

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

with Dr. Frank Turek PODCAST

Jesus, Contradicted with Mike Licona

(June 7, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, some of you are going to be very uncomfortable during this program because I'm going to ask some very hard questions that may challenge your faith. And my guest is going to provide some provocative answers to those hard questions that you might find controversial. They may go against everything you've been taught or assumed about the Bible. And here's my question. Do you believe that the Bible is inerrant? You probably do if you listen to this show, because I do.

Well, let me ask you this. Did Jesus die on the day before the Passover meal was eaten, as John explicitly says, or did he die after it was eaten, as Mark explicitly says? Did he die at noon, as in John, or 9:00 AM as in Mark? Did Jesus carry his cross the entire way himself, or did Simon of Cyrene carry his cross? It depends on which gospel you read. Did the curtain in the temple rip in half before Jesus died or after he died? It depends on which gospel you read.

Who went to the tomb on the third day? Was it Mary alone or was it Mary with the other women? If it was Mary with the other women, how many other women were there? Which ones were they and what were their names? Was the stone rolled away before they got there or not? What did they see at the tomb? Did they see a man? Did they see two men, or did they see an angel? It depends on which gospel you read. Now, that's a quote from Dr. Bart Ehrman during a debate he had with Dr. William Lane Craig.

And my guest today has also debated Dr. Ehrman. In fact, most recently, he debated him for 7 hours straight. No, it's not Jimmy Akin. Jimmy was on last week talking about his debate with Bart Ehrman. Today's guest is my good friend Dr. Mike Licona, and he's going to address the issues Bart brought up in this quote and help us take a fresh look at the doctrine of inerrancy that may make you uncomfortable. It makes me uncomfortable because that's not the definition I was taught, the definition that Mike's going to reveal to us. But it's always good to consider new arguments and insights from other brothers in Christ who are biblical scholars.

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And Dr. Licona is an excellent evangelical scholar. He teaches at Houston Christian University. It used to be Houston Baptist. They just changed their name. He's debated several unbelievers on the resurrection, including Bart Ehrman and others. He's written several books, including his new one, 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Stories Differently.' It's always great to have Mike on.

MIKE:

Hey, thanks, Dr. Turek. Great to be with you again, my brother.

FRANK:

This is going to be controversial for our audience, but I'm excited to get into it. First of all, you wrote an academic version of this book, say 2017, I think it was. It was put out by Oxford University Press. What was it called?

MIKE:

'Why are There Differences in the Gospels?: What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography.'

FRANK:

Now, you took the research you did for that book, which you spent years doing, and now you've put it into a more popular level book called 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently.' Why did you decide to do this, Mike? What's the purpose of the book?

MIKE:

Well, as I was lecturing on this all around the world, I would have people, the audience members saying to me, this stuff's really fascinating, but it's pretty heavy. Can you, you know, make this simpler for the layperson? Can you put the cookies on the lower shelf? And very honestly, I just didn't want to go further with it. I did the research, put out my conclusions, and I wanted to move on to the next project.

But when you have enough people coming to you and saying that, saying, we're really enjoying this, but we don't know how to repeat it either. We don't know how to share this with others. Can you help us with this? Well, you get enough of those requests, and you say, well, I probably

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should. Plus, in the meantime, I responded to some critics and learned new ways, clearer ways to say things to the layperson, plus dealing with some new topics.

Such as, well, if you're looking at compositional devices, what are the outer limits of what the biblical authors used? And then how does this impact the doctrines of inspiration and the inerrancy of scripture? So, all of that is new stuff that's in content that's in this book, that's more geared for the layperson than for the scholar.

FRANK:

And we're going to get into what Mike means by compositional devices here as we go through the program. And inerrancy is a topic that a lot of people have different opinions on. Most evangelical Christians would say they believe in inerrancy, Mike. I guess my question is, does the Bible teach inerrancy? And how do we define inerrancy?

MIKE:

You know, that is a...

FRANK:

How does the Bible define it? Maybe that's a better question. How does the Bible define it if it does?

