

## What Do Critical Scholars Admit About Jesus? With Dr. Gary Habermas

(June 24, 2025)

### FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, even atheist scholars believe that Jesus was a miracle worker. How can this be if they don't believe miracles are possible? And why do scholars say that if there was no resurrection, or at least a belief in the resurrection, there would be no Christianity? And how many scholars believe that the followers of Jesus thought he was God right from the beginning? In other words, the deity of Christ did not evolve over time. You may have heard that people will say, oh, it wasn't until the 90's when John's gospel allegedly was written, did people think Jesus was God?

No, the scholars seem to be saying they thought he was God right from the beginning. We're going to talk about that and a lot more with my friend, the great Dr. Gary Habermas. He's written three out of four volumes, 'On the Resurrection.' The first one is called 'On the Resurrection: Evidences.' We did a show on that about a year ago, beginning of 2024.

And then last week, we did a show on the second volume called 'On the Resurrection: Refutations.' What about the people who try and say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead, that there are other explanations, naturalistic explanations to explain the data that we have.

Today, we're going to lean more into the third volume 'On the Resurrection: Scholarly Perspectives.' So, here he is again ladies and gentlemen, the great Dr. Gary Habermas, all the way from Liberty University. Gary, tell us an overview of this third volume. I've been spending-- I've spent at least five hours in this volume in the past couple of days. It's so easy to read and to see what people think. But tell people what's essentially in here.

### GARY:

Well, first of all, I didn't know this until I opened up the book when they sent it to me in the mail. But if you turn it sideways and look at the ends of the pages, you can see the—



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Right. You can see the dark lines going up, and those are the section headings in the book. Now, here's the way I explain it. Volumes one and two are apologetics. It's an argument for the resurrection and an argument against anti resurrection arguments. But volume three, I pretty much leave apologetics behind a bit.

I should say we, because an up and coming young philosopher, Ben Shaw, who's got his PhD and-- Funny story, but I'll let that go. A PhD in philosophy of history. He's also got a black belt in Brazilian Jiu jitsu, so don't mess with him. But Ben is the editor of this volume, and his name is real small print, but it is there. It's big around the spine and it's also inside, because Ben took 1500 pages of my notes and got them down to where when it came out in the book it was about exactly a thousand pages.

It's like nine hundred ninety-six pages or something in that book. But we're not doing apologetics. We're doing a who's who of everybody from the far left, and I mean the far left to the far right. And here's my criterion. We'll interview anybody who is a scholar, with a terminal degree, usually means a good doctorate, in a field that is relevant to resurrection studies.

So, you could have a PhD in philosophy, you could have a PhD in history, got a PhD in New Testament, PhD in theology, PhD in classics, PhD in archaeology, PhD in comparative religion. And all those fields give you tools to be able to evaluate these arguments. And what we did was we picked a bunch of topics, and we went through them and all we did was give scholar's views from the far left to the far right.

We have a-- I counted, by the way. There's almost, I think there's close to 600 different authors in that book. And of course, many times we use them way more than once. Ben, when he put the book together, Ben Shaw. Ben tells me there's just short of 8,000 footnotes in that book.

**FRANK:**

Oh, easily. Yeah.

**GARY:**

Yeah, 550 or more scholars, and 8,000 end notes. Hard to tell because it starts new with every section but the footnotes. But these guys could be-- And I counted them by name and there's

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more atheists, agnostics and other kinds of skeptics or people who could be pretty conservative but in a different religion.

So, they could be a conservative Jewish scholar who's not a Christian. So, there could be a lot of again, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, and non-Christian religions. Then there's a middle group, let's call them moderates. And each group has like a minus and a plus. There's a minus, a moderation in the middle, and a plus. That's how I think of them. And then conservatives. Then yes, there are evangelical scholars. There are a lot of people say, well, evangelicals are not scholars.

Well, look, my former teaching assistant before Ben has a PhD from Edinburgh in philosophy. Don't tell me that because he's a believer he can't have anything good to say on this subject with the PhD from what I saw in a recent survey was the seventh most influential university in the world. So, there's a lot of guys on the right, they believe. A lot of guys in the far left, they don't believe. And all this book does is give views and they're in alphabetical order.

And I'm not saying there's never any comebacks. Once in a while we make brief comments. This is kind of a silly view because. But for the most part we make no comments. So, you could say, did Jesus die on the cross? And you can get views all the way from the right to all the way on the left. And you might be amazed that a number of the Jesus seminar guys, a number of the renowned skeptics and atheists, they have no problem with death by crucifixion.

In fact, I even have a section in there in the minimal facts. Now you say, well, I thought you weren't doing apologetics. I'm not. I'm only listing the minimal facts as historical facts and I'm telling you how scholars line up underneath them. Yea, nay, in between, with no response. If I don't like what somebody says about one of the facts, I don't sit there and pick fights with the guy. I just reproduce his view and give you a source. So, we try to go through all kinds of topics, basically related to Christ.

