the crime scene that I call the New Testament. What is in that scene? How do we test it? How do we test the evidence? How do we adjudicate whether a witness is a witness and if the witness is reliable? And then, *Person of Interest* is just the opposite. It's everything outside the New Testament. So, those two, I hope, together are considered for the overall case. But here's what I would say to that. If you think that there's another fictional character that could have this level of influence, and that's the claim, then you

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hold the burden. Okay? Who would that be? Like, what fictional character? Give me an example of anyone who even approximates or comes near that kind of influence. As matter of fact, you won't find anybody.

You just did a whole book on Hollywood heroes? Is it Darth Vader? Is it Luke Skywalker? Do you think these folks have established a worldview that 1000 years from now we'll find that all of our major categories of civilization: art, music, literature, education, science, even other world religions, will now bend their knee to Luke Skywalker? I'll tell you what, I'm willing to wait 1000 years and let's see if that happens. Ain't gonna happen.

Frank:

Right.

Jim:

Okay, so in the end, if you cannot find an example of another fictional character that, in fact, can't have the kind of impact that Jesus had, it's reasonable to infer that Jesus is something more than a fictional character. But the same is gonna be true for living human beings on planet Earth. If you can find another living human being who has had this kind of impact on the history of those disciplines, tell me who that is. And you're not going to find anyone. And there's the reason why I think that's also a reasonable inference that Jesus is something more than just another living human being in the history of human beings. So, there is a sense in which, if you had to ask the question: Which of these three things could best account for the world we see today and the kind of influence that we see today?, Jesus is a fictional character. Or Jesus is another average guy in the first century. Or Jesus is the Creator of all things and enters into his creation, and then it causes this huge ripple effect. It seems to me that of those three options, option three is the most reasonable inference. And that's what we're trying to do with Person of Interest.

But I think you're right. I think that really, to be honest, that the only way that he could have this kind of impact is if people were so overwhelmed by what the character of who Jesus was. Not in terms of his nicety, ever, his humility, or his meekness, but in terms of the central claim that he was going to go...and I want you to think about that for a second. The promise of God in the next life is not just to give us a heaven for good people. That's not it. Right? Jesus said this

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in John 14:1-3. "1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

This was not a question from people who didn't know about heaven and wanted to know about heaven. This was a question from the lips of people who thought they were going to lose Jesus. We don't know where you're going, how do we know the way? They wanted to know: Where are you going? The promise of God in the next life is to reunite those who love Jesus to the master they're missing. I will take you to myself. The goal isn't heave. No, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Frank:
Right.

Jim:
And so, that kind of a view of who Jesus was, if Jesus is who he said he was, well, then it makes sense that people would center their lives around him, would be inspired in the arts about him, would write about him more than any other person in the history of persons, would actually form a world view because he says, go and teach others. He didn't say, go and make converts, he says, go and make disciples, teaching them. Well, what if they don't read? Teach them how to read then. One of them don't even have an alphabet. Then you'd better invent an alphabet for them. This inaugurates a teaching culture, an educational culture, that eventually gives birth to the sciences. And I'm telling you, that makes more sense, if Jesus is who he said he was. Because that kind of Jesus, the one that you're longing for, the one that you just want to know: How do I get back to you? How do I get to you? That's the kind of Jesus that can inspire history.

Frank:
Well, that's what we're going to look at. And by the way, Jim, that was a really good answer. I mean, that works. So, you're getting a round of applause for that man. [applause in background] Right there. That's the great J. Warner Wallace, ladies and gentlemen. So, put him up against anyone. In fact, when we come back from the break, Jim, I do want to ask you a couple things before we look at the evidence for the New Testament and particularly the

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resurrection. I want you to tell us what you think the best objection you've seen to Person of Interest has been, if you think there are any good ones, because there's been some people nitpicking at it. But does anybody really, really launch something at the book that you go, man, yeah, I should have done that better. So, right after the break, we're going to do that with the great J. Warner Wallace.