MIKE:

That's a good question. There is no verse that comes out and says the Bible is inerrant. You know, it would be something that you would infer through looking at scripture, but it would be inferred by one's definition or understanding of what it means to say scripture is divinely inspired, theopneustos in 2 Timothy 3:16. All scripture is God breathed. But what does that mean? What does that look like? Paul doesn't really tell us about that. And so, a lot of times folks will go to 2 Peter 1:20 and 21. It says, no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

But men moved by the Holy Spirit, born along, carried along by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God. Well, what does that mean? What does it look like to be carried along by the Holy Spirit? And I'm not even sure that is referring to the whole of scripture anyway, because it's talking about

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prophecy of scripture. Is that referring to all of it, or is that referring to prophecy that has been recorded in scripture? I think it's the latter because it says, men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke, not wrote, but spoke from God.

So, I don't even think that that one is quite pertinent for the inspiration of scripture as a whole. The 2 Timothy 3:16 is referring to the Old Testament, but probably can be applied to the New Testament. But what does it mean to say some scripture is divinely inspired? So, I did a word study on this because theopneustos, the only time it appears in all of the Old or New Testament is in 2 Timothy 3:16. There are possibly as many as three appearances of the term before 2 Timothy. Possibly, but we don't know.

And there's somewhere between eight and 13 occurrences of the term, including 2 Timothy 3:16, that occurs before the beginning of the third century. And of course, terms can change meaning over time and get some nuances to it. So, I want to look at it around the time that Paul's writing this, that it appears in 2 Timothy. And it's just there's a lot of vagueness in the term. Streams can be divinely inspired. Ointments can be divinely inspired. Dreams can be divinely inspired. The teachings of the church can be divinely inspired.

I think what we can say at minimum is that it means it derives ultimately from God. But to go further than that might be to go further than what the term itself meant. So, where I find and contend in the book, and I'll just close with this. What I contend in the book is that a very wooden view of biblical inerrancy held by a lot of American evangelicals, such as the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, that it's based on an incorrect concept of inspiration. And an incorrect concept of inspiration begets an incorrect concept of inerrancy.

FRANK:

Yeah, we need to talk about what is the proper concept of inspiration. Is it divine dictation where God simply puts the words in the minds of the gospel writers or the New Testament writers, and they simply take dictation from God? I don't think anyone today really agrees with that. That's how it was done. Yet, you're saying that the current Chicago Statement of Inerrancy, which was a statement put together by scholars, one of whom was Dr. Norman Geisler, my co-author.

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So, this is what I've been taught. The other was R.C. Sproul, the other was J.I. Packer. Back in about 1978 in Chicago, they put out an eight page statement on what it means for the scriptures to be inerrant. And they, well, we're coming up to a break, Mike. We're going to get into it after the break. What did that statement say and is it the right definition of inerrancy? Does the scripture give us insight on what the proper definition of inerrancy is? Did the writers take divine dictation? If not, then how do we know it actually came from God to begin with?

These are all questions we need to answer, and we're answering them today with Dr. Mike Licona. His brand new book is called 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently.' And we're back in two minutes, so you don't want to 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 never going to hear Dr. Mike Licona on NPR talking about the inerrancy of scripture, but we're talking about it here.

And before I get back to my guest, Dr. Licona, I want to mention there's only two spots left in the presenting track of CIA, the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. It will be held this year, August 1-3, here in Charlotte, North Carolina at Central Church of God. Greg Koukl, myself, Natasha Crain, Alisa Childers, Allen Parr, Jorge Gil, Bobby Conway, Brett Kunkel, Richard Howe, and others will be your instructors. If you want to be a part of it, you need to apply soon.

We do have a non-presenting track this time, so we're opening it up to more people so you can avail yourself of the teaching that you can get at CIA. But you have to apply before the end of June and maybe before then. Because if we fill up, we fill up. So, go to CrossExamined.org. Click on events. Look for CIA, CrossExamined Instructor Academy.

All right, let me go back to my guest, Dr. Mike Licona. His brand new book. I read the whole thing this morning and yesterday. I went through it in about 4 hours. It is a great read. It's called 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently.' Mike, before the break, we were talking about what is the proper view of inspiration? How did the writers of the New Testament and even the Old Testament know what to write down? Why wasn't it divine dictation?

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MIKE:

Well, the Bible doesn't really tell us how inspiration occurred. But it wasn't divine dictation because we see occasions where, for example, Paul has a memory lapse. In 1 Corinthians 1:16, he says, I don't remember if I baptized anyone outside the household of Stephanus. Well, if it's divine dictation, that means the Holy Spirit didn't know. And so, that's problematic. And then you look at almost all New Testament scholars acknowledge that Matthew and Luke used Mark as their primary source and supplemented Mark. And they, on occasion they will improve Mark's grammar, his awkward grammar.