Toward the end of the book, Frank, there is a long section where-- I think there's 100 people in there, and they respond to each other. So, this is really funny. You got the atheists critiquing atheists, you got evangelicals critiquing evangelicals, you got evangelicals going off on atheists

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and atheists going off on evangelicals. All they do is they give the views, and I just let it sit. I didn't offer refutations.

**FRANK:**

Here's one thing that's kind of funny. I was reading today. You're quoting a guy by the name of Williams about the historical facts, and you say this. Here's what Williams-- This is a quote from this scholar Williams.

The encounters with Jesus risen are historical. That's what Williams says. Although Williams says we can't say much about the details except that the historical appearances are the best explanation for the New Testament text. And then you add this. Williams appears to find it frustrating to have to say this. [Laughter]

**GARY:**

Well listen, I've got a buddy Frank, this is an insider. I'm not going to reveal the guy's name, what he's doing or what I'm-- But this guy for 10 years has interviewed really skeptical scholars and he's drawn to people from the Jesus seminar.

So, if you take the Jesus seminar, they're the guys that-- The red beads are, Jesus said, you got the red letter sayings of Jesus. And if you put a red bead in the hat, that means Jesus said it. A pink bead means probably, a gray bead means probably not, and a black bead means no way. These guys are so quote unquote liberal, they only accept 9% of the so-called red letter words of Jesus.

**FRANK:**

Nine percent, okay.

**GARY:**

And he interviews these guys and they're really interesting. This is not in the book, what I'm telling you. I don't have permission to cite this guy's emails. It's not in the book. And he interviews these Jesus seminar guys who only allow 9% of the red letter words of Jesus. He'll say, hey, what about the hallucination theory? Isn't that theory really, really popular?

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And this guy's got a PhD from an Ivy League school, and he teaches at a major university, and he's a Jesus Seminar member. And the guy goes, yeah, everybody's going to give you that the disciples thought they saw the risen Jesus, which you opened the show with.

And then my friend asks him, what's the major argument against hallucinations? And time and time again, the guys in the Jesus Seminar and other very, very skeptical guys are going to go, I think the best argument is the 500, the appearance of the 500. Wherever you have something that even looks like-- This is the guy, the skeptic talking. Anywhere in history where you have anything that even looks like it could be a candidate for group hallucinations, there's nothing to compare.

I read a guy, late yesterday, Cambridge University New Testament professor. He says there's nothing like the data for the resurrection because you can compare it to other religions, other this and there's way more evidences, way more responses, way more large crowds, and so on.

But they keep saying the 500 is the best reason. And they reject 91% of the red letter words of Jesus. And yet, they think Paul's statement in the early creed, Paul records it, but it's not his, of the 500 seeing Jesus as a major comeback against hallucinations. Of course, another great one is the empty tomb.

**FRANK:**

Right.

**GARY:**

There's two right there and I did a survey in that book. No, I'm trying to think. It's not in that book. It's in volume two. I did a survey of about 250 scholars across the whole spectrum. And the view for the empty tomb, I didn't pull punches to make it hit the 80% mark. But it just came out. First time I did the dividing, it came out to 80.2%, 80.2, not 82.

Eighty point two percent of these critical scholars across the board, terminal degree in a relevant field, 80.2 believed in the empty tomb. And if you've got an appearance to a lot of people, by the way, the most evidenced appearance of Jesus is to the 12. Now, that's a group of 12. And who knows, five women could have been there. Mary, the mother of Jesus could have

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been there. James could have been there. The appearance of the 12 could be 20, easily. So, you've got 20 there. You've got 500.

And they were saying, this guy from Cambridge, was saying there's nothing like this and he's not even positive on this stuff. And he says, there's nothing like this in the critical literature. All the data we have on the resurrection, the appearances. So, if you look that up, you'll see some really skeptical guys saying what you just read from the one guy where you even think he's biting his tongue while he's making the comment.

**FRANK:**

I've got to ask you this, Gary, because I was struck in reading through volume three. Again, volume three, 'On the Resurrection: Scholarly Perspectives.' So, you're just reading in alphabetical order what these scholars think on certain topics related to the resurrection.

And I couldn't believe how many of them were saying that they believed that Jesus was a miracle worker. So, my question is, since they don't believe in miracles, what do they think he was doing?

**GARY:**

Okay, that's a great question. A little bit of explanation. One critical scholar, one of these guys way to the left, doesn't believe in miracles. But he says this. He says, to my knowledge, the entire critical community believed that-- And they don't usually say the words miracle worker.

They usually say healer. Jesus was a healer and an exorcist. And you go, wait a minute. You don't believe in demons. And the guy goes, of course I don't. And what about healing? Yeah, I think Jesus did that. So, this one scholar said that virtually 100% of critics on the far left believe he was a healer and an exorcist. And when you go, well, I can understand how you say healing. We might take a sick teenager to a counselor or an MD for some medicine, psychiatry, and they're getting some treatment.

