

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

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Is the Resurrection Unbelievable?

(April 13, 2022)

Ladies and gentlemen if Jesus did not rise from the dead then there is no hope. We're just going to die and it's going to be over. Is it really true that Jesus physically rose from the dead 1989 years ago or thereabouts? Because if he did, there is hope for humanity, there's hope for me, there's hope for you there's hope for humanity. If he didn't, there isn't. And I don't know about you, but you might just believe this and not know the evidence for it. Or you may doubt it and not know the evidence for it. Or you might just be in your own echo chamber. Have you ever heard any evidence or any arguments against the resurrection, against Christianity? Or do you live in your own little echo chamber?

Well, my friend Justin Brierley, does not live in an echo chamber. In fact, he more than anyone else I know, deals with the arguments for and against Christianity on a weekly basis, because he hosts the unbelievable show called Unbelievable. It originates in the UK, and it is a debate discussion show. Many of you have heard this program before, you've listened to Justin on the program. He's been doing it for more than 10 years now, actually, probably 15 now, and he is a wonderful moderator. But he is a Christian. His viewpoint is that Jesus did rise from the dead and he's written a book called Unbelievable?: Why After Ten Years of Talking with Atheists, I'm Still a Christian. And Justin has been on the program before. Justin, it's great having you on again. How are you?

Justin:

It's a great pleasure to be back with you Frank. And you were one of my most recent guests on the show, of course, talking about your new book, Hollywood Heroes, and had you in a fascinating discussion with an atheist YouTuber, Paulogia. So, thank you for coming on. It was a great show, we're getting some really great feedback to it. And I don't know if you saw the graphic we created of it, but I had an R2D2 peeking out from behind you and there was a lightsaber in the hand of the other guest. And I had a baby Yoda somewhere over my shoulder. So, it was good fun.

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Frank:

Well, thank you for having me on. And Paul was a great person to have on because he used to work for George Lucas. So, it was wonderful dialoguing with him, and you over the years, it must be 15 years now, Justin. Why don't you give us a little history of the program, Unbelievable?

Justin:

Yeah, it's been it's been an amazing ride, really, because I went to the boss of our Christian radio station about 16 years ago now and said, I would love to have an opportunity in the schedule, once a week, where while we do a great job talking to Christians about Christian things, we could actually talk to non-Christians about what we believe, why we believe it, kind of model what these conversations might look like that we have with our friends and family and neighbors. And that's how Unbelievable was born. And I'm going to confess, not everyone liked it to start off with, you know, We had plenty of Christian listeners who said: Do we need atheists on our Christian radio station? Haven't we got enough of them on the BBC? But actually, in the end, those who liked it loved it. And so, we just went for it. And it really grew as a podcast, and then latterly, as a video show over the years. So, it's been really exciting to see both sides coming together to dialogue and debate. I've learned an awful lot in the process.

At about the 10 year mark of the show, as you've said, I wrote this book where I tried to put together what I think are some of the core arguments for Christianity. And yeah, it's been an exciting ride ever since. Because I do believe that actually, we don't need to be scared, we need to be confident that we can make the case for Christianity, we need to do that in a world where radical skepticism is only a Google click away. And it's been wonderful to see so many other people going on that journey of learning to have more confidence in their Christian faith by, kind of, engaging in these honest, frank discussions along the way.

Frank:

Well, one of the things that the show does very well is, it can allow people to go into depth, and you don't really get that in our soundbite culture. So, you have a program that usually lasts about an hour and 25 minutes or so. And you're able to bring on the best minds on both sides to delve into the issues. And you've had the biggest names and in the world on that program, Justin. You've had Richard Dawkins on the atheistic side, and of course you've had people like

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William Lane Craig and NT Wright. In fact, you do another podcast with NT Wright every week too. Why don't you tell people about that?

Justin:

Yeah, that's the Ask NT Wright Anything podcast. And I just have the privilege of sitting down with the person who is probably one of the best, if not the best, well-known New Testament scholars in the world. And he has written these absolutely phenomenal books, huge books on the historicity of the early church, the early church documents, the resurrection of Jesus, and so on. And it's a weekly chance for people to ask questions of him. He's not just in a way a New Testament historian, he also turns his mind to all kinds of other issues; social, cultural, political, and so on. And he always just seems to have wise words and a wonderfully engaging style. So yeah, if you enjoy the theology of anti-right, it's a great way of engaging with it on a weekly basis. It's called the Ask NT Wright Anything podcast.

Frank:

Well, let's start at the beginning, Justin, because your book, I liked the way it's laid out. The chapters are titled such as God Makes Sense of Human Existence, God Makes Sense of Human Value, God Makes Sense of Human Purpose. You go through the fact that the most sensible worldview, it seems, is the Christian worldview. So, let's start with human existence. How does God make sense of human existence? Why would we turn to Christianity to say, this is the explanation as to why we're here?