Well, we don't anticipate or think of the Holy Spirit reading Mark at a later time and then thinking, you know what? I can do better than that. Let's say it this way in Matthew or Luke. And then you have an occasional editorial fatigue, especially in Luke. There's one, maybe two instances that I think are fairly clear of this. And so, we don't think of the Holy Spirit at some other time thinking, how did I miss that? But that's what you get if it's divine dictation.

Now, it's like the Chicago Statement wants to have it both ways. They say it's not divine dictation, but they make statements like that God, "caused these writers to use the very words that He chose." And that, "the words were divinely constituted." So, it's like, well, that sounds a whole lot like dictation. Well, they say it's not. But I don't think it could be clearer that they have something like that and very close to it in mind. So, you could punt a mystery, but it's like maybe you should define what you mean a little more clearly when you're saying it's not dictation. Maybe you need to use better terms.

But if he chose the very words, if these words were divinely constituted, and on another occasion, it says the scripture has a single author, a single mind behind it, well, then how do you account for these human imperfections in it? So, a number of scholars have tried to look at this over the years to say, how do we get inspiration? B.B. Warfield and William Lane Craig to take a similar kind of approach, where Craig calls it a middle knowledge approach. So, basically, God looks, and there are all these different kinds of worlds, theoretical worlds. There could be, but God chooses to actualize the world in which Paul is going to write what he's going to write.

B.B. Warfield puts it a little bit differently, that over time, God prepared these writers to write what they did, but they had absolute and complete free will in writing what they did. So, you

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can see these guys come up with similar ideas, but they're wrestling with this. And I think what we're looking at, God is involved in this somehow. Maybe God is implanting in them, in their minds and thoughts, some of the concepts that He wants to be communicated.

In some cases, He might put the very words. But this kind of makes more sense of the Bible that we have, if we look at this kind of inspiration, it would produce the kind of Bible that we have. Whereas I would contend that the kind of inerrancy, a more rigid, traditional inerrancy that we find in the Chicago Statement would produce a Bible that looks different than the one that we have.

FRANK:

Yeah, there may be some divine dictation, particularly with the Ten Commandments. These were written by the finger of God or anywhere it says, thus saith the Lord. That might be divine dictation. But as you point out, there are other places, maybe most of the rest of the scripture, where God is using the personalities, even the memory lapses and the idiosyncrasies of the writers to even communicate what He wants to communicate. And so, there does seem to be some element of dual authorship here. And so, how do we untangle that?

Well, the Bible doesn't really define it for us, so we're doing a bit of speculation when we're saying the Bible's inspired. I mean, it says it's God breathed, as you mentioned. But then you did a search of all of the Greek uses of that phrase, 150 years each side of the Bible, and you really didn't come to any firm conclusion as to what it could mean, correct, Mike?

MIKE:

Yeah, not necessarily the timeframe. Somewhere between probably 150 B.C. Well, yeah, 150 B.C., all the way up until about the year 200, and 8-13 uses within that period of time. Yeah, sometimes I can't think of one in English right off. But there are words in English that we say that don't mean it literally what that word is saying. Like, maybe if I say that test was a real bear. I don't really mean that, you know? It's like what Bruce Metzger said about Revelation. The text doesn't mean what it says. It means what it means.

So, I think that's the case with theopneustos, that we get the idea when it says God breathed, that sounds like divine dictation. But we reject that view. So do your staunch evangelicals, all of

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them, the scholars, would reject divine dictation. So, what does theopneustos mean? And it's just difficult. You know, you can quote all kinds of verses from the Old Testament and New Testament that God brought back to their memory the thing that Jesus had taught. But that doesn't mean that, I mean, when he's talking about those things, he's talking about so they can preach this. It could include writing, but it's especially about their preaching.

Are we to say that during all their preaching, in several decades after Jesus' resurrection, that when they were out proclaiming the message and teachings of Jesus, none of them, none of the disciples even once misattributed an Old Testament quote to the wrong prophet, or that they placed one of Jesus miracles at the wrong location? I think that's probably to go to really stretch things too far.

So, that's why I think if we look at inspiration as having dual authorship, it has both divine and human authors, and that God was overseeing things, but not in a micromanaging sense. Then in that sense, you could conceive of actually having some minor errors even in the autographs. I'm not saying that there were, but I don't see any reasons conceptually why there wouldn't be.

