

What Does Biblical Inerrancy Really Mean? | with Dr. Mike Licona

(June 11, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, most people that take the Bible seriously believe that the Bible is inerrant. But what does that mean? How do we define inerrancy? Does it mean that every teaching is inerrant? Does it mean every teaching and detail is inerrant? If so, what do we do with details that appear to be in conflict or actually appear to be errors themselves? How do we deal with this? Do we try and harmonize them? Are there other ways of looking at these so-called differences that may appear to be contradictions?

We started our conversation last week on the main podcast with Dr. Mike Licona. His brand-new book deals with this. It's called 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently.' And you're probably not going to be able to pick up the thread very well unless you go back and listen to the first show, because we're going to pick up right where we left off. There's so much more to cover because Dr. Licona has made a brand-new book from his original academic work. It just came out in late May.

Again, it's called 'Jesus, Contradicted.' And Mike, why don't we start by talking about what some scholars will say are errors in the Bible versions that we have now. Can you name a couple of these? And these are just details. They're not errors in big issues, but they're details. Give us one or two and let's talk about them.

MIKE:

Well, in 1 Samuel, it says that David killed Goliath. When you come to 2 Samuel, it says that Elhanan killed Goliath. And so, which, which is it? Now, in the original, there were two Goliaths.

FRANK:

Mike, come on! Everybody knows that. That might be a harmonization right there but go ahead.
[Laughter]



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MIKE:

Some have tried to say, well, it was Goliath's brother that they killed. And I mean, that's a possibility. The thing is, 1 Samuel in its original form was just Samuel. And it was later on that it was divided into 1 and 2 Samuel. The same author wrote it, you know, the whole thing as one document. So, I mean, there's various hypotheses that go around to try to explain the difference, but we just have to say, well, it's, maybe one of those solutions are correct. Maybe it's an error there. You know, we just don't know.

And here's something that's interesting. You find a lot of these things in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, differences in numbers and things like that, the numbers of chariots, the numbers of soldiers, etcetera, numbers of stables. So, what's going on here? Does Chronicles exaggerate because that was a literary device back then?

Well, it is a known literary device, but is that what the chronicler is doing? You know, it's hard to tell at times. But you can compare parallel texts, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, and see that there are certainly discrepancies in what's going on and we can come up with reasons to think, well, you know, maybe harmonize them or, you know, scribal error, you know, copyist error, things like that.

But we can't say we've identified them all because look, the reason we can identify these things is because there is a parallel text. But most of the Bible does not have a parallel text. So, we're not going to say that copyists only made errors when a parallel text was involved. We can identify errors where there are parallel texts. There's probably some errors in the text where they don't have a parallel that shares the story.

FRANK:

Yeah, it could be. We don't know.

MIKE:

So, I mean, that's one. When we come to the New, I mean, there's plenty in the Old Testament. When you come to the New Testament, there's the census of Augustus that's mentioned in Luke. Scholars think that, that-- A lot of scholars think that that's an error. I mean, at least we could say it is a reasonable candidate for an error.

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I think the location of the feeding of the 5000 is a potential. It's a reasonable candidate for an error. You have Luke that places it near Bethsaida, which is around, if you think of the Sea of Galilee as a clock, then Bethsaida is around 12:30/1:00. And then Matthew and John says that after he fed the 5000, Jesus ordered them to cross the lake and to go to the other side, to Capernaum.

FRANK:

Which really isn't the other side. It's kind of on the same side of the lake.

MIKE:

Well, it's the north side. But no, it is on the west side as you know, having been there several times. It's around 10:30/11:00. So, it's on the west side rather than the east side where Bethsaida is. Well, Mark says he tells them after the feeding to cross the lake to the other side, to Bethsaida. Well wait a minute, how can that be? So, I mean, that's a reasonable candidate for an error. I think the most difficult one to resolve would be in the infancy narratives.

So, you have Matthew that has Jesus in Bethlehem and then Joseph is warned in a dream to get out of there and to go to Egypt. And so, he's down there for perhaps two years, and then he returns after Herod Archelaus dies, and then they settle in Nazareth. In Luke's Gospel, after the days of purification, which I think was 40 days, then Mary and Joseph, we find them in the Jerusalem temple. So, she gives birth in Bethlehem.