Justin:

Well, I think the reason for it is that when you both look philosophically and scientifically at the world around us, Christianity makes sense of the data, it makes sense of the evidence. What kind of a universe do we find ourselves in? Is it one where, you know, just by the pure laws of nature, and you know, things were just left to run by themselves, it would produce us? Well, not at all. Because actually, there's all kinds of incredible things that just had to be just so in order for us to be here. Many of the listeners will have heard of the fine-tuning of the universe for the existence of life, the way that things like the force of gravity are set up to an infinitesimally specialized degree, such that chemistry could form so that planets, galaxies, matter could essentially exist. If it had been ever so slightly different, we would not be able to exist. There's that.

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There's the fact that there is a universe at all, you know, the fact that our best cosmology suggests that our universe came into being. Space, time, and matter came into existence. Even just the fact we can do science at all, we can ask these questions of ourselves, there's this extraordinary degree to which, either it's the most extraordinary fluke that the physical equations of the mathematical realm happen to map onto the physical universe itself or there's some kind of a divine hand behind this. Because even the brightest scientific minds out there, Albert Einstein, Eugene Vigna, I had on my show, Roger Penrose say, this is a huge mystery. A miracle, in fact, is what they often call it, that we can do science at all. So, I think there's just so many things pointing in the direction that this is not just the happenstance of whatever the universe happened to throw at us. When you look at it in detail, it feels like the universe [unintelligible] is coming, that there is a God behind it. So, that's just one example of the way in which I think, you know, Christianity makes more sense of the data, of the evidence, than a naturalistic atheistic account of reality.

Frank:

Justin, what do you think is the best, most robust counter to that from the atheistic side? You've had so many atheists on your program, the top in the world. When they're addressed with that question: Why can we even do science? Why can why does this universe exist at all?, what are some of the things they say?

Justin:

It depends on which one they're attacking. I mean, if it's the fine-tuning of the universe, often people will go to the multi-verse as a possible counter to it. You know, well, what if we are just one of many universes and we happen to be in the one that's conducive to human life? The problem is, it is such a speculative area, and even if you were to grant some kind of multiverse generating kind of physical aspects of the universe, that itself would need an explanation. And according to many cosmologists, such as Luke Barnes in Australia, that itself would be a have to be an incredibly finely-tuned process itself, so it doesn't really get rid of the problem. Likewise, when it comes to the beginning of the universe, you've had people like Sean Carroll, obviously giving the mathematical kind of versions of how we could explain it. Again, they only tend to push the problem one step back, so I think it's hard to get away from it.

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Frank:

A lot more with my friend, Justin Brierley. His book is called Unbelievable. Why After Ten Years of Talking with Atheists, I'm Still a Christian. He also has a great event coming up that even us here on this side of the pond are going to want to be a part of. We're going to talk about that right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. Back in 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 me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. My guest is Justin Brierley, all the way from the UK. His great weekly program called Unbelievable you need to avail yourself of. Wherever you get podcasts just type in Unbelievable with Justin Brierley and you will find it. It's a discussion/debate show, normally a Christian against an atheist, sometimes there are other worldviews on there as well. And it is well worth listening to. Justin also does the Ask NT Wright Anything podcast which you want to make yourself aware of as well.

And right now, we are talking about atheist explanations for say the beginning of the universe or the fine-tuning of the universe. And this is important, friends, because if we're going to have hope that Jesus rose from the dead, God must exist before the resurrection, otherwise, the resurrection would be an anomaly, or it didn't occur. You have to have a god to raise somebody from the dead. So, we're talking about the existence of God first before we get to the resurrection.

Now, Justin, you've had some of the greatest atheistic minds on the program. Sean Carroll is one of them. He had an interaction with Luke Barnes, who is a theist and believes in the fine-tuning of the universe and thinks that God is the best explanation for that. What's some of the conversation those two gentlemen had?

Justin:

Yeah, this is going back a few years, but they had a great conversation. Sean Carroll has defended a naturalistic point of view, so he's very definite about where he stands on this. He's not an agnostic, he's a naturalist. He says, as far as he's concerned, the best explanation for

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reality is that all that exists is matter in motion and the natural laws of the universe. And so, Luke Barnes pushed back on this. Luke is a Christian but, you know, he is just as fine a cosmologist and astrophysicist as Sean Carroll is. And he has done a great book actually looking at the evidence for the fine tuning of the universe.