FRANK:

In fact, we need to define that. We need to define that, Mike, because autographs, some of our listeners might not know what that means. The traditional current view of inerrancy, the one from the Chicago Statement authored by Geisler, Sproul, and Packer, says that inerrancy really only applies to the original manuscripts we call the autographs. And so, it doesn't necessarily apply to the Bible you have on your shelf. Because if we have a discrepancy that we can't reconcile, we're unsure of that particular passage.

But even Bart Ehrman admits it doesn't affect any doctrine. So, um, maybe uh, you point out in the book, and we're talking to Dr. Mike Licona. The book is called 'Jesus, Contradicted.' You point out that if you want to be a stickler about this, if you were to ask someone who believes in the traditional view of inerrancy, the view that I've been taught by Dr. Geisler, that is your Bible on your shelf inerrant, that traditional view person would have to say no. Why?

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MIKE:

Well, because even Geisler himself acknowledged that there are errors in the originals. Take the book that he co-authored with Thomas Howe. 'The Big Book'

FRANK:

Not the originals, the manuscripts.

MIKE:

That's right. The original manuscripts that were written down by Moses, or Joshua, or David or whoever, you know, wrote these things down, or Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul. You know that it says that only those autographs, those original manuscripts written by the authors would be inerrant. But we don't have those, and we haven't had them for a very long time. God could have preserved an inerrant text, but He didn't. So, it seems like He didn't think that it was necessary for us to have an inerrant text.

And so, because there was a human element in the preservation of the text, and God did not prevent errors from creeping in during that time, then how do we know, since there was a human element in the composition of those texts, that there wasn't errors in it at that time? And since inspiration, I think it's in 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about Christ speaking through him. If anything, that sounds like inspiration. Right? And yet again, we have to ask, are we to say that in Paul's 30 some years of preaching, that he never once misattributed a saying from a prophet to a different one? Or he never misquoted Jesus, or he never placed attributed something Jesus did to the wrong location?

FRANK:

But I think, though, that the doctrine of inerrancy, as I understand it anyway, does not say that the Apostles were inerrant. They say that their writings were inerrant. So, Paul may have been offhandedly made a mistake, right, when he's talking to somebody. But when he writes something, there are no errors in it in the autographs. That's what we're talking about here, ladies and gentlemen. The autographs, what he actually wrote on a scroll, or a scribe wrote for him, not the copies of those where errors may have crept in in the copying process. See, that's the distinction we're making here. So, the graphs, the scriptures are inerrant, but not necessarily the Apostles themselves. Do you understand it that way, too?

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MIKE:

I understand that's what CSBI, the Chicago Statement, is saying. But my point I'm making, when Paul says that Christ is speaking through him, that is every bit as much a statement of divine inspiration as you find what it says of scripture. So, if you're not going to require something to be completely, in every word inerrant in what he's preaching, why do it with the scripture, with what he's writing, if it's not what he's speaking?

FRANK:

All right, a lot more with Dr. Mike Licona. Do we have the wrong definition of inerrancy? What's the right definition? We're going to get into it because we both believe in inerrancy. So, don't go anywhere. We're back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, what do we mean when we say the Bible is inerrant? How do we deal with the differences in the text, say, between one gospel and another gospel, say, about the resurrection? Do we try and harmonize those somehow, or are there other methods of seeing why one gospel said it one way and another gospel writer said it another? And that's the subject we're talking about today. My guest, Dr. Mike Licona, his brand new book, 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently.'

Mike, why don't we just use an example, and then you can explain some of the techniques or some of the things that might be going on in the scripture that maybe we haven't really been aware of until recently. So, at the very top of this program, I read a quote from Dr. Bart Ehrman about how, say, the different gospel accounts talk about the resurrection and who got to the tomb first, and how many women were there, and was Peter and John there, or just Peter? So, talk about those differences and how we might be able to think about them from your book, 'Jesus, Contradicted'

MIKE:

Well, the most common compositional device that I noticed as I was reading and comparing how Plutarch tells the same story on numerous occasions is one that we'll call literary spotlighting. So, we've all been at a theatrical performance. We know that there are multiple actors up on the stage participating in something when the lights go out, and then a spotlight

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shines on a single actor who breaks out in a monologue or song. And so, we know the others are there. But since so much attention is focused only on the one, you could get the impression that that's the only one there. Well, literary spotlighting is when an author does something similar. So, we find this happening a few times just in the resurrection narratives.