Forty days later, she's the purification rites, doing it in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus is dedicated there. And then Luke says, after that, they settle in Nazareth. So, what's going on there? If I had to put money on it, I would probably say my best guess is that Luke just didn't care about the Exodus to Egypt, and just didn't include the story and just weave these things in and, like, cut that out and just made it go from Jerusalem to Nazareth.

FRANK:

I wonder if that is that... Yeah, that is something that Bart Ehrman brought up in Jimmy Akin's debate. Where did they go? Why does there appear to be a difference between Luke and Matthew? It might not be an error, as you said. Maybe just Luke just decided, I'm not going to include that part. I'm going to compress this. Or it could be in terms of homes, Jimmy was

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saying that it could be that Joseph had two homes. He had a rural home and a city home, so to speak. I mean, there's ways to harmonize these things.

The question is, are we stretching it too much when we do that? And notice, ladies and gentlemen, these things that are acknowledged are minor, minor details. This has nothing to do with whether or not there's a God, whether or not Jesus rose from the dead, whether or not he died for your sins, whether or not, if you trust in him you're going to have eternal life. None of these are big theological issues.

They're minor details. And it shows you something, as we talked about in the previous podcast, that when skeptics bring these kind of things up, they're really going after minor details because they can't go after major details because everybody agrees on the major events. They have these little chronological things, these little differences in location and cross the lake here. Cross the lake. Big deal, right?

I mean, it's nothing huge here, but I want to talk also, Mike, about the compositional devices you talk about in the book 'Jesus, Contradicted.' I want you to compare the compositional device with a harmonization attempt. And why don't we take Jesus heals the centurion servant? Because Luke tells the story one way, Matthew tells the story another way, and it appears to be contradictory. So, first of all, how does Luke tell the story? And then how does Matthew tell the story?

MIKE:

Well, Luke has the centurion. He's got a servant who's very sick. And so, he sends some Jewish leaders to Jesus to ask him the favor to heal his servant. And so, they go and they say, Jesus, the centurion is a righteous man. He loves our people. He's built a synagogue for us. He's worthy of this. Please come and heal his servant. So, Jesus says, all right, let's go check it out. So, they head toward the centurion's home in Capernaum, and on their way, the centurion has a change of mind.

And so, he sends some friends out to intercept Jesus and say, look, the centurion says that he's unworthy to have you come under his roof. But he recognizes that you are a man of authority, just like he is. So, just say the word and his servant will be healed. And Jesus praises the

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centurion for his faith and heals his servant without ever seeing the centurion or his servant. That's how Luke tells the story.

FRANK:

That's Luke, chapter seven, ladies and gentlemen. Now, Matthew, chapter eight. How does he say it? Or how does he tell story?

MIKE:

Matthew follows his typical practice of simplifying a story. I like to say, rather than the girl version of the story, he gives us the guy version, and he simplifies. And so, he just has Matthew or the centurion himself, go to Jesus in person and make the same request. Lord, I got the servant and he's sick. Please come and heal him. All right, let's go.

No, no, no. I'm unworthy to have you come under my roof. You know, you're a man of authority like me. Just speak the word. And the centurion. I'm sorry. So that Jesus praises the centurion for his faith and heals his servant without ever seeing the centurion. So, there's a difference there. Did the centurion go and meet Jesus or not?

FRANK:

All right, so how would the scholars who believe in what we call now the traditional view of inerrancy, that every detail has to be precisely the same. How would they harmonize these two seemingly divergent accounts?

MIKE:

It's a difficult one, Frank. I've solved t two different ways they attempt to harmonize it. The first, and there's only one modern scholar I found that tried it. It was Gleason Archer. And I think Craig Blomberg was open to it, if not partial to it. And that is to say that the centurion first sent the Jewish elders, and then he sent the friends, and then he said, you know what? I think I'll just go in person, you know?

So, saying something that none of the other gospels said. So, that'd be one way. Another way is what our mutual friend Richard Howe proposed, and some others have as well. Metonymy, where one represents another. So, it would be like saying President Biden communicated with

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the President of Taiwan, expressing his support for Taiwan, when it was actually the Secretary of State, Blinken, who communicated with their Secretary of State.

So, you could say that Biden did communicate with their president. He just did it through others. And so, in that sense, it would be that the centurion, when it said the centurion went to Jesus, that's just representative. He actually went to him through the Jewish elders and the servant.