And when they walk away, if the medicine helps and that counseling helps, we would say, we could very easily say, they were healed by going to this medical doctor. Counseling is a way of healing. And I think what they mean by the healing part is easy. Jesus did talk to people, and he

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was so winsome. Read the Sermon on the Mount. A lot of it's like cognitive psychology today. It's very cognitive, like Paul in Philippians, chapter four.

**FRANK:**

Right.

**GARY:**

Jesus gave good advice, winsome teaching, changed people's perspective on themselves and on the world. And that's healing. So, these guys really do think healing takes place. But on the demons, you go, you think he was an exorcist? Absolutely. Yeah. But you don't believe in demons? No, absolutely not. But you think Jesus was an exorcist? Yes. Would you explain that for me? Okay. And the critic would—

Guy way over on the left side. Maybe Jesus, some I remember would say, I don't believe in demons. Therefore, I don't think Jesus cast any of them out. But Jesus had tremendous influence on people, like a psychiatrist or a psychologist might have today.

And if they were bound by something that today we would call psychiatric depression, anxiety, whatever, they could be healed after dealing with him, especially if they came back to him a few times. Quote, unquote, they had a few sessions with him. And he goes, I don't believe in demons, but here's the reason, here's the key. I think he healed. The guy would say, I think Jesus flat out healed, like a counselor can heal today. But here's why I think he was an exorcist.

There's no demons, and he never cast a demon out. However, examples like the ones reported in the Gospels, either the example itself or one like it, is true. In other words, that's a sense in which he was an exorcist. That Jesus very much did things in the Gospels or just like the things in the Gospels.

So, in other words, those statements in the Gospels-- Even guys who don't think the Gospels are reliable, they think a lot of those exorcisms without the demon part, they think the scenario where the person was healed, they are true historical accounts.

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That's a sense in which they think he was an exorcist or the sense in which they think he was a real healer. Like a counselor could be a healer.

**FRANK:**

Right. But a counselor typically doesn't heal somebody instantaneously. And that's what appears Jesus was doing.

**GARY:**

Well—

**FRANK:**

So, how do they deal with that?

**GARY:**

You know, I think the guy would say. I think he would say-- And they're very open to this. They would say that shows you what a magnetic personality this guy was, how brilliant he was. There's nobody in the world-- Jesus is the only founder of a major world religion who's claimed to be at least a prophet in all the major world religions.

Everybody else downs, somebody downs all the rest of the guys, except Jesus. He was an extraordinary person. You get the impression reading the Gospels that he could lock eyes with somebody, and they could walk away differently. So, this guy had to make, at the very least, a secular view. He had a magnetic personality that allowed him to do things immediately.

**FRANK:**

So, what would they say about the resurrections that Jesus performed on the girl at Nain, and Lazarus, and the healings of the invalid who'd been an invalid for 38 years? I mean, what did they say to that?

**GARY:**

Well, there's two major treatments that I'm aware of, lengthy critical treatments of Jesus' miracles. One is John Meyer, whose own multi-volume historical Jesus is as well respected as anything in the field. He passed away a few years ago.

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**FRANK:**

You quote him a lot in here.

**GARY:**

Pardon me?

**FRANK:**

You quote him a lot in here. Yeah.

**GARY:**

In his second volume, he's got almost 500 pages on Jesus' miracles. The other one, is a guy named Twelftree, and he published a book called 'Jesus the Miracle Worker.' And he gave 500 pages to the miracles of Jesus. And they both evaluate these things, and all right. So, your question is, what about the three people that Jesus was raised from the dead? Both those two guys, Meyer and Twelftree, both of them said that the best evidential data of all the data for Jesus' healings, exorcisms, and so on, the events he did that are the best—

**FRANK:**

Attested?

**GARY:**

Verified, are the three resurrections.

**FRANK:**

Really?

**GARY:**

These guys may not believe in resurrections, but they say that those three accounts have so many pro arguments in their favor, you've got to think something. I don't know what to say, but something like that happened. You know, that's kind of the way they respond.

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**FRANK:**

So, they don't have an explanation. They don't believe in miracles, but they say this evidence looks really good that he did resurrect these people from the dead.

**GARY:**

Yeah. Now, here's the question. What happens when later he rises from the dead? And if you think he really rose from the dead, now it makes sense, I think, to go back and say, who knows? Maybe he did raise those people from the dead. After all, he was raised from the dead. So, I guess you could come back armchair quarterbacking, Monday morning quarterbacking, come back later and correct your earlier view on the three that he raised from the dead.

**FRANK:**

Well, let me ask you this, because Dr. Craig Evans cites the parable of the Wicked Tenants as evidence that Jesus predicted his death and potentially his resurrection. Why does he say that? And what other evidence exists for Jesus truly predicting and accomplishing his resurrection? That he did predict it, in other words.