So, you have Easter morning, and you have Matthew, Mark, and Luke have several women going to the tomb. John, on the other hand, says Mary Magdalene got up and ran to the tomb and so only mentions Mary Magdalene. But I think John is using literary spotlighting here because it says Mary ran back, ran and found Peter and a beloved disciple and then said, we have taken the Lord, and we don't know where they've laid Him.

Well, it's probably not referring to Peter, the beloved disciple, and Mary because of course they wouldn't know where they had put Him because they didn't even know the tomb was empty just 5 seconds before. She's probably referring to her and the other women. And then what happens? You have Peter and the beloved disciple, according to John, get up and run to the tomb and find it as Mary had said. But Luke reports that Peter got up and ran to the tomb and found it as the women had said.

Well, is it just Peter or is it Peter and the beloved disciple? Well, Luke doesn't say just Peter. And in fact, just twelve verses later he's talking to the Emmaus disciples, and he says that their eyes were kept from recognizing Jesus. And Jesus says, why the long faces? And he says, are you the only one in Jerusalem that doesn't know what's happened? You know, there was just Jesus. We thought He was the Messiah, a great prophet, but He was crucified this past Friday.

And this morning some of our women folk went to the tomb and said they saw angels who said He'd been raised from the dead. And then some of our own, plural, some of our own went to the tomb and found it as the women had said. Well, Luke, just twelve verses earlier you said just Peter. No, I didn't say just Peter. I only mentioned Peter. He's the lead Apostle and maybe he's the source of the information for Luke. But Luke, we don't do that today. Yes, you do. You do it on a regular basis in your everyday, ordinary conversations.

But even if you didn't, it wouldn't matter because I'm writing using the literary conventions in play in the first century. Matthew, Mark, John and me didn't get together and form a

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committee for the misleading of future historians according to the literary conventions in play at the time of writing. It's not our responsibility to try to guess the way you're going to be talking and using rhetoric all in the 21st century. It's your responsibility to find out how we did it.

FRANK:

Yeah, it's been said before. You say it in the book, 'Jesus, Contradicted', Mike, that the Bible was not written to us. It was written for us. It was originally written to the people, the New Testament anyway, to the people that lived in the first century. And it's obviously very applicable to us today. But it wasn't written to us because we didn't exist 2000 years ago. It was written for us. And the standards of the first century in terms of biography are different than the standards of today.

And so, that's what you're pointing out, although you are saying that spotlighting happens even sometimes today. And I think one of the expectations we've been taught, or we have as Christians, Mike, is the fact that we think when the Bible is inerrant, when Jesus says the scriptures can't be broken or He casts, He goes after the Pharisees and He says, you're wrong. You err because you don't know the scriptures.

We think that when we think of inerrancy, we think of camera like accuracy, that everything is a quote, as if a stenographer was there typing up exactly what Jesus said at every moment. And if there is a difference between one gospel and the other gospel, then we have a crisis of faith because that's our expectation going in. Why is that the wrong expectation?

MIKE:

Well, because that's just not the, that wasn't the objective of ancient biographers. And this is just widely, broadly accepted by classicists, has been for decades. And it's also widely accepted by even conservative New Testament scholars who spend their time in the text studying these things. Otherwise, you've got to account for these differences. During Jesus baptism, in Mark and Luke, God's voice from heaven says, you are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased.

God is directly addressing Jesus. But in Matthew, Matthew changes who God is talking to. He says God's voice, says, this is my beloved Son. With Him I am well pleased. God is directly

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addressing the crowd. Now why would Matthew do that? Well, we can't ask him, but I think Augustine was probably correct when he said, Matthew changed this in order to make God's voice more personal in its address to the reader. God is telling the reader that He's affirming Jesus as His Son. We find all these kinds of differences.

FRANK:

Now, somebody today would say, well, that's an error, Mike, because He didn't address the crowd. He addressed His Son. So, how would you respond to that?

MIKE:

I guess it's how you going to define error. If we're looking at precise details, then we'd have to say, yeah, that is a surface discrepancy, a surface error. But if we're looking at allowing ancient biographers to do what they were taught to do, what they were allowed to do, then it's not an error. Like, for example, when I read a parable of Jesus and I know that Jesus took liberty in inventing a story that does not include historical characters, is that an error to say that there was a good Samaritan? No, I understand the genre involved in that.