What was interesting about the conversation is that they both respect each other scientifically, but they just have a different kind of almost stopping point, a metaphysical stopping point. Luke called it brute fact, okay. Sean Carroll as it were, has to just own up that there are some brute facts about the universe on his naturalistic account. Okay? Because questions like: Why is there anything at all? Why are there laws of nature? Why is the mathematics so elegant and so extraordinary? These are, if you like, the stopping points for Sean Carroll. He says that, well, you just have to have a stopping point, okay. There is going to be some mystery, if you like, in the universe. But as far as I'm concerned, that's where I stop.

And Luke simply asked the question of Shawn: Well, why stop there? He gave a great analogy. He said, let's imagine, okay, maybe in a couple hundred years' time that the great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Albert Einstein, Alberta, has finally written up the complete solution to everything physical, okay. All the top physicists of the world are gathered as she writes up every single sort of complete physical equation that explains our universe on the blackboard. And, he asked, Shawn: Well, would that be it? Would that be all your questions answered, basically? And he said: Or would you actually want to go beyond the blackboard? Would you want to ask, well, why are there equations at all? Why is there a blackboard at all?

Justin:

And for Luke, that's a perfectly valid question. And for him, it makes sense to ask that question, because it's a natural question to ask. It's the kind of question of: Why are there laws at all? Why is there a universal at all? And he doesn't see why you should stop at just this kind of naturalistic stopping point and say, that's my brute facts and I'm not going to go any further than that. Shawn Carroll came back and said, well, God is your brute fact, Luke, and I just don't accept God, because I've got these other reasons not to believe in God. But for me, I think it's a fascinating one. But I do think ultimately, that when you get to that point of the physics of the universe, the question of why there is anything at all, especially why there are laws of nature, why they take the form they do, you do run into a kind of metaphysical boundary. And I think at

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that point, it's perfectly valid to ask: Can we have another explanation? And yeah, I think it makes a lot of sense that, given the extraordinary nature of life and the universe, that positing a God makes sense. For me, that's a natural next step to go to, and the only reason you wouldn't is if you had an ideological pre-supposition about reality that stopped you from doing that. And I think, you know, in a sense, Shawn does, and I think he kind of owns up to that.

Frank:

You know, a mutual friend of ours, the great John Lennox, put it this way; at the end of the day there's only two worldviews, either matter gave rise to mind or mind gave rise to matter. And obviously, if matter is the ultimate stuff of the universe, then okay, it gave rise to mind. But we know that matter had a beginning, we know that matter is composed, we know that matter degrades, we know that matter by itself is dumb. It seems that the ultimate reality therefore is a mind. And if ultimate reality is a mind, the Logos, as John Lennox would say, quoting from John chapter one, then naturalism isn't true. I wonder how Shawn Carroll would answer the question: What evidence do you have for naturalism? What would he say to that, do you think, Justin? Because can you have evidence for naturalism?

Justin:

Well, I think he kind of goes down the route that I think many naturalist do, which is just that, well, the only kind of physical effects we see are natural. You know, we can't sort of go beyond the natural sort of effects of the universe, physical matter that we kind of observe through our microscopes, and so on. But of course, there's actually a huge pushback against that, especially in the area of mind, where a lot of people - we're not talking about Christians, necessarily -- a lot of secular philosophers are saying, No, consciousness is a different kind of thing. You cannot simply go from matter to mind. There's a qualitative difference between them.

It's interesting, actually, because Roger Penrose, again, one of the greatest physicists in the world. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2020. I had him on my Big Conversations show a couple of years ago, with William Lane Craig, debating the universe. And, you know, he worked with Stephen Hawking and others on, you know, singularity theorems and everything. But he's very interesting, because although he's not religious, he's not really a naturalist either. He identified three different realms that he believes actually exist independently of each other. He identifies the physical realm. So, that's the universe; rocks, trees, planets, and so on. He

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identifies the mental realm. He says, that exists because your mental experiences are not physical experiences, they're different. And he identifies what he calls an abstract mathematical realm, this extraordinary fruitful area of mathematics. And he says, the great mystery is the way all three of these combine and overlap on each other, that we can access with our mental mind, this mathematical realm, and this mathematical realm maps so extraordinarily, fruitfully on to the physical realm. And he said, I just don't understand how that happens.

And of course, William Lane, Craig said, let me give you an idea. And he said, what if all of those realms are linked by a mind? What if it is the mental realm that actually links all those? In fact, there's a divine mind would make perfect sense of how to unify these three separate realms that you say exist, Roger. And they had a really interesting back and forth on that. But I think actually, it's when you approach that kind of barrier, that metaphysical barrier, you suddenly realize the naturalism thing won't cut it. It leaves too many holes. And when you've got a brilliant physicist like Roger Penrose, saying, this is a great mystery, or there's a huge miracle involved here, you've got to ask yourself: What are you actually looking at in the end?