**GARY:**

Yeah, I say-- I come back to it in parts of all three of those volumes. You can read some of the stuff on the predictions in volume three. But most critical scholars, I think that's a fair comment. I didn't do a head count on this one. Someone's going to say, where's one of your favorite head counts? And the critics hate that. But where's one of your head counts? It's not. I'm just making a general comment. I think most critics-- Dale Allison is an example.

**FRANK:**

Princeton.

**GARY:**

Yeah, Princeton. Most critical scholars think Jesus did predict his death and exaltation/resurrection. He predicted it. Then when it happened-- Here's what's cool, Frank. Volume four, I haven't gotten to yet, but volume four is on two topics. What's the resurrection have to do with theology? And what's the resurrection have to do with practice?

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And what I say in the theology section, I have a section on the Christian worldview. If Jesus predicted his resurrection ahead of time, that means he knew-- He shared with his Father his teaching. He shared with his Father the worldview perspective. Because if he knew he was going to die and rise again, which doesn't happen. Even then, people weren't stupid. They know you didn't get up and walk out of the tomb. But if he-- If he came out of the tomb, that shows that he was part and parcel with his Father.

It shows that his theistic worldview was one that had real control on reality. So, I think that he predicted the resurrection as more than just, oh, yeah. He probably predicted it. Yeah. But if he predicted an impossible event once in the universe, no other founder of a major world religion that happens, then where are we now? That means he had an angle in the truth. He knew it was going to happen. And it looks like he really did share in reality with his Father and his Father's knowledge.

**FRANK:**

You know, you've said this before when we spoke about this probably several years ago, that one of the benefits of laying out the facts that everybody agrees on, the minimal facts, is that when you lay them all out, you realize that the best explanation of all the facts is that Jesus really did rise from the dead. And I asked you, well, then why don't they just come to that conclusion? And you used an illustration from marriage to answer that. Refresh our audience of that illustration, Gary.

**GARY:**

Well, some people say I do in marriage, and some people say I don't. By I don't, they might prefer to live with somebody. They might prefer to stay single, whatever. But that's more-- For the person who trusts Christ, the word *pistis* or *pistis*, verbs and nouns in the New Testament. It's a very strong word, way stronger than our word. You know, we could say, I believe the Yankees won the World Series last year.

Well, that would be false. But you could say, I believe. But in the New Testament, the Greek words for believe mean to jump in with both feet. They mean to commit yourself. So, Jesus called people, like in the Sermon on the Mount, he called people, he said in Luke 14, he said, if you're not willing to love me more than your family, more than yourself, and more than your

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possessions, boy, you talk about heavy stuff. If you're not willing to do that, then you're not fit to be a disciple.

So, Jesus asked people, when he said believe, he said, jump in with both feet. So, I liken that to marriage. And when my wife, Debbie, died of stomach cancer, the mother of my four children died of stomach cancer in 1995, I got married to a family friend, Eileen. And this month, in just a couple weeks, Lord willing, we have our 29th anniversary. And when we would be married, Jerry Falwell Sr. did the ceremony.

And he got to the point in the ceremony where he said, Gary, in one second, I'm going to ask you if you're going to say I do. And you know that when you say I do, everything you own belongs to Eileen. And she has this white gown on. She's real quiet. She doesn't get involved in conversation. She raised her right, left hand, and she goes, yes! And the whole place just blew up. [Laughter] Okay, that's a little picture of what the I do means. I do means all of me for all of you.

And I think that's what salvation is. Jesus was calling us to make him-- Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he says in the Sermon of the Mount. So, that's the part of Jesus calling us to come to worship him. And that's volume four. Now, we're actually up to the fourth volume is done, but it doesn't come out for, a little over a year. It comes out in August of next year, volume four.

**FRANK:**

So, there are people who will see the evidence that somebody could make a good spouse and still not want to get married.

**GARY:**

And I think the world, Frank, is full of people who think Christianity looks good. There's some evidences for it. And we often ask about atheists. Frank, you know this as well as anybody. I'm not trying to put anybody down, but darn it, talking to atheists and other strong, especially Jesus mythers, they are frequently very angry, and they go off.

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I think a lot of that emotion is because they're confronted with data that they frankly don't have for their worldview. And they don't like being pushed. And when you push, the more you push, the angrier they get.

I think that's what spawns the emotions. And Frank, I think that's why most people who, if they walk away, if they say, I don't, those who say I do, come to Jesus. Those who say I don't, I think they oftentimes-- I know this because they've told me. Tony Flew on theism-- They say, I've been playing with this for a long time, and I think the data are pretty good, but I didn't want to go there. Didn't fit my lifestyle, doesn't fit my friends that I hang around with, that doesn't fit my blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And they're saying no. And the more you push, the angrier they get. So, yeah, they say I don't, but Jesus requires it. And the other side, as I'm sure you say over and over again, in your atheist, 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist' book. They want to say I do to me. They don't want to say I do to their spouse or to the Lord.