You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. My guest, J. Warner Wallace, ColdCaseChristianity.com, has written a brand-new book, Person of Interest, out for just a few months. And you can also go back and get Cold Case Christianity as well, because that's the book we're gonna talk more about today. So, don't go anywhere. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. My guest today is Detective J. Warner Wallace and we're talking about the evidence for Christianity, particularly the evidence for Jesus rising from the dead and the fact that the New Testament documents are historically reliable. Now, Jim, just before the break, I said, there have been people that have tried to take some shots at Person of Interest. If you go to Amazon, it's almost completely five-star, for good reason. But are there any things in the book you're going, you know, I wish I had done this better or that better? Has anybody really come out, have any atheists come out and said, hey, you blew this, this is wrong?

Jim:

Well, if there's any book that you write that, at the end of it you think... at some point, you just stop. You stop the project, and you submit it to a publisher. And not because you feel like, okay, I've reached the apex of my, you know, this is the best thing I've ever done. No, because you have a deadline, and you stop, and you give it to a publisher. And I've always felt like, wow, if I had an extra...I would change this, I would change that, you know. All these things, you can second guess. But as far as this book goes, I think it does what we intended it to do. Now here's the problem. In the apologetics world we have made cases and I'm a casemaker. I make cases. And if you look at my subtitles on my books, they all pretty much say that, right. A homicide detective makes the case for X, a cold case detective makes the case for X. That is not

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our subtitle here. This is a different kind of book. I think a case can be made but the subtitle here is: Why Jesus Still Matters in a World that Rejects the Bible. That's a different kind of claim.

So, you could argue, and I've seen people say it, this is not the way I would argue for Christianity. Well, to me, this is like piece five of a four book trilogy, so far, that makes a case for Christianity from a number of different angles, because here's my premise for the book. If every New Testament was destroyed, we could actually reconstruct the story of Jesus, just from the fuse that leads up to the explosion called Jesus, and the fallout that follows from the explosion called Jesus, because it's in every nobody murdered case. So, I give you an example of a nobody murdered case and then we turn the corner toward Jesus. And so, what this does is, it assumes that, look, if we didn't have any New Testaments, you'd still be stuck with the same Jesus you know, because he can be reconstructed from every important dimension of human culture. Now, the people will say, well, no, that's not the way you...you could know nothing about Jesus if you didn't have a New Testament. We ought to be focused on the New Testament. Agreed, because everything I'm going to talk about in my book, are people who had a New Testament, and it so changed their lives that they memorized it, repeated, it wrote about it, painted about it, sculpted...You name it, they did it. And we can reconstruct the story of Jesus, if every New Testament had been destroyed in this thought experiment that I offer in the first chapter.

Now, in the end, whenever I work cases in front of a jury and I don't have a body, or any evidence from the crime scene, I've never lost a case. So, they will provide a conviction and then when I debrief this jury, and I'll say to them, well, what did you think? They'll say, well, we thought he was guilty but that was a good case. That's why we convicted him, but I sure wish I had an eyewitness. Well, it turns out, we have eyewitnesses. That's what we're talking about in Cold Case Christianity, right. I'm not going to write Cold Case Christianity again. I've already written that book. This is a companion piece. But also, I think though, Frank, here's the thing. You and I have a deep love for the case for Christianity. What we discovered traveling across the country is that the church at large is not, maybe, as interested as you and I are in the details. And the question is: W write a book that says, here's a book that makes a case for what they think they already believe in sufficiently and don't need the case, I can't even get the church interested in developing a reasonable, evidential, defensible version of Christianity. But

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this kind of book, I think, brings people in in a way...I'm trying to be creative. It's a drama, it's a detective drama, it's heavily illustrated. The idea here is: How do we introduce something...

I can't tell you the number of people who have written to me, who didn't know anything about me, but they found me through this book. And now they've gone back and purchased *Cold Case Christianity* and *Forensic Faith* and *God's Crime Scene*. And so, it becomes a gateway, I hope. And I think all my books are simply gateway books. I stand on the shoulders of people who really know something, okay. I'm just a cold case detective. I'm trying to assemble the evidence. Lee Strobel would say the same thing, I think. And so, I'm trying to be a gateway to other people, to other ideas, but I know that for most people in the church, and sadly, I think they're more interested, at least initially, in the crime dramas, then they'll say: Oh, how's that connected to Christianity? Oh, I see. But I think what I'm trying to do is to engage an audience of the church that will then look seriously at the evidence. And of course, in the end, it's going to come down to the New Testament. Why do we think that anything cited by anyone in history, in any of these disciplines, is actually true? And that's going to come down to making a case for the reliability of the scriptures. And that's an incredibly important thing to do.