Frank:

Yes, when Shawn Carroll says that only material things exist, he's counting out the very mind that has brought him to that conclusion. Because if he's just a molecular machine, if he's just a moist robot, why should we believe anything he says about naturalism? In fact, this came up in our conversation that I had with Paul on your program last week. That CS Lewis quote, where CS Lewis says, unless I believe in God, I can't believe in thought so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God. It seems to stop every naturalist in their tracks. Why should I believe naturalism, or evolution, or atheism is true if I can't arrive at these mental conclusions without some sort of freewill, without some sort of ability to follow the evidence where it leads? And naturalism doesn't give you that opportunity. It just leaves that out. And so, it seems to me a self-defeating viewpoint, mentally anyway, Justin.

Justin:

Yeah, I meet so many naturalists who firmly and positively declare these days that they're determinists because, you know, hey, we all know the universe runs according to these principles, and it's basically all just a knock on effect of one particle interacting with another. And I just don't get it because I'm like, well, if that's true, if everything you think right now was

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determined since the beginning of the universe, how on earth can you talk about evidence leading to rational arguments, leading to logical conclusions? Because none of that's actually happening. All that's happening is that molecules are bouncing around in your brain causing you to believe certain things. So, for me, as many have pointed out, John Lennox, CS Lewis, many others, determinism and that kind of view of the universe, that clockwork view of the universe, radically undercuts rational rationality. And it's very hard to see how anyone is coming to any reasonable, rational conclusions if it's a non-rational, non-reasonable process that is, in fact, what drives it all. And it's not the easiest thing to kind of bring across to the layperson, but I think it's a very powerful argument that has actually persuaded many philosophers that you cannot have a purely naturalistic universe in that way.

Frank:

Yeah, in fact, that's what really was one of the obstacles for CS Lewis to continue to be an atheist. As soon as his colleague told him that naturalism didn't work. It was logically self-defeating, he immediately said, okay, I believe in a spirit. He didn't go to theism. He said, I didn't want this spirit to be a nuisance. A nuisance that it would somehow put moral claims on him. You know, Lewis was being honest. He said, I knew there had to be a spirit because without a spirit, I couldn't even explain how I could think anything. And our mutual friend Max McLean, his new movie - I don't know if you've seen that yet, Justin - it's very well done. The Most Reluctant Convert movie.

Justin:

I have seen it. It's extremely good. And I've been in touch with Max about it. In fact, I had him on my show to talk about it. And he does such a good job. And obviously he's taking a bit of poetic license by recreating some of these scenes between Lewis and his colleagues, but they're very, very well done. And yeah, I can highly recommend that movie, The Most Reluctant Convert.

Frank:

Now, we're coming up on a break here, Justin. Just give us a little taste of what you're going to have on Saturday, May 14, over there in the UK, and then we'll pick it up on the other side of the break. What's happening?

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Justin:

Well, it's a big, Unbelievable Conference. And for the first time, we're back in person at the British Library in London, but we're opening up to everyone all over the world online. So, you can attend from anywhere in the world. It's from 9:00am Eastern, if you're listening out in the US or Canada, and it's all about unmuting God, it's about finding our authentic voice again in a culture that is so riven by confusion and division. So, we've got some great guests, and I'd love to tell you all about it.

Frank:

We're gonna get to that right after the break. My guest is Justin Brierley. His book is called Unbelievable, and the God Unmuted Conference is coming up here, May 14 - that's a Saturday - all the way from the British Library in the UK. You can join via the internet. We'll tell you how to do it right after the break. Don't go anywhere. We're back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, are you afraid to speak up and talk about your Christian faith? Are you self-censoring yourself? Are you canceling yourself? Are you worried about being canceled if you just say one wrong word according to the inclusive, tolerant, diverse culture, which is not so inclusive, tolerant, and diverse because in the name of inclusion, tolerance, and diversity, they will exclude you and not tolerate you if you utter the wrong thing? So, what do you do if you're a Christian? Because Christian beliefs are now completely anti-cultural. Or we might say the culture is anti-Christian. What do we do about that? How can we inform ourselves so we can be better ambassadors for Christ? Well, my friend Justin Brierley is going to have a full day all the way from the UK, right from the British Library. It's called God Unmuted: It's Time for the Church to Find Its Authentic Voice Again. Tell us a little bit more about this, Justin, and how people can join from this side of the pond and be a part of this.

Justin:

Well, Frank, thank you so much for the opportunity. If anyone wants to come along on the day, we've obviously got the in person option in the UK, but from all over the world Unbelievable.live is the place to go to book a ticket to join us online. And it's going to be fully interactive when you're visiting online to the conference as well. So, you'll be part of the Q&A, there's gonna be lots of chance for interaction with all the guests. We've got a huge lineup, 10

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guests all together, joining us for this year's conference, because we're going to do a lot of it panel style.