**FRANK:**

Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to be talking about that this next weekend. I think that's October-- What am I talking about? June 29, we're going to be, at Faith Assembly, Orlando. We're going to be talking about the question I always ask people. If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian?

The honest answer for many people is no. It's not a matter of evidence. It's not a head problem. It's a heart problem. They don't want it to be true. So, if you're anywhere near Orlando, would love to see you on the 29th. Also want to mention, Lord willing, if things ramp up in Israel, we won't go. But right now, there are groups going back to Israel.

We're going back in the first two weeks of October. We're going to go to Jordan first, see Petra, all that, then go to Israel. Then we're going to go to Egypt on the extension for four days for people that want us to go to Egypt. We just went to Egypt in December. So, if you're interested, you want to see the Holy Land? You want to see Jordan, you want to see Egypt? Go to [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org). Click on Events. You'll see the tour. It begins, I want to say, October 3rd. It

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goes for anywhere from, depending upon whether you take the extension to Egypt, goes from like ten days to two weeks.

It's a VIP tour. We stay at the best places. It's not cheap, but if you're going to go, go big. Go big or stay home. So, we're going big. So, I hope to see you. We only take one bus. I hope to see you on this trip. We're all going to be together, so check it out. Let me go back to my guest, Dr. Gary Habermas. Gary, there's so much in the scholarly book, Volume three, that I want to ask you about since we have limited time. You have a section here on Bible contradictions, or really gospel contradictions. And even if there are contradictions, what does that do for the evidence, for the resurrection?

**GARY:**

First of all, Frank, just a comment. You said you're going down to Orlando on June 29th?

**FRANK:**

Yeah.

**GARY:**

That's our anniversary.

**FRANK:**

Oh, all right. Yeah. [Laughter]

**GARY:**

Yeah, I have a PhD course, Lord willing, this fall, and it's on apparent contradictions in the New Testament. Now, this isn't my specialty, and I've never taught this course before. But we're picking out textbooks and I'm letting the students, the PhD students who signed up really helped me get a handle on some of this stuff.

But I want to start the course two ways. One is to talk about ICBI, better known as the Chicago statement and what inerrancy is. And there are some statements in the inerrancy statement, the Chicago statement, the most conservative scholarly inerrancy comment in the world. And it

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talks, it says the New Testament speaks in a language of approximation, not the kind of apodictic certainty.

So, you go, I had a guy with three doctorate degrees, very well-known name a few decades ago tell me he's not an inerrantist for this reason. Either Jesus said what Jesus said he said, or Jesus said what Mark said he said. But Jesus couldn't have said what Matthew says he says and what Mark said he said in the same time, same place, same manner. And he rejected inerrancy for that. This guy had an Oxford doctorate and two other doctorates, UCLA and one other one. And I said, I'm thinking about that.

And I think, wow, does your worldview not allow paraphrasing? You can't paraphrase? How come there's different orders for the different sayings of Jesus in the Gospels? It's out there for everybody to see. So, inerrancy doesn't teach what people says it does. It's not that same-- Yeah, we don't want contradictions, a real contradiction. Two things cannot both be and not be in the same time, same place, same manner. That's not true, but there's a lot of room in this. Okay, that's one point I want to make on what is the reliability or inerrancy of Scripture.

Secondly, your question, what difference does it make if--? Let's say, a book comes out and Christians feel like they're in a lot of hot water because this guy's got five arguments that are very hard to dispute are not errors. Let's just say that for the sake of the argument. I tell people over, and over, and over again. Let's use a big example. Maybe the toughest problem in Scripture is what do you do with Joshua being commanded to kill men, women, and children in the Middle East.

That ethically, that's very offensive to a lot of people. So, Michael Licona and I, we have a little fun when we go to speaking engagements, and we're talking to people and the guy goes, let's say someone says, what happens with Joshua, or did Judas hang himself, or did he jump off a cliff? What happened? And I'll say, what point are you trying to make? I'm trying to make the point that there might be a problem, an ethical problem with Joshua and a contradiction problem with my second example.

Okay, right. So, what's the point? The Bible's not the airtight book that you need it to be for-- Timeout. That I need it to be for? I teach at liberty. People know what my view of Scripture is.

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But inerrancy does not have to be-- Inerrancy is not part of the gospel, in my opinion. And a person could believe in reliability. But here's all you need in order for Christianity to be true, three major facts.

When you look at all the definitions in the New Testament, mostly in, Paul's works and in the book of Acts, here's the three teachings. Deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They go, what about the empty tomb? Well, it's there about half the time, but it's not there the other half of the time. It's good. It's a good fact.

But deity, death, resurrection. Yeah, but what about Joshua and the Palestinians? And I go, you must not be hearing my argument. And I'll get it down to this level, Frank. If someone said to me, basically all I think that's true in the New Testament can be summarized as evidence for the deity, death, resurrection, and a few other things, is that good enough for you?