FRANK:

Okay, that's an attempt at harmonization. Now, when you read these ancient biographies, many of them by Plutarch, you say there's about 90 of these ancient biographies within 300 years of Jesus, 150 years of each side. And Plutarch wrote about 48 of them, if I'm not mistaken. And you say all this in the book, 'Jesus, Contradicted.' What might be a solution to this issue other than that harmonization? And you call it a compositional device.

MIKE:

A compositional device. That term, I use it because Christopher Pelling, the foremost authority in the world on Plutarch, that's the term that he uses for it. There were certain devices that we can infer when we look at the different ancient historians and biographers that they use. And one would be transferal, where you transfer what one person said, as though said by another, or the recipient is transferred from one to another.

We saw a transfer happening with the recipient, with Jesus' baptism. Who did God's voice speak to? To Jesus or to the crowd? It's a transferal that Matthew is doing. I think that's what Matthew's doing here, and here's why. Plutarch tells an interesting story about how Pompey, when Rome was in a serious crisis, a lot of riots going on. It was about ready to collapse under its own weight due to the corruption and the riots. Sounds a little like the US at this point, you know, reminiscent of it.

So, they appoint Pompey, the famous Roman general, to run Rome for one year, and he doesn't need the Senate's approval. He can install any law that he wants. This is the end of 53 BC; 52 BC comes along. And so, one of the laws that Pompey makes is that if someone is on trial, one of their friends can't come in and read a speech of lavish praise called an encomium, because it

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would unduly bias the jurors when it really wouldn't matter, contribute to whether the guy was guilty or innocent.

So, Pompey makes this law, and then later on, a few months later, he proceeds to break this law. When his friend Plancus is on trial, he creates an encomium and has it read at the trial. Now, here's where it gets interesting. And we know this happened because it's also reported by Suetonius and Cassius Dio. So, in Plutarch's 'Life of Cato the Younger,' Cato Judacensis, he says that Pompey wrote the encomium and gave it to an emissary who came into Rome and read it to the jury.

And we know this is how it's happened, because, again, this is how Suetonius and Dio reports it. And it would have been that after serving as consul, Pompey would have been outside of the city of Rome with an army in a consular province. And so, with that army, he wouldn't have been allowed to come back into the city of Rome while he was gone that year. But when Plutarch tells the same story, we're talking about the same author telling the same story, using the same sources.

And as Pelling argues, he's writing these simultaneously. He says that Pompey himself came into the city and read it directly. So, Plutarch there is just simplifying and transferring the words from the emissary to Pompey, because they were Pompey's anyway. And I think that that's what Matthew was doing with the centurion. It makes perfect sense. He's just doing what Plutarch and others did, writing ancient biography with transferal.

FRANK:

How does that differ from what Richard Howe said, that it's in sort of an emissary way, saying it was Biden, when really it was Blinken? How does that differ?

MIKE:

It does differ because Plutarch is actually saying, he means, he intends for us to understand that Pompey himself went in the city and read it. Whereas Richard is saying that, no. Matthew didn't mean for us to take it, that the centurion himself went. And where I think that goes wrong is that in Luke, he's telling the people, the emissaries, go back. And he praises the centurion for his faith, and he tells them plural, that it will be done.

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So, he's using plural noun, plural verb. Whereas in Matthew, he uses the singular verb. Go, singular, to the centurion. Go. It will be done for you, singular, as you, singular, have requested. So now, I don't think he's referring to metonymy there. It just makes more sense when we see this kind of stuff that's going on in the other ancient literature.

These are common compositional devices that were part and parcel of writing ancient biography and history. This is how they did it back then. We do it today, in a sense, for especially us guys or people who want to abbreviate. We're not so much concerned about precise accuracy. We're more concerned about just telling the story succinctly and giving an essentially faithful representation of what occurred.

FRANK:

Yeah, you talk a lot in the book, 'Jesus, Contradicted' about the fact that we, when the gospel writers are writing down even what Jesus said, many times they're paraphrasing. They are getting the gist of what he said. Because I remember years ago, Mike, when I first became a Christian, I was reading two accounts of Jesus saying, you must deny yourself and take up your cross. And another gospel, I think, said, you must deny yourself and take up your cross daily. And I'm thinking to myself, well, did he say daily or not? You know, which is it?