For instance, in our opening session, Glenn Scrivener, who's a wonderful speaker here in the UK, will be speaking on why Christ alone can win the culture wars. And then we've got a panel discussion on unmuting God and asking: What would Jesus say about race, cancel culture, and identity? Those are the big hot button issues we know are dividing both the church and culture at the moment, Frank. And I just felt this year, this is what we need to talk about. We need to have an open and frank discussion about these issues. So, we've got some guests joining us for that alongside Glenn for that panel discussion. Lisa Fields leads a kind of apologetics ministry to African Americans in the US. Jeff Vines is also another US church pastor. He'll be joining us for that. Calvin Robinson is an interesting character here in the UK. He's kind of very much on the anti-woke kind of side of the discussion. He's got a big, big following on Twitter. And we've also got Phil Vischer, who has his fans and those who don't like what he's doing when it comes to issues around race and identity and so on. So, we're going to have a really interesting, diverse panel in that way to kind of have a frank conversation about these issues. And it's one where we're very much going to be taking audience questions.

But we also want to talk not just about the controversial issues, but also how to transform our culture, not be consumed by it. Alister McGrath will be our second keynote speaker, who will be talking on that subject. And then we're going to be hearing, again in a panel discussion format, from voices around the world. Joseph D'Souza is a bishop in India. We're going to be hearing from Sharon Dirckx who's from the Oxford Center for Christian apologetics. John Wyatt is an international bioethicist. Skye Jethani will be joining us as well, as we sit down again with Alister, as a panel, to look at how we speak with our voice about Jesus, in arts, in science, in global culture, that kind of thing. And there's going to be some really practical stuff as well about how to share our faith in a confused and divided world. So, it's going to be a day where we really do take the bull by the horns, and we ask: How do we speak with grace and truth into our confused and divided world and be a witness for Jesus?

I think very often, Frank, Christians kind of feel nervous about speaking up, like you were saying. They see the culture wars going on, and they don't want to kind of leap in with both feet and just become another voice in that battle. So, for me, it's all about finding what is a wise,

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Christ-like way of engaging our culture at the moment and showing that there is a better way. This is the thing I found is that, in all my travels, I've met so many atheists and agnostics and skeptics, but I rarely meet someone who isn't a believer in something, if you know what I mean. And very frequently I find it is an ideological issue. It may be, you know, LGBT, it may be race, it may be identity, it may be another issue that that sort of has become that person's sacred issue, if you like, and they may have their own kind of holy books, and they may have their own, you know, sacred rituals, they may have their heretics as well, you know. You look at someone like JK Rowling who's suddenly been canceled, you know, by a lot of people because she takes a particular perspective on trans issues and so on.

And so, for me, the problem is that we turn these issues into...they become mini religions of their own, Frank. They become the kind of idols that people end up sort of following in and of themselves. And the problem is with any religion that doesn't have Jesus at the center of it, it quickly becomes graceless and highly toxic, actually. And for me, we want to acknowledge that actually, people's desire for justice, that's coming from a good place, actually. It's just that we'll never have a world where justice truly flourishes if we don't put Jesus at the center. And for me, that's what the conference is about ultimately. It's about saying we need to put Jesus back in the center of these conversations, because only with him that we will actually see true justice prevail, only with him that will see the world truly transformed. Otherwise, it's just culture wars and all you get from that is casualties. So, that's the big idea of our God Unmuted Premier Unbelievable Conference this year, Saturday, the 14th of May. And as I say, we would love anyone from all over the world to attend. Unbelievable.live is the place to get tickets, see the speakers, and check out the schedule.

Frank:

Justin, very well said about putting Jesus at the center. You get a round of applause for that. That was well done, Justin. And you're absolutely right. And people will put something at the top of their priority list. As you said, maybe it's their own personal identity, maybe it's LGBTQ issues, maybe it's race, maybe it's something else. It does turn into its little mini-religion. It's an idol. I'm reminded of what Philip Johnson, the gentleman that wrote Darwin on Trial, once said. He said, he who is a skeptic in one set of beliefs is a true believer in another set of beliefs. And so, some of the skeptics who are skeptical of Christianity, well, they believe positively in other things, whether it's LGBTQ, or whether it's some of the woke ideology, or whether it's

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materialism, or whether it's macro-evolution and quantum vacuums bringing the universe in together. They actually believe in some positive things, and they need to defend those beliefs. If they're going to say that these beliefs are really true and what we ought to follow. Anyway, the website again for that is Unbelievable.live.

Justin:

That's right. There's a little video promo there you can check out where I'm introducing some of the topics and guests and you can just check out all the different options. There's even a pay what you want option, so we want to make this very accessible for anyone, whatever their budget is. So, that's the place to go.