But here's the other thing. Look, you influence culture through the arts. We have a tendency to think that you can influence culture by voting. Of course, you can. I mean, we all need to vote. But politics are so downstream of the arts that people learn. This is why your book on *Hollywood Heroes* is so important. Because it turns out that you're far more likely to influence someone's spiritual worldview through a creative movie, which could often just teach a lie, than you are by making an evidential case like we do, typically. It's the arts that we need to start engaging. I'm trying to find a creative way in. And that's what we're trying to do with something like *Person of Interest*.

Frank:

Alright, well, let's do this. Because, as I said at the top of the program, some people might try and say, yeah, okay, you're right, Jim. I can't deny it. Jesus has had an unparalleled impact on our culture in so many ways. The only way I can explain it is people thought he had risen from the dead, but he really didn't, but once that lie blossomed Jesus just took off. He was a real person, but he wasn't God, he didn't rise from the dead, he just took off. And oh, by the way, Detective Wallace, it's not till 363 AD, that the church decides, here are the books we're going

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to put in the Bible. We're not going to recognize these other gospels, like Gospel of Peter, and Gospel of Judas, and gospel of Thomas, and all these other Gnostic Gospels. We're just going to recognize Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Oh, isn't that convenient 300 years later? Now you have something in Cold Case Christianity, that I think is brilliant, to deal with this issue. It's something you take from your cold case world, and it's called the chain of custody. Can you explain what that is?

Jim:

Yeah, it's so important. At the Council of Laodicea, they have a couple of edicts, a couple of statements at that council that really lock in which books of the New Testament are going to be considered canon. But why would you exclude all that other stuff you've talked about? And how do we know that what we have by 363AD or 364AD, how do we know that what we have by that time has not been so utterly corrupted? Same thing happens in criminal trials, you know. You have a piece of evidence that's collected in 1980 and then why bring it to trial in 2021? And how do you know it wasn't tampered with, in some way, 10 years after it was collected, or 10 years before we got it into trial? Some evil detective pulls it out of property and modifies it in some way, so it makes the defendant look guilty. That's the claim in trials all the time. And you've seen this if you watched Making of a Murderer, right. Oh, was that blood really in the car? Was that blood really in the room? You know, the blood vial has been opened and there's some blood drawn from it. You see what I'm talking about. It's pretty popular in culture.

Well, the same thing is being leveled against the Gospels. We don't know, that's the claim anyway. And this is a claim that someone like Bart Ehrman will make in a book called, How Jesus Became God, that the story of Jesus as a simple preaching Rabbi gets distorted and magnified and changed over time until finally, the Jesus of history becomes the Christ of Christianity. A miraculous miracle worker who rises from the dead, who was born of a virgin. So, the question is: Are these claims there at the crime scene or did somebody along the way modify the evidence from the crime scene, the New Testament period, and then by the time it gets to a council, to the courtroom, like the Council of Laodicea it's been so utterly tampered with that it cannot be trusted.

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Well, how we address this in criminal trials is we simply ask: Well, who's touched this evidence over the years? There's a custody chain. In other words, everyone who touches the evidence over the years is like a link in the chain that connects the past to the present. And each one of these folks, it turns out, have to do some documentation. So, your CSI at the scene is going to take pictures, write a report, collect the evidence. It's gonna be described a certain way. The person who picks it up at a property to deliver it to the crime labs gonna make a report. If he passes it on to a detective, he's gonna take his own, back in those days, it'd be Polaroids. Okay. Nobody knows what a Polaroid is anymore. So, they would take it, slowly come out of the camera, you know, and so they would take these Polaroids. My dad used to have investigative Polaroids. I remember as a kid he'd have a notebooks of his own personal investigative notebooks, his notes for a trial. And I remember like turning the pages of all these dead bodies, you know, on Polaroids.

And so, you take pictures, and then you give it to the crime lab. They take pictures, they run a very comprehensive report. I pick it up years later, I'll take pictures out. And now I've got picture after picture and photograph after photograph and report after report describing the nature of the evidence over the years. And that chain of custody, every defense team is gonna challenge your chain of custody. They're gonna argue that there's a gap right there. I don't know where this was for the four years. It's not at the crime lab, it's not reported in the property room, that's when it got changed. So, we had to account for that chain. And so, what we did was, this is called the chain of custody. And if we can show that the images in the reports, in the beginning, match the ones at the end, then you know how things changed over the entire chain.