So, I think what the problem with those who would have say, well, we've got an error there. They are reading ancient biography as though it's modern biography. It's like, all right, birds. Birds can fly. A penguin is a bird, but it can't fly. But it's still a bird. So, a person could make a mistake by saying, yeah, but all birds should fly. So, I'm going to fault the penguin for being unable to fly. Well, no, you wouldn't do that. That would be wrong to do that. Well, it's like biographies are reporting historical events. Yes, they are. Well, all biographies ought to report events with precision. No, they don't. Ancient biographies did not. So, it's a genre mistake there.

FRANK:

And all writing is selective. You can't include everything. You can't include every detail. Some of these differences can be harmonized, ladies and gentlemen. In fact, my co-author, Dr. Norman Geisler, wrote a book, 'When Critics Ask.' And many of these differences can be harmonized, but some of them seem to resist harmonization, that you really got to jump through a lot of hoops to get them to say, well, there's not a difference here. That is a contradiction. Now, before I get there, Mike, I want to ask.

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MIKE:

Frank, can I just throw something in real quick here?

FRANK:

Yeah, go ahead.

MIKE:

Your co-author, Dr. Geisler, was very critical of me for suggesting, with a slew of other New Testament scholars that John moved, he displaced the temple cleansing from the end of Jesus ministry and transplanted it at the beginning of Jesus ministry. He said Mike Licona admits there's error, that John made an error. Well, I never said John made an error, but he took it that way. But you know what I learned later?

As I read the book you just mentioned, 'The Big Book of Bible Difficulties', Geisler and Hal say in there that when it comes to Jesus' cleansing of the temple, that Matthew moved the event from Monday to Sunday and conflated it with the first temple visit. So, they acknowledged that Matthew was doing the very thing that I said that John was doing. And yet, why is it that it was an error that I was saying, but they were fine with it?

FRANK:

Well, you know, it's interesting that we had Jimmy Akin on the show last week, a Catholic apologist that debated Bart Ehrman as well. And one of the things he was saying, which is sort of the same thing you're saying, is that in ancient times, a biography could move events around or biographer could move events around for certain stylistic purposes.

And so, chronology, strict chronology, was not necessarily expected. In fact, is it Luke that said, or is it Papias that talked about Luke? I can't remember how this goes, Mike. You would know. But that Luke was going to, well, Luke says, I want an orderly account. The implication is maybe Mark's gospel wasn't in necessarily strict chronological order and Luke wanted it to be. Is that a fair way of putting it?

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MIKE:

Yeah, that's a difficult one. What did he mean when he said he composed and put these things together in an orderly manner? Well, it's not chronological because a lot of times he's doing it thematically. So, I think that's probably more of what we're looking at here to communicate themes and things like that than chronology.

FRANK:

You know, when we watch a movie or even a biography, there are times when the writer will put a whole bunch of events together in order to make a point or a dramatic scene, even though they may not have been in that strict chronological order. And when we're watching that, other subplots in the story are going on concurrently.

But the writer doesn't stop and say, okay, now let me go to this subplot right now, because this is happening right now. He stays with the scene he's with, and then he comes back, and he says, let me pick up the subplot now, even though it's not in strict chronological order. Is that what could be done here in the ancient world as well?

MIKE:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You definitely have that in the ancient writers. In fact, you have others like JL Moles, a classicist, saying that this was universally done amongst ancient writers and historians.

FRANK:

Well, we're going to look at another supposed error in the Bible when we come back and apply what Mike writes in his new book, 'Jesus, Contradicted' to it. So, you can see if it makes sense to you or not. So, don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with me, Frank Turek on the American Family Radio network. Back in 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. Want to mention I'll be West of Atlanta, Georgia, this weekend, Lord willing. June 9, Midway Church, Villa Rica, Georgia. Two morning services, and then in the evening we'll be doing I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, taking your questions in the evening. Hope to see you there. Then the following Wednesday, June 12, be out with my friend Jack Hibbs at Calvary Chapel, Chino Hills for the Wednesday night service.

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And then I'll be speaking at all three of the Sunday morning services on Father's Day. Happy Father's Day, fathers out there. That's June 16. Check our website for details. CrossExamined.org. We're going to look at a supposed error in the scriptures in just a second.

But Dr. Licona, Dr. Mike Licona, my guest wants to say something about the definition of inerrancy, which we've already pointed out. It's not really defined very much in the scriptures. We're kind of putting scriptures together to come up with it, and we're not quite sure we have the right definition. But say what you wanted to say about inerrancy, Mike, before we move on to that supposed error.