And that, for me, was almost like a crisis of faith. How can I trust this stuff? What did he say? What's the truth? And part of the reason that bothered me is because I had the wrong expectation of what inerrancy was. And we've already admitted in the first show, ladies and gentlemen, that the Bible doesn't give us a firm definition. No matter if you're going to take the Chicago statement view, you've got to go back and listen to the first podcast and what we're talking about.

Or you're going to take the view of inerrancy that Dr. Mike Licona is going to give us here in a few minutes here on this podcast. The Bible doesn't tell you what the right definition is, but you've got two principles, Mike, that you use to try and arrive at the proper definition of inerrancy. What are the two principles?

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MIKE:

Well, not necessarily for inerrancy, but just two principles of how we can approach the text. And the first is our view of Scripture should be consistent with what we observe in Scripture. Our view of Scripture should be consistent with what we observe in Scripture. I mean, this just sounds common sense to me. And the second one is that--

FRANK:

Before you get there, before you get there, let's unpack that for a second. What do we observe in Scripture? We observe that authors relating the same events tell those events differently. And so, and even using different wording. Now, it could be he said something, and I'm sure he did. He said things over and over again in different locations.

And maybe one author is saying what he said in one location, and another author is saying the same kind of thing because he said it a little bit differently in another location. That could be. But it could also be that they're just recording the gist. Both of those options are on the table.

MIKE:

That's correct. And again, I'm not the first one to say this. I mean, F.F. Bruce, brilliant scholar whose conservatism was beyond question. J.I. Packer, one of the three guys who crafted the Chicago Statement, said that no one has epitomized the balance between faith and Christian scholarship more than F.F. Bruce. And yet, when F.F. Bruce, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, in the introduction, he says John has taken the Jesus tradition and restated it as an expanded paraphrase, a translation of the freest kind, a transposition into another key, and so much more. Wow. You know, that's pretty remarkable.

And so, that's why I think you have, on many occasions in the Synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where you have them, Jesus is cryptic about his identity, but in John, he's out there with it. Before Abraham was, I Am. And he makes statements that are very explicit that we don't find in the synoptic gospels. What we do find, however, is the same kind of message that Jesus was communicating explicitly in John. We find it being communicated implicitly, or in softer terms, in the synoptic gospels.

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So, when you read the gospels, like, if you were to read Matthew five times and then read Mark five times, and then read Luke five times, don't go, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Matthew, Mark, Luke. Read Matthew five, Mark five, Luke five, and then read John five times. What you'll notice is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are extremely similar in the way they report about Jesus. Jesus sounds the same.

When you read John, the message, the teachings of Jesus, the picture we get of Jesus is the same, but he sounds different. And then when you read 1 John five times, you go, whoa. Jesus in John's gospel sounds a whole lot like John in 1 John, which seems to suggest that John has recast Jesus using his own words. So, they took these kinds of liberties. That's the way that they wrote back then, they were entirely authorized to do this kind of stuff. They just didn't write like modern biographers.

There's only one who wrote like modern historians, biographers, and that guy's name is Asconius, who wrote around the same time as when Paul was executed. Now, most people will never even have heard of Asconius. And the reason being is because people didn't care about him, because he was writing in a manner that people just didn't value back then. That's not what they wanted.

FRANK:

Okay, so the first principle we have to, our view of Scripture should be consistent with what we see in Scripture.

MIKE:

Right.

FRANK:

What we observe in scripture. And the second principle?

MIKE:

Second principle is, if we truly, truly want to have a high view of Scripture, then we will accept it, embrace it as God has given it to us, instead of attempting to force it to fit a mold of how we

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think he should have. And if we refuse to do this, we may believe we have a high view of scripture, when in reality, we have a high view of our view of scripture.

FRANK:

Yeah, that's an interesting distinction you make. We have a high view of our view, what we expect. You know, there's a lot of things that I might expect God to do differently, but since I'm not God, he has reasons for not doing them the way I might want him to do them.

MIKE:

We'll take, for example, he says, if you want to be my disciple, you've got to take up your cross and follow me. That means you've got to be willing to be crucified. And yet we hear that God loves us. Well, we think if God truly loves us, I mean, if we love our children, we love our spouses, if someone came to them and say, deny your dad, deny your husband, deny Mike as your husband, or we're going to subject you to a horrible death, I'd say, yeah, you know that you're my wife.