Well, there turns out to be a New Testament chain of custody. And that's the one thing that I was always hoping about Cold Case [Christianity] that would stick with people, right. Because we talk about how to test reliability of manuscript evidence, and we talk about it sometimes from the perspective of a manuscript expert, or a historian. But most people in our culture have no idea what historians and manuscripts...they have no idea, for example, what literary criticism is like. The discipline has to be explained to them first before you can leverage the discipline to make a case for Christianity. But it turns out that every night people are watching crime shows, and they have an innate sense of these kinds of things, because they've been watching them since they were kids. Imagine if the only thing to watch on TV was the work of

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historians and literary critics. By the time you get to adulthood, you would know exactly how those disciplines work. Well, they've been doing that with crime shows.

So, what we're trying to do is to offer the parallels in crime investigations that people get...oh, so, if there's a New Testament chain of custody, if I can track the progress of the statements in the Gospel to see the earliest people who talked about who received the gospel, who then talked about it, did they describe Jesus in a much less spectacular way? In other words, when they talk about Jesus, he's just a preaching rabbi, but he was never born of a virgin, he never rose from the dead, he never worked miracles. That's the question. Or has he consistently been the same kind of Jesus every time he's ever talked about in the chain? And that's what we're looking at in the chain of custody.

Frank:

Well, right after the break, we're going to go into detail on the chain of custody because there's the chain of custody from Paul, from John, and from Peter. And Jim is going to unpack that for us right after the break. You're going to be amazed that there's a consistent description of Jesus throughout the early centuries of the church. So, the documents written in the first century, as we'll see after the break, were not altered. The same guy is the same guy in the first century as he is in the fourth century. Don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. Back in two minutes.

How to Interpret Your Bible. Have you ever taken a course in that? One of the most important things you can know as a Christian. The online course that I'll be leading starts this Monday, January 10. If you hear this after that, you can still join probably for about a week after that. Go to CrossExamined.org, click on online courses, you'll see it there. And then the next week, the great Dr. Gary Habermas will be teaching his course on the resurrection. Another online course you're going to want to be a part of.

And we're unveiling today, that CIA, the CrossExamined Instructor Academy that we have been running every year since 2008, it is going to be online, in addition to the live one that we're going to do in late July. And the online CIA is going to start this February, just next month, and it's unlike any course you've ever taken. In the online CIA, the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, you will be evaluated by either myself, my guest today, J. Warner Wallace, Alisa

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Childers, or Dr. Richard Howe. In other words, you're going to present to us. Not only are we going to present to you great apologetic information, at least we hope it's great, you're going to present to us and we're going to help you refine your presentation and question answering skills on the online CIA. It's going to be all done via zoom. We're only taking 24 students. If you want to be a part of that go to [CrossExamined.org](https://www.CrossExamined.org), click on online courses and you will see it there. Sign up. We have an early bird special only until January 14. You can save 20%. Check all that out.

Let me go back to my guest, Detective J. Warner Wallace. Jim, just before the break we were talking about this chain of custody. And there are three chains: one from Paul, one from John, and one from Peter that you have identified. Tell us a little bit about those and how they affirm that Jesus hasn't been changed throughout the early centuries of the church.

Jim:

So, here's why this is so important, right. Because the materials that were used, which I think I talked about in Person of Interest as well, the technology of papyrus, and using the writing instruments that were used, they don't fare well, right. So, if we carve this on stone, you got a much better chance of stone existing. But when you're going to pass documents, the great thing about it is, the documents then become mobile. So, the word can get spread very quickly. The bad part about it is that the material deteriorates. So, the claim has been made by many skeptics that you don't have a piece of manuscript evidence about the New Testament, until, what 300 years after the end of the Common Era, or in 280. So, then how do I know that the first versions that may have been written, that are now lost...we don't have the autographs, the original copies of these gospels...how do we know that those gospels were what we have today? We have to fill in that gap between the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and the first existing manuscript we have, because the argument is going to be, yeah, that story of Jesus got changed. And by the time it gets into the council, it's really been changed.