MIKE:

Yeah, I think some of your viewers probably feeling a little anxiety over this. Wow. There could be some errors in our present text? I wasn't even aware of that, that they're in our present text, you know, much less possibility in the autographs or the originals, like Licona is saying. So, why won't that, isn't that a slippery slope just to kind of, that leads to giving up trust in the gospels? Well, wait a minute. We already have errors in our present text. Okay?

And why do you still trust the present text? Because you believe that God in His sovereignty, because He loved us so much that it resulted in the incarnation, that God in His sovereignty, would ensure that everything that we would need to know for salvation, and living the Christian life, and knowing God was preserved with sufficient accuracy. That's why we have confidence in scripture. Even though those who embrace the Chicago Statement acknowledge that there are errors in our present Bible.

Well, I would say the same thing, even if we acknowledge the possibility of errors in the originals, that because God loved us so much that it resulted in the incarnation, he would see to it in His sovereignty that everything He wanted us to know about salvation, knowing Him, living the Christian life, was preserved with sufficient accuracy. The confidence is built for the same reason, whether you take a traditional view of inerrancy or a more flexible view, as I do.

FRANK:

Yeah. In fact, we're going to get into that flexible view here in just a few minutes. But I also want to point out that no matter what internal debate we have over what is the proper

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definition of inerrancy and what is an error and what isn't, it doesn't change the big picture one iota. And even somebody like Bart Ehrman would agree with that, that the essential doctrines of the faith remain solid, even if we're arguing over did someone make an error as to how many angels there were at the tomb, or, you know, that kind of thing, or did Jesus curse the fig tree here or there? Or, you know, these are very minor things we're talking about.

And by the way, Mike, it seems to me that when Bart Ehrman argues that the documents are somehow unreliable, he always majors in the minors. He talks about these little differences, like who got to the tomb first, like we've been talking about, or how many angels were there. And he seems to miss the fact that all of the documents agree on the big issue. There was a resurrection. Jesus rose from the dead.

So, even if someone made an error in the details, that doesn't change the big picture. In fact, you give a great example, and you do so in the book here. You've done it before, about the Titanic. Can you unpack that example for us here? Because this is a very insightful look at how to look at these differences that I think most people have never considered.

MIKE:

When the Titanic sank, you had some of the survivors that contradicted one another on an interesting item. Some said that the Titanic broke in half just prior to sinking. Others said, no, it went down intact. Well, how do you get that wrong? You know, here you are, according to the eyewitnesses, it was a totally clear night. The water was calm, the moon was not out, so the only light came from the stars and the ship, which was over 700ft long, was lit up and you heard people screaming.

And so, it's the most frightening, terrifying night of your life, and the ship is the only thing you can see. So, how do you mistake it? Some say it breaks in half and then sank. And others say, no, it went down intact. I don't know how you get that wrong. But nobody questioned whether the Titanic sank. It was just a matter of a peripheral detail.

FRANK:

Yeah, well, yeah, that's what they all agree on. It sank. You wouldn't say because they disagreed on how it sank, that it didn't sink. Right? That's what they all agree on. The same thing is true

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with the resurrection. Everyone agrees there was a resurrection. That's why these documents exist to begin with, ladies and gentlemen. There wouldn't be Jews in the first century claiming a man claimed to be God and rose from the dead, unless a man really did claim to be God and really did rise from the dead, because they had nothing to gain from saying this. And by the way, Mike, if they told the story exactly the same way and there were no divergent details, what would we immediately assume?

MIKE:

Well, even in antiquity, there were a couple of early church fathers that said we would know that they were colluding with one another. But that said, there are occasions in Matthew and Luke that they have, they're quoting Mark virtually verbatim, which shows, suggests that they are using him as a source and supplementing him, and editing him on purpose.

FRANK:

Now, you get into this in the book about Mark being the first gospel written. It's kind of technical. We don't have time to get into it here on the program. But it's in the book, 'Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently.' But couldn't one argue that Matthew could have witnessed the whatever Mark says Matthew could have witnessed, too, and wrote it down in the same way? Or are you saying they're far too similar?