Well, I'll tell you what, for me, it's good enough to get you into the kingdom, and then you can take a post grad class with Joshua, you can take a post grad class with Moses, Daniel, you can take a post grad class with Paul, take a post grad-- And you can find out what the answer to those things are. But if the deity, death, resurrection of Jesus are true, Christianity follows. I start my lectures now, and that's how I start, 1 Corinthians 15. And I'll say, if this material is true, Christianity is true. Yeah, but what about--? Christianity is true.

What about these five--? Christianity is true. What are you not understanding about that? Christianity is true. So, to me, that's by far the best answer. The other stuff is cream on the cake. But when the three things are true that I just said, Christianity follows.

**FRANK:**

Yes. I guess people will say, well, if we can't trust the text in this one little part, why should we trust it elsewhere? Why is that not thinking properly, Gary, about historical text in general?

**GARY:**

If you go back to the first volume there, 'Evidences', I have six facts and I argue the way critics do.

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**FRANK:**

Here it is folks. This is the first volume right here.

**GARY:**

And by far the vast majority of critics will grant those six facts. I start with a list of 12 and they'll usually give you all 12. Some of them will balk on the empty tomb. But basically, most people give you all 12. I take six of them because they're the strongest. And there's an average of 15 arguments.

The way I did it, I did it according to critics, the way they argue. If you want the real example, it's 14.7 reasons per six facts, 14.6 evidences for each of the six facts. So, if they go, well, what if Jesus contradicted himself here? I go, well, I mean, there's all kinds of responses. Frank, I mean, you're like this. You love these kinds of responses. What if he didn't? No. What if he did? No. What if he didn't? Well, I'm saying he did.

I'm saying he didn't. I mean, where are we going to go on this argument? We're not going to solve it. But if there's 15 evidences for each of the six, and the six are enough, they are the gospel data, you could find a whole bunch of holes in the rest of Scripture, and that part could be true, and you could find out in eternity what went wrong.

**FRANK:**

You know, since you mentioned death, deity, and resurrection, or death, resurrection, deity of Jesus, we did open the show talking about the fact that, a lot of people still try and say that the deity of Christ evolved. Even though when you read the scholars here on this, Gary, the scholars are almost unanimous in saying, as Bauckham put it, Richard Bauckham, that the earliest Christology is the highest Christology.

That in other words, they thought Jesus was God from the beginning. So, where's the disconnect here? Why do I see people like Bart Ehrman and Alex O'Connor--? Alex is a young man who's an atheist who thinks that the deity of Christ evolved over time because Mark isn't as overt about deity as, say, John.

And so, it kind of evolved. What's your response to that?

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**GARY:**

Yeah, well, first of all, just a comment sideways. I think the strongest comment in the Gospels for deity Christ is in Mark. So, if he says they evolved, I like Mark 14:61-64, Jesus before the high priest. And he claims to be seated on the right hand of God. Darrow Bach has done a huge study in Germany with German sources on how we're most sure that Jesus taught that. And if he said he was seated on the right hand of God, there's no stronger statement of deity than that.

But you took the words right out of my mouth. Bauckham, now he's quoting. He didn't say-- He didn't get-- He didn't say that himself, but he gets it from other people who say the earliest Christology is the highest Christology. And you go, what about Ehrman? I can't speak for-- I've only met him once and he seems like a nice guy. And I think, for the most part, I think he's an honest guy that he'll call a spade a spade and he'll tell you when there's facts. He gives 15 evidences for the crucifixion for the historicity of the crucifixion.

He believes the disciples, without any qualms, believe they saw the risen Jesus. He said, I'm not shy about that because it's a historical fact. Now, you say, what about deity? Bart Ehrman takes the adoption theory that Jesus was a man and God made him deity because-- It's sort of like-- I don't want to say this because it's going to give the wrong view, but some of the people in Greek mythology were mere men who were ascended to godhood.

Well, it's not the Greek view, but he thinks that very-- I think Bart would pretty much agree with that phrase, that the earliest Christology is the highest Christology. Because he says there's four-- There's about seven or eight. But to me, the four biggest ones in the early church that showed that Jesus claimed to be deity are these. He forgave sin. He's worshiped. Now, as I'm saying these, where do you get this stuff? You get them largely from the creeds, the early creeds that are true.

**FRANK:**

The creeds that are in the text itself.

**GARY:**

These are in the creeds from the early—

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**FRANK:**

In the Bible itself. We're not talking about the Nicene Creed. We're talking about-- because people need to know, Gary. They may not have heard your work before, that you've identified at least 41 creeds in the New Testament. So, these are short sayings. Well, explain what they are for our audience.