Frank:

Now those that do sign up, can they watch these lectures or these panel discussions after the fact or do they have to be live to watch them?

Justin:

Yeah, you can. In fact, for those who maybe are on a different time zone but would like to kind of do catch up, we are offering that as an option as well. So, when you get your ticket, if you want to request the catch up version of the conference, we can make that happen for you. Likewise, anyone who gets a premium ticket for online, they get all the downloads anyway, soon after the conference, so they get to watch everything again at their own leisure. Of course, being there live, if you can be, that means that you get to be involved in the Q&A, you get to be able to ask questions of the panelists and so on throughout the day. So, there's an advantage if you can do it live. That's why we're having it at a kind of an unusual time in the UK. We're doing it at 2:00pm UK right through to the evening, because we've got a special part of the conference.

Our evening event is a great conversation on, Is There a Master Behind Our Mind between Sharon Dirckx, who's an Oxford neuroscientist and a Christian, and Ian McGilchrist who's become quite renowned as a brain psychologist. He wrote a book that everyone's talking about, The Master and His Emissary. And so, he's more on the secular side, but they're going to come together have a great big conversation, dialogue as part of the conference in the evening. But we're hoping the fact that we're starting it later in the day here means that more people can

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join from your side of the pond, Frank, at about 9:00am Eastern or if you're on the West Coast it'll be 6:00am Pacific. So, an early start, but well worth joining us live if you can do.

Frank:

Sharon Dirckx I think was interviewed by Lee Strobel for his newest book, The Case for Heaven.

Justin:

That's right.

Frank:

She was she was very good in that chapter as I recall.

Justin:

And she's also interviewed for the new movie documentary of The Case for Heaven, which I had the chance to have a look at. And Lee's coming on my show next week to talk about it so...

Frank:

Oh good.

Justin:

Yeah, she's a really interesting person. So, one to watch out for.

Frank:

Well, friends go to Unbelievable.live, and while you're at it, if you sign up for the God Unmuted Conference on May 14, you should also check out their website and subscribe to Justin's podcast called Unbelievable. And you'll get an hour and a half or so every week of some great conversation that deals with some of the issues we've spoken about today and many more. In fact, Justin, let's move on. Now we talked a little bit about the evidence for God, the evidence for the fine-tuning, we talked a little bit about the mind body issue and how there's got to be some immaterial realm out there for us to even be able to think and have freewill. Let's now move on to the resurrection since this is Holy Week. You've had everybody a big on your program, both for the idea that Jesus actually did rise from the dead and those against. Who are the main scholars in this world, say, for the resurrection and against the resurrection?

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Justin:

Well, there's many names I could choose from. Obviously, some of the most influential scholars, kind of who have been writing on, debating on the physical resurrection of the death of Jesus; Mike Licona and Gary Habermas wrote some very influential books, and they've kind of led the way in what is sometimes called the minimal facts approach to the resurrection. So, looking at the kind of historical facts that even very progressive non-believing scholars would still affirm around Jesus. That would be things like, for instance, the fact that his followers believed that they had experiences of the resurrected Jesus. It would include the explosive growth of the early Christian church. It would include the conversion of skeptics, such as Paul and James and so on. And the question they ask is: Given that there are these shared, believed, historical facts that even non-Christian secular scholars affirm, what does that actually show us? Could it be that those facts alone, even if we didn't go to all the specifics of the New Testament stories in the gospels, would they be enough to show that something strange happened in the first century?

And I'm very sympathetic to that. In fact, just on my own show this weekend, Easter weekend, I'm featuring a discussion between Justin Bass, who's written a very good book on this called *The Bedrock of Christianity*. He again is a New Testament scholar who's says, actually, if you just looked at Paul's writings - just First Corinthians 15 and some of his letters - just from what we know of that historically, we know that something really weird happened in the first century that went against all the Jewish theological expectations of that time. So, I've got him in conversation with Dale Allison, who's more skeptical of sort of the physical aspect of the resurrection. That's an interesting conversation. Obviously, on the other side, there are many scholars. You've got people like Bart Ehrman, you've got James Crossley, you've got a number of others who are willing to kind of say, I believe in these facts, but I don't believe they necessitate a resurrection. But yeah, maybe we could talk more about that in a moment.