Well, what we do is, we actually start to look and ask the question, Well, okay, if it's being transmitted, for example, orally, or is being transmitted at a period in history, we no longer have that document, who's it being given to, who's it being taught to. So, John, for example, has personal students. Now people are gonna argue about, well, are you sure this is a personal student? Well, every early Christian historic record identifies these men as the students of John.

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So, I get it, if you're going to start to nitpick out, one of the challenges we have is that this is either such a vast conspiracy that it covers 300 years and several generations of people in different regions of the empire, who are all cleverly saying the same thing and they're all lying. Okay, look, I always say it this way...

Frank:

That's ridiculous.

Jim:

Yeah, you [unintelligible] objections. You say, Isn't it possible, Jim, that this vast multi-generational, multi-geographic conspiracy, when you don't even have a way. It's not like you can communicate in real time like we can today. You got to cover that geographic distance in order to communicate that conspiracy, okay. Is that possible, Jim? I'm always gonna say yes, because anything and everything is possible, but it's not reasonable. And that's the standard we have here. It's not beyond a possible doubt because nothing is beyond a possible doubt. I'm assuming I'm talking to you, Frank, but it's quite possible you're an imposter. Okay. At least I can say it's possible.

Frank:

I find your lack of faith disturbing [said using Darth Vader's voice].

Jim:

Okay. But I don't think it's reasonable. Right. By the way, if you operated your life, on the basis of what is possible, you'd be frozen in place in fear, because it's quite possible that someone's gonna break into your house tonight. And that sound you heard? It's possible that's the murderer coming in through your front door. You see the problem with this? We operate our lives on the basis of what's reasonable, so let's extend that out.

Frank:

Probable.

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Jim:

Right. Let's extend that out to what we're looking at here. So, here's what we know. The history of the church tells us that the first students of John, for example, are Polycarp, Papias, and now Ignatius. [Frank fills in name for Jim] Side note: This is also true of verse memorization, I noticed. If I start reciting a verse to you, and I make an initial misstep, forget it. The whole thing...I'm never gonna find Ignatius in my mind again, right. And so, it's Ignatius, Polycarp and Irenaeus. So, these folks are sitting at the feet of John and what's great about that is we have some of the written material from Ignatius and Polycarp. At least, we have seven letters from Ignatius, and we have one from Polycarp. And I talked about this in Cold Case Christianity. And the writings of Papias, he's cited by Eusebius later in church history, but we don't have the documents that Eusebius says that Papias wrote, so let's just take Papias off the table for a second.

If we just look at what Ignatius and Polycarp wrote, we can get a view of the Jesus that they were taught by the eyewitness named John. So, we can look and say, well, yeah, but you know, the earliest people who are taught by John, when they described Jesus, he never rose from the grave, and he never was born of a virgin, and he never did miracles, all the supernatural stuff is not there. He sounds more like just a wise preaching rabbi in the first century. No. Now it turns out when you read Ignatius and you read Polycarp, and their [unintelligible] from John. Early in history, they affirmed the exact same view of Jesus that John held, that he taught them. And it turns out they had a student, Ignatius and Polycarp had a student named, guess what? Irenaeus. So, we can look at his work and we can see if he affirms what they say. Then we can go to the next one, Apollos. Who is the master to student relationship? And you can trace these things down through time.

Now, you can get a much longer trail on Paul's writings, because Paul had two students named, first, Clement of Rome. He mentions Clement in his letters and Clement writes a letter called First Clement. So, you can kind of see well, what's the description? It's very early in history. What is the description that Clement of Rome offers based on what Paul...?

Frank:

It's about 95 AD. Yeah, it's very early.

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Jim:

So, it's pretty early. So, you can look and see. And so, here's the whole problem for people who argue that Jesus somehow is exaggerated over time. Well, it turns out that the earliest descriptions of the first generation of believers who are not eyewitnesses, they're the students of the eyewitnesses, affirms the kind of Jesus we know today. It affirms the Jesus as described by the eyewitnesses. So, you've got two generations then and you just keep doing this through time. Now, there's a number, for example, if you go through Peter and Mark, and then Mark establishes the church in North Africa. He picks the first four bishops of that area. So, you can really, kind of, go through all of that and that leads you all the way heel to toe, teacher to student, teacher to student, teacher to student. You can see what they're teaching about Jesus, all the way to Eusebius. And that gets you all the way to the period of time that is talked about, the Council of Laodicea. So, you can trace those chain of custodies to see what is changing, if anything, over time.