MIKE:

Yeah, I think they're far too similar on many occasions. Yeah, it gets technical, more than we can cover in just a minute or two here. But, yeah, there are occasions when it seems that Matthew is an entirely independent source. I think about Jesus before Pilate. All four gospels seem to be reporting independently here. It's the kind of normal variation you'd find in eyewitness testimony. But then when you look at other things, when there's nearly verbatim agreement between them, it's just not the kind of stuff that you find with people who are telling the same story.

You know, I could think if you and I were sitting at dinner, dinner at a restaurant, and a couple beside us were arguing, and later on, the woman picks up a wine bottle and hits the guy over the face, and police come and take her, and paramedics are attending to his wound. If the cop asked us, you know, write down exactly what you remember them saying. How much of that

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would we remember within 20 minutes? And when we were recalling that, how much similarities? There would be similarities on short statements. I hate you. Get out of the house. I don't ever want to see you again. We're done. You know, things like that, short statements you could recall verbatim.

But anything lengthy, it's going to be difficult. And if we're asked to translate those because the couple was speaking in Spanish and fortunately, we know Spanish fluently, but the cop does not and asks us to translate it, us being able to translate that in Spanish and it still comes out virtually verbatim? Well, now we know that it's going to be something that we were collaborating with one another. That's just not the kind of similarities you find if the normal variation in eyewitness testimony.

FRANK:

Yeah. In fact, the very fact that there are differences between the gospels is actually evidence that these were eyewitnesses, or at least some of them were eyewitnesses. If they told it in exactly the same way with exactly the same words and exactly the same details, that would have been collusion. By the way, back to the Titanic example, I could see quite easily how people could have differed on how it sank. First of all, they're in shock. Second of all, it's dark. Third of all, if you're a beam of the boat, you might see it break in half. If you're on the bow of the stern, you can't see it break in half. There's plausible reasons why they could have had a difference there, and the same could occur with some of the gospels.

MIKE:

Well, in that case, one of them made an error. Right? You still wouldn't throw out their testimony as being unreliable.

FRANK:

That's right. You would still say it's reliable. Yeah. The Titanic sank. It's a minor detail, and I can't stress this enough for those of you that are uncomfortable with our conversation, we're just dealing with the text as it is, and we're trying to explain WHY it is why it is. Well, actually, Mike is, through his book 'Jesus, Contradicted.' And we're trying to see, how does this fit with the doctrine of inerrancy. And there are ways of dealing with this.

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One is harmonization, and that's what Dr. Geisler does a lot in the book, 'The Big Book of Bible Difficulties.' Another approach is not that Mike is against that, you're not against that. But when it's pushed too far and you think it strains it too much, there may be other ways to say this is why there are differences. And some of that has to do with the standards of the day and how different biographers wrote 2000 years ago and what sort of ways they wrote and what was acceptable and what wasn't. So, all that is in the book. 'Jesus, Contradicted.'

And I feel so inadequate, Mike, because there's so much in this book we haven't covered. That's why the people have to get the book. But what we're going to do, if it's okay with you, in the midweek podcast this coming Tuesday, we're going to pick up our discussion because I want to get your definition of what inerrancy is because you believe in inerrancy. I believe in inerrancy. How do we differ? What is acceptable and what isn't as the boundaries of inerrancy? And we'll talk about it in the midweek podcast.

Now, those of you listening on the American Family Radio network are not going to hear that on AFR. You've got to look up the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast. And this coming Tuesday, Lord willing, it will come out. That'll be Tuesday, June 11. So, if you want to hear that, look for the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast. In the meantime, Mike, if people want to learn more about what you do, your YouTube channel, your website, where do they go?

MIKE:

YouTube channel is Dr. Mike Licona or just put in my name. It'll come up. Mike Licona. My website is RisenJesus.com. I'm also on Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok.

FRANK:

Great. By the way, Dr. Licona debated I said Bart Ehrman for 7 hours. That's behind a paywall. But a debate you did have that I moderated was between you and our mutual friend Richard Howe. Richard Howe was taking Dr. Geisler's position basically on inerrancy, and you were expressing your position. And we're going to put that debate, it's on YouTube, in the show notes. This was a 2019 debate at Southern Evangelical seminary.

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So, you can watch that debate and the back and forth there, and you definitely want to get the book 'Jesus, Contradicted' by my guest, Dr. Mike Licona. And you're going to want to hear the Tuesday podcast. So, don't miss it. Look for the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast, and it'll come out June 11, Lord Willing, and I will see you this weekend west of Atlanta. Check our website for more. See you here next week, Lord willing.

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