You know that you're my kids. Deny me. I know that you know it. Spare your hide. But that's not what God says. He says, no, you've got to be willing to take up your cross. And no matter what they do to you, do not deny me. That's what I expect of you. So, yeah, God doesn't always act as we would think he would or hope that he would. But he's God. He's independent. He does what he wants.

FRANK:

Yeah, we're speculating now, Mike, but why do you think, and maybe there's no way of answering this, why do you think God would allow, say, even errors to creep into scribal errors to creep into the text? We can identify those. But why would he allow that?

MIKE:

You're right. We can only speculate. I mean, I've heard people say, well, maybe if our text was, if there was no challenges in terms of errors in the text, we would worship the text. You know, I don't know if it's possible I guess. I really don't have any idea. You know, what I do know is this. God could have given us his scriptures in any number of ways. He could have put them on golden plates and told us where they're at and we could dig them up and we'd have them word

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for word. He could have communicated them to us through an angel that dictated to us, through an angel that we were written. He could have.

FRANK:

Thank you, Muhammad. [Laughter]

MIKE:

He could have done any of these things, but he didn't. Instead, he chose to have the scriptures composed and preserved by humans, which allowed errors to creep into it by the time it gets to us in the 21st century. This is what scripture looks like. God could have chosen different ways, but this is the way that God chose. And God saw that it was good.

FRANK:

Yeah, that's the way he did. Now, drum roll, please. What is your definition of inerrancy and why?

MIKE:

Well, again, if our view of scripture is to be consistent with our view of scripture, I look at our product and I say the autographs, the originals, may have been inerrant in every detail, but we cannot know. And I don't want to go further than what we can actually give, what I think is a decent argument for. So, I define inerrancy as the Bible is true, trustworthy, and without error in all that it teaches. That's how I would define it. And what's nice about what I like about this definition, it applies both to the originals and to our present Bible.

So, we can hold up our present Bible. Pastor can hold up his Bible on Sunday morning and say, the Bible I'm holding in my hands is the inerrant Word of God. It's inerrant in all that it teaches. But as you pointed out earlier, the pastor who embraces the Chicago Statement cannot with integrity, hold up his Bible on Sunday morning and says, my Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

FRANK:

Yeah, you can do that with that definition. And who agrees with you on that definition? Prominent people we know who are conservatives? I think. William Lane Craig.

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MIKE:

Yes. William Lane Craig would. I haven't discussed this with a lot of individuals, and I don't know even if I did, I don't know that I'd want to give them their names, because then they'd become targets. I've been targeted before. I've got thick skin. I can take the arrows in my back. I'm not going to ask my friends to do it, so. But I know William Lane Craig does. In fact, what was interesting is I sent my chapter, an early version of it, to Bill. And then he's working on his Magnum Opus, and I think his volume one is coming out this fall.

And so, he sent me his chapter on the doctrine of Scripture. And hark, we both pretty much believe the same thing. We both think of inerrancy and inspiration in very similar ways. We just get there differently. He gets there through philosophical theology. I'm getting there through historical as well as theological. But I'm not so much doing philosophical theology. That's just not my lane. But we kind of arrived at the same conclusion independently, which was kind of neat.

FRANK:

Now, toward the back of the book, again, the book's called 'Jesus, Contradicted.' You include a couple of testimonies from people that had read your previous book, which is the academic version of this. And I know some people are having their mind stretched listening to this, because our expectation, at least mine was, given the fact I learned from Dr. Geisler that every detail had to be correct in order for us to call the Bible inerrant. And many of the details we can harmonize, but there are some that appear to be better dealt with the composition technique you're talking about, Mike. And you had some people write to you and say what about reading your book?

MIKE:

I've had a number of people write me, pastors and other people, saying, this stuff is great. This has really restored my confidence in the Gospels. The very first person to do it is a gentleman in Southern California named Ricardo Mora. He's a high school teacher. And what had happened was he was listening to a-- Okay, so he came from, I think it was Cuba. And he was.

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FRANK:

In fact, let me read it, Mike. I have it right here. This is on page 214. He sent you an email. It says, I'm so thankful for what you have done here, Mr. Licona. Dr. Licona. I am crying right now as I write these words. And I'm a guy. I don't usually cry. It's been 22 years of searching for, no, it's been 22 years of searching for an answer, praying for some form of insight, hoping that my mind would one day be at peace. It's finally at peace.