And what's great about it, and people will say this to me all the time as a complaint. Well, look, Jim, how do you know, though, that that's a good document from Ignatius? That that's not been corrupted? Also, because there are longer versions of Ignatius' letters. And there are shorter. But we will use the most redacted version. Are we really going to argue that this conspiracy occurs in Rome, in Southeast Asia, because the John line is going to go through Southeast Asia? The Peter line is going to go through Mark in North Africa. The Paul line is going to go through Rome. Are we really going to argue they just happen to be lined the exact same way? And for what reason?

And remember that it's not as though Jesus is the first significant religious figure in human history who develops a robust worldview that then millions of people follow. The head start was in Hinduism. Indra exists before Jesus. Krishna exists before Jesus. Buddha exists before Jesus. Zoroaster exists before Jesus. None of these folks had the kind of impact that Jesus had on world history, and they had a dramatic head start. Let me give you an example of that. As I was searching through and looking at the history of education, you know, it turns out that the ancients did educate themselves, and they had a process by which they would educate themselves, sometimes quite robustly. But this view that you and I have of modern universities, where there's a body of students that comes to a location, where there's a resident faculty that, if they pass certain courses of curriculum, they're bestowed a document, a Diploma of

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graduation. That view that kind of university, as you know, it is born in three places, all founded by Christ followers: Bologna, Paris, and Oxford. And this blows up into a history of university planting by Christ followers.

So, if you do a search, now look at the historic universities planted by Christians, and you compare them to the universities planted by Jewish people, or Buddhists, or Hindus...because there are universities planted by those groups and all three of those groups had a head start on Jesus by centuries.... there's no comparison. There's no comparison. It's 10 to 1 if you add up all those groups. And when we started to do this research, we realized, oh my goodness...again, Jesus tells His disciples from the get-go, one of the earliest documents in Christian history, aside from the Gospels, is a document called the Didache, which is the teaching of the 12 apostles to the nations. It was used to catechize because they realized that this is a teaching and learning worldview. And that's why we can look at the history of the chain of custody, because these are people who felt a duty to teach the next generation. And they held this in high regard because their master said in his parting words, go make disciples, teach them everything I taught you. So, it wasn't like, hey just go preach the gospel. No, it was transfer information. And that's why the chain of custody is retrievable in Christian history and is so important in making the case.

Frank:

I don't want people to think that we don't have good manuscript evidence. We do. In fact, 43% of the 8000 New Testament verses are in manuscripts earlier than 225 AD. So, we do have early manuscripts. But Jim, what you're referring to is, the first complete manuscript we have would come from about 300 AD. Is that Sinaiticus?

Jim:

Yeah, well here's what we tried to do. It's been said for years, it used to be said, oh you can reconstruct all the entire New Testament except for eleven verses by the church fathers. And that's actually true. We should talk about that after the break.

Frank:

Alright, yeah, we'll do that right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist on the American Family Radio Network, the great AFR.net. My name is Frank

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Turek, and our website is CrossExamined.org. My guest, Detective J. Warner Wallace, his website is ColdCaseChristianity.com. Check him out there. We're back in just two minutes.

Sunday, January 16, Lord willing, I will be at Cottonwood Creek Church in Allen, Texas, for the morning services. Great people there. Then the following Thursday, January 20, I'll be at the University of Texas at Dallas. If you're anywhere near that area, it's open to the public, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. And then just a day or two later, at the unApologetic Evangelism Conference in Jacksonville, Texas. Check our website for more. And then we've got a bunch of colleges lined up with University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, and Winthrop University, and the couple of weeks right after that. So, check our calendar. If you're near any of those places, would love to see you. Now Jim, you're going back out on the road too, my guest, J. Warner Wallace. Jim, where are you going to be coming up soon?

Jim:

We'll be at praise church at an Engage Conference in Beaumont on the 29th of January. And then I'm actually at Cottonwood Creek also, for the morning services on the 27th of February. And I'll be there for the Reality Apologetics Conference the same weekend through Stand to Reason. We are there on the 25th and the 26th. And I'll be at an event at MTSU, Middle Tennessee State University, on the 8th of February. That's a nighttime events at 7:00pm. You can go online. New Vision Baptist Church is putting it on. They've got a great college ministry. So, we'll be doing a Q&A there. My calendar is available with your calendar, Frank, at CrossExamined.org.