Frank:

Yeah, let's do that. Let's see what the skeptics have to say. What is their explanation for the minimal facts? We all agree on the same facts. The question is: How do we interpret those facts? You're listening to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* with me, Frank Turek. My guest is Justin Brierley of the *Unbelievable* podcast. You need to avail yourself of that every week. We're back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

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Ladies and gentlemen, on Monday, April 25, I will be at Louisiana State University, the LSU Tigers, for I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. It's open to the public. Anyone can come. Check our website, CrossExamined.org, for more. It starts at 7:00pm Central Time on the Louisiana State University campus. That, of course, is in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Hope to see you there. Also want to mention that next week the Ethics of Abortion: Pro-Life Apologetics in an Uncertain Age online course with my friend, Scott Klussendorf, I think one of the best pro-life speakers and certainly pro-life trainers in the world. He'll be your instructor. If you sign up for the premium version you will have several zoom sessions with Scott to hone your skills and ask questions. To check it out, go to CrossExamined.org, click on online courses, you will see it there.

Back to my friend, Justin Brierley. His book is called Unbelievable, and his podcast is of the same name. We're talking about the resurrection right now and we have people on both sides, quite obviously. Scholars saying yes, Jesus rose from the dead, others saying no, he didn't. Now Justin, you had a little analogy about the resurrection on Tik Tok that went pretty viral. Can you tell us about that?

Justin:

Yeah, sure, sure. So, I'd been doing Tik Tok for a little while - this was about a year ago and some of these videos are done quite well talking about why I believe God exists, why it makes sense to believe in a creator. And inevitably, a lot of people got in touch and ask questions saying, Okay, if God exists, which God? Because there's Muslims, there's Hindus, Jews, or whatever. And they said, wouldn't you have to kind of search through every religion to know which one is true? And I said, no. And this was the analogy I used. I held up a big bunch of keys, and I said look, when I go to my church to unlock the front door, I often have to search through a whole similar set of looking keys before I find the one that actually unlocks the door. Okay. But if I have found that key, and it unlocks the door, I don't go searching through the rest of the keys and try every other one in the lock just in case that works too. I know I found the right key.

And I said, I think it's like that with Christianity. You don't have to exhaustively search every single religion and all its claims in order to know that Christianity holds the key. Because if it's true that Jesus Christ is who he said he was, and that He rose from the dead, you have found the key that unlocks the door. Because if that's true, then the other ones can't be true, kind of

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by definition. In that sense, if you ask me, how do I know which God is the true God, it's because that God has revealed himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ, in the life, death and resurrection. And so, for me, that's why there is a historical bedrock to Christianity. It's not just sort of, well, once you've established a case for God, you just kind of have to take your choice as to which of these gods it might be. There's, there's a very good reason to believe that Jesus Christ proved that the God of the Bible is the God of the whole show.

And for me, that's why I think we're extraordinarily blessed, Frank, to have the kind of historical evidence that I believe we do have for the resurrection. In that sense, Christianity stands apart from every other world religion. Many of the others are based essentially on personal revelations, angelic dreams, visitations, things that cannot actually be put out in the public square and debated. They are just sort of subjective personal things. Whereas Christianity was born as a public religion where the claims that people made could be disputed because you know, we could have shown you where the tomb was, I can show you whether this guy said that Jesus existed or not, or whether he rose again or not, and that kind of thing. And so for me, I think people really under appreciate how unique Christianity is, that the main central claims of it are things that can be held up to historical scrutiny at the time when it was happening. And even today, some 2000 years later, we still have an extraordinary amount of access to those first followers, what they wrote, what they believed, what they said had happened. And for me, that's why we can still talk about the resurrection of Jesus all this time later.

Frank:

Well put. I love that analogy, Justin. Let me ask you this, though. You've had people like Bart Ehrman, and James Crossley, and people that agree on the minimal facts. They agree that Jesus was crucified. They agree that his disciples believed he rose from the dead and were willing to die for the belief. Many of them agree that there was an empty tomb. How do they explain the facts, Justin? If it's not a resurrection, what was it that explains the facts, according to them?

Justin:

Well, this is the curious thing, because once you've got all of those facts sort of lined up. You've got to ask yourself, well, what's the best explanation for them? And what I've found, interestingly, with someone like Bart Ehrman, especially, is that he has said, well, as a historian, I simply cannot allow a miracle because then I'd be having to let miracles in all over the place.

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So, he kind of believes that the historical method kind of excludes miraculous explanations a priori, and therefore, almost any explanation is better than the miraculous explanation. And so, you know, he would say, well, whatever it is, grave robbers, or hallucinations, or whatever, I've got to prefer a natural explanation to a supernatural explanation, or I'd simply open the door to things that are outside the purview of history. He often sort of says, then you're doing theology, not history.