Now, the very differences that cause me so much worry and doubt are turning into markers of authenticity. I can finally trust these accounts again. Your work is crucial for young adults to know as they enter college. What happened to me can be avoided. Please don't stop doing what you're doing.

MIKE:

Yeah, he said that while he was at. He was at a Christian university doing a master's degree in apologetics years ago, more than 20 years ago. And the Gospel differences really bothered him. And so, he read Geisler and Howe's book. He read Archer's book, and he said he found some of their proposals for reconciling the differences, their harmonizations, to be more problematic than the difference itself.

And so, he just kind of stagnated in his Christian walk for, like, 20 years or over 20 years. And so, it was reading this book, which he learned about on Bill Craig's podcast, Reasonable Faith.

FRANK:

That's right.

MIKE:

He took a day off. He bought the book, took a day off of work, and read the book, and it rejuvenated his faith.

FRANK:

You know, for me, these little differences, ever since I've been doing this now, you know, when I first became a Christian, it bothered me. But ever since then, none of these apparent

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discrepancies have bothered me for some reason, because the overall message still comes through.

And I remember you saying that when you were very early in your walk as a Christian and you were going to Liberty, you kept going to Dr. Gary Habermas, who was a professor there, and you're coming up with all sorts of objections to the faith. And he would keep saying one thing back to you. What was that?

MIKE:

He said, Mike, did Jesus rise from the dead?

FRANK:

That's right.

MIKE:

And that's so important, because if he did, its game, set, match. Christianity is true.

FRANK:

It is, period. Right. Now, we've got to talk about one other thing, and then I want to read a quote from Bart Ehrman again, because it's germane to what we're talking about. Some people are thinking, but, Mike, if I give an inch on saying that, you know, there could be a scribal error. There could be, maybe Matthew got it wrong. Maybe the centurion didn't go. Then I'm going to start doubting the resurrection, because how do I trust the same author on the resurrection? How do you respond?

MIKE:

You just look at historical research, and there are things through the Scriptures. I mean, there's some things we can establish about Jesus, some things we can't. We can't establish that he was born of a virgin or take the statement that Jesus' death atones for our sins. The historian can establish that Jesus died by crucifixion. But the historians don't have the tools. No one has the tools to be able to establish as fact that Jesus' death atones for sin. It's a truth of faith.

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It's something we have to believe by faith alone, because there's no way to establish it. So, I think when we take some facts, known facts, things that even skeptical scholars will grant, we can build a very strong case for the resurrection of Jesus. And so, that's how. So, like you said earlier, was there one or two angels at the tomb? I think there was probably two. And you have spotlighting going on. It's irrelevant. Even if we couldn't tell, and even if that we look at that as a contradiction, it doesn't change the fact that Jesus rose, leaving behind an empty tomb.

FRANK:

Yeah. Ladies, gentlemen, I can't emphasize enough, these documents would not exist unless Jesus Rose from the dead.

MIKE:

Yeah, I agree with that.

FRANK:

Why would they? Why would they ever be written? What's the point? Right? That's what every one of these documents is written about. When you think about it, it has something to do with the resurrection of Jesus, whether it's stated explicitly or implicitly. So, the New Testament documents we're talking about. If Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, he'd have just been another itinerant preacher who said some pretty amazing things. But he wouldn't be the center of the human race, that's certainly for sure.

MIKE:

He'd be like every other failed Messiah of that time. And Josephus said there were a lot of them would be Messiah dies, killed by the Romans, and then they just find someone else. And that movement just becomes no more than a footnote in future historical works.

FRANK:

In fact, I want to read something that Bart Ehrman said. Bart Ehrman, the skeptic we've talked about many times on this program, he wrote a book in 2006 called 'Misquoting Jesus.' And Bart Ehrman was a disciple and learned from Bruce Metzger, probably the top manuscript scholar of the last century, who taught at Princeton University. And they actually co-wrote a book

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together called 'The Text of the New Testament' the same year that 'Misquoting Jesus' came out.

And in the paperback edition of Misquoting Jesus, it's not in the original, but in the paperback edition, there's an interview where they interview Dr. Ehrman, and here is what he says. Because Bruce Metzger is or was a believer. Here's what he says in the interview, Bart Ehrman. Bruce Metzger is one of the great scholars of modern times. And I dedicated the book to him because he was both my inspiration for going into textual criticism and the person who trained me in the field. I have nothing but respect and admiration for him. And even though we may disagree on important religious questions, he is a firmly committed Christian and I am not.