Frank:

Yeah at CrossExamined.org. So, check it all out there. We're trying to get back out on the road, post COVID, and hopefully this new variant will not shut all that down.

Jim:

I know. Right.

Frank:

Yeah. Apparently, from what I've been reading. it's not as drastic in terms of the symptoms, but who know?

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Jim:

We're talking about Texas here too, right, so we should be okay.

Frank:

Texas. Yeah, they're open.

Jim:

Yeah, we'll see.

Frank:

That's right. Yeah.

Jim:

So, that's good. I'm in California, because I have to look at Texas as my model, okay, because if it's California, good chance... I mean, they're talking about the Super Bowl being moved to Texas, right. I mean, can you imagine from California. It's crazy. So anyway, let me say one thing about what you said before the break, which is really fascinating. It's this idea that a certain percentage of the New Testament can be recovered before 225. Now, tell me a little bit more about that. You got that from a reliable source, a friend of ours.

Frank:

Yeah, that's Dan Wallace, who is an amazing scholar at Dallas Theological Seminary. And he's, you know, Dan has made it his life's mission to photograph every extant manuscript from the New Testament. And, I want to say he's over a quarter million photographs so far. And when he goes to some of these places, some of these obscure monasteries and universities, sometimes he even discovers new manuscripts that people didn't even know existed, you know, they're hidden somewhere. They're there underneath something. And so, Dan is doing the work here. So, I got that stat that 43% of 8000 New Testament verses are in manuscripts earlier than 225 AD from Dan Wallace.

Jim:

Wow. That is encouraging.

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Frank:

Now, there was a mistake that we made when we wrote I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Dr. Norman Geisler, my co-author, had long had this stat, that you could reconstruct the entire New Testament, except for 11 verses, from just the quotations of the early church fathers. We later discovered that wasn't true. But then Jim, you did some research, along with David Geisler, Norm's son, and what did you discover about that?

Jim:

Well, I reached out to Norm before he passed about that issue, because when I wrote it in Cold Case [Christianity], I would have loved to know what the numbers were. That would have been a great truth claim to support in Col Case Christianity that 43% has been, you know, before to 25. So, I just needed to know like, I realized that I was collecting the manuscript, the writings of the church fathers, the Ante-Nicene church fathers, the pre-Nicene conference church fathers. And the reason why I focus on those is because, it seems to me, the claims that I always was concerned about as a non-believer...because I became a Christian at 35. When I was first examining this, I was like, well, yeah, the power corrupts. And so, when the Roman church, you know, when the Roman Empire starts to take over Christianity, I would expect all kinds of shenanigans to occur. So, I thought, okay, well, then how about let's just trace those leaders of the church, who were in place under the persecuted church, the church that was, depending on the Emperor...some emperors were more tolerant than others...was being chased. And they made claims about the manuscripts that they were reading. These are the church fathers that precede Constantine making the Christian faith the religion of the Empire. Let's just see what they said about it.

Frank:

Well, Constantine made it tolerable, right?

Jim:

Well, the Edict of Milan basically removes hostility toward Christianity and the Edict of Thessalonica makes it the religion of the Empire. So, I think by that time the skeptical Jim says, you know what, who knows what they changed at that point. So, I want to know what's happening in the first 300 years before any of that nonsense.

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Frank:

That's what we're talking about today.

Jim:

That's what we're talking about today. The chain of custody. So, I write in this new book, Person of Interest, I reached out to David now that Norm has passed, and he had some great people who he was working with on this, and I cited them in the case notes of this book. And you can see it in the book. It's illustrated. Every church father who precedes the Council of Nicaea, and how many books, how many gospels, and how many letters are quoted by that particular church father. There's a graphic for this, and you can see them all standing with the numbers of gospels they quote, and the numbers of letters they quote. And then I went through, I did the research, and he has compiled numbers. David and his associates have compiled numbers on how many...so this is a much more accurate. So, here's what we know. And this is what I talked about in the book. It turns out that about 87% of the Gospel of Matthew is quoted by the early church fathers prior to the Council of Nicaea. About 935 verses. 66% of Mark, about 435 verses are quoted by these same church leaders. But 86% of the Gospel of Luke, 990 verses quoted by these church leaders. And 97% of the Gospel of John, about 859 verses that are quoted by these early church fathers.