**GARY:**

By the way, in Volume 1, I have a whole chapter on early And then I have an excursus right after that chapter on the creeds, and what makes them early? Now you've got Philippians. They're short little synopses that come from the days of the apostles. Could very well have come from the apostles, and they were memorized. Because in those days, you can't say, go down to the store and get Gospel of Mark.

You can't even say, go down to the store and get the four spiritual laws of the Romans Road. You can't even say that. So, they had to memorize, and they're very good at that. Memorize the key teachings, and that becomes these early-- If you don't like the word-- I don't mean you, but I mean people who don't like the word creedal.

Just call them traditions. They're little traditions that are woven into the New Testament. They're all through the book of Acts, especially Acts 1 through 5, 10, 13, and probably chapter 17. Here's a great one. Romans 10:9. This is a creed. Everybody thinks it is. Rudolph Bultmann, way to the left of Ehrman. Bultmann thinks it's an early creed. Here it is.

If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God's raised him from the dead, you'll be saved. Okay, right there. What's there? Deity, Lord, which is by the way, New Testament, the translation of the Old Testament, Yahweh. You've got Lord, resurrection, death, and Romans 10:9.

To me, it's the most valuable, maybe more valuable than John 3:16 for people who like John 3:16. But Romans 10:9 is highly evidential. So, you've got four of these seven or eight things. Jesus forgave sin, Mark chapter two. And when he says the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sin, they call him a blasphemer. They want to kill him. They think he's committed

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blasphemy because he's forgiven sin. He's worshiped in Philippians chapter two. And that's not the only one. But he's worshiped in Philippians chapter two.

Further, Jesus taught-- He literally said these things. He calls himself, he gives himself names, Son of God, Son of Man. Now, Bauckham doesn't like the Son of Man argument, but most people think the Son of Man argument is very—

**FRANK:**

It's the Daniel 7 argument. Why wouldn't he like that? That's going right back. It's going right back to Daniel 7, the Ancient of Days. Why would Bauckham not like that? That's what he's saying in Romans 14. I mean not Romans 14. Mark 14. Right?

**GARY:**

Mark 14 is one of two passages where Jesus paraphrases Daniel 14 and applies it to himself.

**FRANK:**

Daniel 7. Yeah.

**GARY:**

So, critics-- And then Barth says, here's the biggie. Barth goes, what about pre-existence in a so-called red book, 'How Jesus Became God?' He said, this is a little easy to me. Seems easy to me, but I understand him. He says, in the early church, if you already believe these high things about Jesus, and you're already worshiping him, and think he can forgive sin, and so on, to say he was pre-existent from the beginning of the world, not created, to say he was pre-existent is a natural thing to add.

So, pre-existence is a huge thing. Again, you got Philippians 2, you got Colossians 1, Colossians 1 creed. So, these early creeds, I think it very much backs up that earliest Christology is the highest Christology. So, the way I say it is coming out of the gate in 30 or 33, whatever you think the date for the death of Jesus is, coming out of the gate in 30 or 33 A.D. the teaching that Jesus was high deity was immediate.

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And I'll tell you what did it. Jesus made these claims and everybody thought, dude, you're crazy, How can you say that? Or, okay. You're not crazy, I kind of like you. I'll put up with this for a while and see. But when he was raised from the dead, people say, whoa. He really was or is those things. And that's how the high Christology started.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, the whole thing was shot out of a cannon via the resurrection. I've heard you say that before.

**GARY:**

A freight train that took off immediately. And that's why the disciples jumped in with both feet. They were willing to die. The three big guys, James, the brother of Jesus, Paul, and Peter, we have first century sources for their martyrdom, all three of them. So, they weren't just willing. They did go to their death for what they believed.

**FRANK:**

So, from the very beginning, Jesus is God. He's resurrected. That's what best fits the data. Of course, it's got to be a rare event, ladies and gentlemen. If resurrections occurred all the time, they wouldn't have their-- The resurrection of Jesus wouldn't mean much to us. So, it's got to be a very rare event.

**GARY:**

It's an old argument but try to get out of it. And here's the argument. If the Father raised his son from the dead, was it because he was a false prophet or because he was a true prophet? Well, nobody in history taught deity, death, resurrection. Nobody in history taught that. If Jesus was wrong at the point of the resurrection, and especially the deity, here's two things that Jesus taught that were extremely heretical if not true.

I am deity, and what you do with me determines where you spend eternity. It's not Peter who's at the gate of the kingdom, it's Jesus. He's the one that let's you in or let's you out. So, the two things, I'm deity and I'm the one that gives you the pass to get into eternity.

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Those two things are high treason, high heresy if they're not true. So, how does God respond? He raised him from the dead. Well, who else did he raise from the dead? Buddha? Nope. Krishna? Nope. Lao Tzu of Taoism? Nope. Moses? Nope. Who did he raise from the dead? Major founders of all religions. Jesus and...Jesus.

So, it's an old argument, but it seems to me that you can't get away from the Father raised the Son, affirming his message by raising him from the dead. It means his message and in particular, the teachings of deity, death, resurrection and the way into the kingdom are primary.