And my reaction to that, and the way that others have responded to him, is simply why should we rule out the explanation that the first followers themselves gave, just because it doesn't shoot your methodological approach to history. The fact is, it could well be that this is at least one event in history where it feels like the facts point in that particular direction. Now, of course, there are other claims of miracles from other people. And we're going to do the same with them, we're going to ask: Does it make sense to believe that there are other miraculous claims that the other people make? Well, of course, other people do. But I've rarely seen any evidence that they're nearly as well attested as this particular miracle claim. So for me, it's about saying, okay, if there is a God, and if, for instance, that God left us a whole set of telltale signs in the Old Testament that someone would come who would be this extraordinary figure, who would die and who would be resurrected, perhaps that's a clue to the fact that when it all seems to center upon this one individual, and this extraordinary hole in history has appeared, which only seems to be explained by a resurrection, maybe this is the one instance where you can say directly that a miracle occurred because something strange happened. And so, for me, I've never been satisfied with this idea that you simply can't do history and believe in miracles at the same time. So, that's kind of what I've heard from Bart in the past.

Frank:

Yeah, it's a philosophical presupposition and it seems like he's arguing in a circle. He's saying miracles don't occur because we've never witnessed them. It's the old David Hume argument, which doesn't work. As CS Lewis pointed out, he's arguing in a circle by saying, since we've never seen a miracle they can't occur. Well, this might be the instance where you actually see a miracle. You can't just close it off. And it's interesting to me, Justin, I don't know if you've noticed this as well. I think people like Bart Ehrman, and others in the past, have tried to take a particular alternative theories, say hallucinations, or the Swoon Theory, or something like that, they may have said, oh, this is our explanation. Now, it seems they don't even take a position.

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They just say the resurrection didn't occur. Well, then how do you explain the facts? And it doesn't appear that they have an explanation. Have you had any major skeptic on your program try and put forth a naturalistic theory that explains the facts? Have you had anyone do that in recent times?

Justin:

Well, again, that there's just been people who've given "what if" type theories. What if it was a great a grave robber? What if it was just, you know, they turned up at the wrong tomb? But the problem is, when you run them through the kind of the filter, if you like, of the minimal facts, they all run into, for me, insuperable problems. So, you've got the fact that, you know, in the early church, the testimony of women in the first century, it wouldn't have made sense to have invented a story where women were the first discoverers of the empty tomb. Their testimony was worth half that of a man. And yet, this is what you have in the earliest accounts of the gospels that women discovered. It's the kind of thing where if you're talking about people fabricating something, there are so many aspects of the story that don't make sense of that. Not least - and this is something I was talking about on my most recent edition of Ask NT Wright Anything - the fact that the resurrection of someone in time went against all of Jesus's followers' theological expectations.

Again, if you're talking about them having hallucinations, because they really wanted him to be the Messiah, what they wouldn't hallucinate is him rising physically from the dead, because that was a new thing, that was completely novel. There was an expectation that people would rise from the dead at the end of time. And you kind of get that, don't you, in the story of the raising of Lazarus in John, where Mary says to him, I know that he will be raised at the end of time. But the point is, Jesus was raised there in that moment. And again, there's too much kind of weirdness going on in the story for it just to be sort of some kind of expectation that got fulfilled through hallucinations.

So, for me, there's all kinds of reasons why these theories, these alternative theories, just don't seem to stack up ultimately. There're too many points at which they fall through. And you have to ask yourself, in all honesty, what if the explanation those first followers gave is the true word that Jesus had been physically raised from the dead? If you've got an open mind, and if you're willing to see that so much of history leading up to that moment and history since that moment

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seems to converge on this moment in history, you've got to ask, maybe there's a good reason, maybe these people were not making it up, maybe this is one instance in which what, obviously, is a miraculous event, could actually make sense of that of all of the historical facts surrounding it. So, I mean, none of this will force a skeptic to go that route, you know. You can always bring another objection. But for me, it makes sense. If you're willing to be open to the possibility, it makes perfect sense of all of the data that we've got to hand.

Frank:

And it makes a lot of sense, as Justin points out in his book, *Unbelievable*. If you don't have the book, you ought to get it. And don't forget, Justin, give us the website again, for the May 14 event, *God Unmuted* over there in the UK that people can join via the internet from this side of the pond. What's the website again?

Justin:

It's *Unbelievable.live*. You can find out all about the topics, the speakers, and indeed the various options for joining us live from anywhere in the world, including US, Canada, and wherever people may be listening to this show. that's unbelievable, Doc.

Frank:

Thank you so much, Justin. It's always great having you on the program and keep doing what you're doing on *Unbelievable*.

Justin:

God bless you, Frank. Thanks for having me.

Frank:

Absolutely. That's Justin Brierley ladies and gentlemen. Don't forget *Unbelievable.live*. Check it out. May 14, sign up now. You can be a part of it live. You can also watch the lectures and the panel discussions afterwards as well. I'm Frank Turek. We'll see you here next week. He is risen. He is risen indeed. God bless.

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