So, in other words, why is this important? Well, I'm not trying to reconstruct in the right order, I'm not puzzling that way. My question as an investigator is: What do these verses they're quoting say about Jesus? In other words, are they quoting all this stuff where he's just teaching on the Sermon on the Mount? You know, he's teaching principles, he's telling them parables? Or are these church fathers talking about the miracles of Jesus, the virgin birth of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus? Because here's my argument, Frank. If we had a manuscript record, as we have today, with the number of copies we have, with the adaptation of these documents over time, but every one of these, Jesus is nothing more than just a teaching rabbi. He was never, ever anything more. No one ever claimed he worked a miracle. No one ever claimed he rose out of the grave. He's just an ancient sage who's documented at this level his simple sermons and teachings and parables. There would not be a skeptic in the world who would deny the historicity of Jesus. There wouldn't. If all he is in every document is simply a teacher of wisdom, then people would say, well, yeah, of course Jesus lived, of course this is true, this is accurate, this is reliable. But when you insert a miracle, and now suddenly...

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Frank:

There you go.

Jim:

...skepticism enters. This is not about the strength of the eyewitness accounts. It's not about the strength of the manuscript evidence. It's not about the strength of the transmission of the documents. It's about a presuppositional bias against the miraculous. And that's why, in *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, you spend time talking about miracles. Why? Because it turns out that that anti-miraculous bias... Greg Koukl and I were with Dan Wallace at an event in Dallas, Wallace, and we asked him, why is there this skepticism about the late dating? Why do people think that the Gospels are dated? Is it based on manuscript evidence, something in the manuscript evidence that gives away the fact? He said no, no, It's a bias against the miraculous. It's that there's no way, in the minds of people who reject anything supernatural, that Jesus could accurately predict the destruction of a temple. That has to have been written post Temple Destruction. It has to be written post 70 because there's no way they reject the idea of this kind of supernatural prophecy. Also, if you write it later, after everyone's dead, well, then you can include these ridiculously unreasonable miracles, because there's no one alive now who could refute them. So, this is what is preventing people, I think a lot of people, from dating these gospels as early as I believe they were written, because they have an anti-supernatural bias that prevents them from looking at miracles.

Frank:

I've asked that same question of Gary Habermas, our mutual friend, who has written more on the resurrection than any other human being in history. His magnum opus now is over 5000 pages. He's working on it. I asked him that same question once, Jim. I said, Most of these New Testament scholars, why did they date the Gospels late? And he gave the same answer. Because I asked him, is there any data that would suggest they are late? And he said, no. They know if they're early the gig is up. If it's early, then you can't say that this is mythology in any way. It's too early.

Jim:

You know this is true. In a case like this, your defense team is going to attack the one thing that they are trying for a cornerstone piece of evidence. If you're wondering what your best piece of

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evidence is, look, and ask yourself the question: What is under the most attack by the defense team? That's my best piece of evidence. And this is what's happening here. The early dating of the scriptures is pivotal for us. And that's why it's under attack constantly.

Frank:

What you've pointed out, that Paul actually quotes Luke, and that would require Luke to have written his Gospel before Paul writes First Corinthians. And we know Paul wrote First Corinthians in 55 or 56. AD. So, what does that mean for Luke? What has Luke written?

Jim:

Well, this is why I think that you got to put Luke prior to the mid 50s, because he's quoting the church in Corinth, right. He's talking about the Lord's Supper, and he's quoting it to Timothy in First Timothy, when he's talking about what is considered scripture. Now people will argue well, he's quoting an oral tradition. Really? He calls it scripture and he puts it alongside Deuteronomy. If he's not calling scripture that might make it make some sense, but if you're going to call this scripture, and then you're comparing it to the other thing which we know at the time is a written scripture, that's reasonable.

Frank:

The great J. Warner Wallace, ladies and gentlemen. Jim, thanks so much for being on the show. It's ColdCaseChristianity.com. You got to check them out. Also check his calendar on our website, CrossExamined.org. You can see him out there. Jim, it's great having you on. Thanks so much.

Jim:

Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Frank:

That's J. Warner Wallace, ladies and gentlemen. And I'm Frank Turek. Great being with you. Don't forget about the online courses, How to Interpret Your Bible and a bunch of others. See you next week.

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