**FRANK:**

And that's the beauty of the resurrection. And I know the next volume will get into that more and even tell your own story about Debbie. But I want to read one thing you have in here. Again, friends. This is the book we're talking about in this episode 'On the Resurrection: Scholarly Perspectives.' There's hundreds of quotes and summaries of scholars on all these issues.

Gary, this is from N.T. Wright. This is on page 605. And this has to do with the alternative theories. And Wright says this. Quote, no other explanations have been offered in 2000 years of sneering skepticism toward the Christian witness that can satisfactorily account for how the tomb came to be empty, how the disciples claimed to see Jesus, and how their lives and worldviews were transformed, unquote.

Then you say this. Wright states that historians must inquire and explain the best explanation for the origin of early Christianity. The critical responses have led to, quote, some fairly well known false trails, unquote. Those who think Jesus's body remained in the tomb have a historically quote, formidable task ahead of them, unquote.

Wright comments on the difficulty one worldview plays regarding the evaluation of evidence of events but says that some events can be strong enough to change a worldview. Do you think the resurrection, when you look at the evidence, can turn somebody from being a naturalist to saying, well, supernaturalism is true, there is a supernatural world out there?

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**GARY:**

You do and you get Father, you get Son, you get the plan of salvation. Jesus' number one teaching was the Kingdom of God and how to get there. It's agreed to by virtually everybody, the Kingdom of God and how to get there. In the words of a couple of very popular Christian gospel songs, Jesus holds the keys.

Jesus holds the keys to the kingdom. And he holds the keys by virtue of who he was, and by virtue of showing it to be true by the resurrection. That's back to your earlier question about discrepancies. Yeah, I think those things can be explained very, very, very well. But I think if all you have at the end of the day is deity, death, resurrection, guess what?

When you say I do to that Jesus, then you're on your way to eternity. And there is an eternity. Because you get that from NDE's. You get that-- By the way, NDE's only say you live after death. They don't say you'll live forever. It's the resurrection that says you will live forever and that we'll be like Jesus.

**FRANK:**

Absolutely. Ladies and gentlemen, everyone you love will die. Everything you build will crumble. Everything you say will be forgotten. Everything you do will come to nothing. You and your identity will die and vanish unless the resurrection is true. And I think Gary, you've done a great service to the body of Christ and even people outside the body of Christ because now they have all in one place where they can go to get top scholarship on all of these issues, all of the counter arguments, all the evidence for all the counter arguments against.

And I can't wait for the fourth volume to come out because that's actually going to be even more existentially relevant to people. So, kind of sum up things for us and then we'll close out the show. Gary, what do you want to tell our viewers and listeners as we close?

**GARY:**

Well, you know what? It was great you asked the questions you did up until this point. I would summarize-- I'll just repeat what I just said. I think we know a lot from Scripture that have nothing to do with the deity, death, and resurrection of Christ.

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I think we know a lot from the Old and New Testaments that are backed up. By the way, Frank, I just got an article the other day that said that there are a number of scholars who are moving the dates for the Dead Sea Scrolls back.

**FRANK:**

Yes.

**GARY:**

To be even earlier. I just think we have a lot of data and there's a lot of truth in Scripture. But if all we know, if all we know for sure is that Jesus made multi claims to deity, and then he predicted his death and resurrection, died, and true to his comments, he was raised from the dead, that alone-- There's a lot of truth in Scripture, archaeology, history, you name it.

But deity, death, and resurrection. If they're true, Christianity is true. And if Christianity is true, the way to the cross-- I call it the Yellow Brick Road. The Yellow Brick Road is open for us to get on board and remember Dorothy, and the Lion, and the Tin man and Scarecrow-- Don't get off the road. Don't get off. They're going through the fields. They see the Emerald City, and they're falling asleep in the fields. I mean, don't get stumped by everything. Oh, here's a lion.

Yeah, but the lion's a chicken. I mean, just face the problems and the things that come, but stay on that path. Don't get off. Deity, death, resurrection, and when it's true, Christianity is true. We have a number of reasons. That last essay I told you about reading, I give 4 evidences for an afterlife. NDE's are as good as any. There's an afterlife. So, stay on the road. It's worth it. And eternity hangs in the balances.

**FRANK:**

Amen, ladies and gentlemen. Check out GaryHabermas.com, GaryHabermas.com for much more than what we've even talked about. And if you don't have these volumes, you need to get them. By the way, this would make a great gift set for people you know who are interested in apologetics and the resurrection.

This is the third volume. As we mentioned, there are two that came before it: 'On the Resurrection: Evidences' and 'On the Resurrection: Refutations', and this is 'On the

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Resurrection: Scholarly Perspectives.' We'll look for the third or the fourth volume next year. Gary, as always, a pleasure, brother. Thanks for all you're doing. And friends, we will see you here next week. God bless.

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