We are in complete agreement on a number of very important historical questions. If he and I were put in a room and asked to hammer out a consensus statement on what we think the original text of the New Testament probably looked like, there would be very few points of disagreement, maybe one or two dozen places out of many thousands. The position I argue for in 'Misquoting Jesus' does not actually stand at odds with Professor Metzger's position that the essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament. Unquote.

That's on page 252 of the paperback edition of Misquoting Jesus. My only question for somebody like Bart Ehrman, then, Mike, is why did you ever write the book Misquoting Jesus then? Right? I mean, because even if you're right, there are these minor errors, these minor details that we can't harmonize. Even if you're correct, you're essentially admitting that what Bruce Metzger is believing is contained in the documents, including the resurrection.

MIKE:

Yeah, I agree with you. You know, that is the popular version of his other book, 'The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture.' And The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture is far more tamed in the way it describes things than what you find in Misquoting Jesus. And so, what happens, you know, Bart has this way of trying to make things very provocative, and people get the wrong impression because people were reading it and saying, yeah, we can't trust the New Testament.

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Can't trust it at all, you know, because it's been corrupted over the years. And so, I just think that due to the provocative way in which he communicates in that book, which sells a lot of copies, he's miscommunicating. Not misquoting but miscommunicating his ideas behind it.

FRANK:

It's really more misquoting Ehrman, because the same year he released the update to the book, the text of the New Testament, with Metzger. And as you say, when he's talking to an academic audience, he's much more tame. He's agreeing with Metzger that you can trust what the New Testament document says.

But of course, he doesn't agree that everything the New Testament documents say actually happened. He's simply saying the text isn't corrupted to the point where we can't know what the original said. And so, ladies and gentlemen, I say all that because if you're bothered by these minor so-called errors, that we might not be able to harmonize, that doesn't affect the Christian faith one iota.

MIKE:

That's correct. Jesus Rose. So, Christianity is true.

FRANK:

That's right. That's right. And all the major teachings remain the same, even if the centurion did or didn't go to Jesus. Right? Even if so and so in the Old Testament was 42 or 22, there are two different manuscript traditions on how old he was. These are minor things, ladies and gentlemen. But as Christians, when skeptics bring them up, we ought to be able to at least have a discussion with them on it. And that's what this book will help you do. 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently' by my friend Michael R. Licona, Dr. Licona. It's filled with all sorts of endorsements on it. I read the book.

It's a great read, whether you agree with everything or not. That's not the point. You ought to be educated on these things. I think there are certainly many things in this book that are helpful to understanding why there are differences in the New Testament. So, put this not just in your library, but in your head, ladies and gentlemen. And again, Christianity is true, whether or not we can come up with a satisfying solution to every little detail. Mike, tell people where they can

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learn more about you and where they can watch videos about this book and what you have in it.

MIKE:

My YouTube channel is Dr. Mike Licona. And so, I think we, right now we have three short videos that kind of just give you a little teaser of what's in each of the chapters, things like that. Well, and some, well, maybe not so much individual chapters, but what's being said in the book. There's going to be, I think, ten videos, short videos, two to four minutes. We've got a couple interviews on our channel of more describing the ideas that are in the book, discussing it, and we've got much, much more.

So, Dr. Mike Licona, YouTube channel, or you just go to our Facebook. I'm sorry, we've been going at this for a while. I'm getting tongue tied on my website, risenjesus.com.

FRANK:

RisenJesus.com. And later this year, ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Licona and I will be releasing an online course on the resurrection. We filmed it last year. We're just pulling it all together now. And of course, that's Mike's area of expertise, the resurrection, and he was a student of Dr. Gary Habermas, as you may know. So, look for that course coming out. We'll give you the details when it does. And I want to remind you I'm going to be at Calvary Chapel, Chino Hills Wednesday night. That's tomorrow night, June 12, and then June 16 for the Sunday morning services. Check all that out.

Also, a lot of great online courses are up at our website. You can take them in a self-paced way over the summer, keep you and your kids engaged. There are several for kids as well, including a course in logic called 'Train Your Brain.' And if you haven't had a course in logic yet and you're an adult, you ought to take it because you can learn from a kid's course. It's for 6th to 8th graders. Check it out. And Lord willing, we will see you back here next week. Thanks again to Dr. Licona. God bless.

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