

How to Detect Heresy: The Gospel of James Talarico with Ryan Crews

June 26, 2026

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, suppose there was a seminarian who was trying to get a job as the pastor of your church. He applied and you went on to vet him. You went on, looked at his social media accounts, looked at maybe some of the sermons he's done before, some of his public statements, and you found him saying things like this. He gave an invocation once and he called God the holy mystery.

And then he didn't just reference the Bible, he also referenced the Torah, which is of course part of the Bible. But then he mentioned the Quran, the Gita, the Dharma. And then he ended the prayer by praying in your many names. Not in Jesus's name, but in many names. On another occasion, he said there are six genders and God is non-binary. On another instance, this candidate to be a pastor at your church said Jesus never asked for worship.

He also said that the trans population needs abortion. And he said that if we put any abortion restrictions on anybody, that quote, every one of our neighbors with a uterus would become property of the state, unquote. And he said that would be unchristian. He also said you discovered that the Bible's silent on abortion. And he argued that abortion policy is not, quote, a place for the state.

What if this candidate also said, I'm a Christian and I hate Christianity? And then he went on to claim that Jesus was a socialist and an anarchist. And he also thought, at least politically, we could get rid of prisons, we could make them obsolete as long as we spent enough money on social programs. And what if this guy also thought, he actually said this, that Christianity is more violent than Islam and has done more damage than Islam?

Would you think this guy was a Bible-believing Christian, who could be the pastor of your church? Obviously not. Well, what if this guy, also claiming to be a seminarian, decided he's not just going to be a pastor, he's going to run for the United States Senate as a Christian and as a seminarian, despite the fact he said all these things.

What would you say? Would you think he'd be a good candidate? Well, you might say it depends on what his policies are that result from this kind of theology. Actually, in this program,



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we're not going to talk a lot about his policies. We're going to unpack the theology that is underneath these policies from a man who is running for Senate in the state of Texas.

His name is James Talarico. And in order for us to analyze the theology that this man holds, I'm going to bring in a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, who also happens to be on our board here at crossexamined.org, and he is a resident of the state of Texas. So he's been following this Talarico gentleman for quite a while.

His name is Ryan Crews. Here he is, ladies and gentlemen, the great Ryan Crews, all the way from the Big D, Dallas, Texas. Ryan, how are you?

RYAN:

I'm good, Frank, how are you?

FRANK:

I'm just swell. And by the way, what we're going to talk about today is also going to be, at least some of it, in a blog post that you just provided to us. Ryan. First of all, why did you decide that this Talarico guy needed to be investigated?

At least his theology?

RYAN:

So what's funny about it is that I had several colleagues, co-workers, who were always asking me what did I think about Talarico's policy, actually, because they wanted to know what I thought politically. And for a while, I'd been, as I tend to be too buried in my books. And I hadn't really followed his campaign. But when he won the primary, I decided I needed to actually figure out an answer to that question.

And so I went and looked into him some, and, to the great consternation of those who set me on this path, I actually came away not wanting to talk about his policy at all, but wanting to talk about his theology. Because the more and more I listened to this man, he makes his faith a central part of his campaign platform. He makes his seminary background, his desire to be a Presbyterian pastor, or at least a Presbyterian Seminary graduate, a big part of his campaign for the Senate.

And he says a lot of theological things to justify those policy positions, as a result, because theology is my domain. I am very interested now in just about everything that he's saying

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because I'm listening for hey, how does this correspond with the biblical text as I read it? And of course, as you know, I, I have quite a few concerns.

FRANK:

In fact, before we get into the specific concerns we have about his theology, first of all, tell us from which seminary he's graduated and what is their basic statement of faith?

Where would they be on the conservative to liberal scale?

RYAN:

So he is at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, is, I believe, the name of it. And I believe he may be on a leave of absence right now while he's running for Senate just to be, to be fair. But that's, as I understand it, where he is enrolled. It is a PCUSA seminary, Presbyterian Church of the United States of America.

He also attends a PCUSA Church in Austin, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. And that denomination, that tradition, of which, for what it's worth, he seems to be a fairly faithful representative, does tend towards the liberal or progressive end of the theological spectrum. So really, I talked about this with some mentors of mine. Really, we shouldn't be surprised by anything that Talarico is saying because it's very much in line with his denomination's position theologically.

It's just when a lot of people are hearing this for the first time, it warrants comment.

FRANK:

Yes, and it is in line with his denomination, which tragically is not in line with the Bible. Let's just put it mildly. And let's talk about before we get into this, because people sometimes say, well, why would you call out a false teacher, why would you do that? What does the Bible say about false teachers?

Just give us a few passages here, Ryan, about false teaching and false teachers and how we should respond.

RYAN:

Yeah, absolutely. So for anybody who thinks, hey, you shouldn't call out false teachers, the thing is that Jesus' first disciples apparently thought that we should. Paul is a great example. He does it in several of his letters. But let me just mention Galatians. In the opening verses of Galatians,

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he decries that he is shocked how the Galatian church is abandoning the gospel that he and others preach to them in favor of a false gospel, which is not really a gospel at all.

And you can almost say that Paul's on a bit of a tirade about this because he's so hurt and upset that people are departing from the true faith in exchanging it for a lie. Peter, in Second Peter, chapter two, similarly, talks about those who will lead people away from their master, which is of course a reference to Christ, and teach all sorts of falsehoods.

He tends to camp on their fruit. That you would be able to identify the validity of their teaching by the validity of their fruit and how well it aligns with the Gospel and the teaching of Jesus. Incidentally, Jesus himself said something similar, in Matthew, chapter 10, I believe. And then we have to mention John. So John in First John, and I'm going to check this just to be sure. First John, chapter two, verses 22 to 33, is a really helpful passage where John basically says, hey, if anybody denies that Jesus is the Christ, they're a liar.

And he even goes so far as to say that they're the Antichrist, which I don't think, don't hear that in Revelation antichrist terms. But they are opposed to Christ if they are denying that he is in fact the Messiah if they're denying his divinity. So, none of these three, who are three of Jesus's foremost apostles, Paul, Peter, and John, they don't mince words about this.

The last person I'll mention is James. James, in his letter, he cautions that teachers should be careful because those who teach about the Christian faith, who teach about Jesus, will be held to a higher standard than those who do not. And so, because Talarico has put himself in this position as somewhat of an authority on the Christian faith, we, therefore, have to hold him to a higher standard in the way that James says.

And incidentally, Frank, that applies to you and to me as well. We're held to a higher standard than others are. And so if we start saying things that are off, it would be right for others to come after us as well. It's not because we disagree with Talarico politically. It's not because we don't like him. None of this is because of those things. It's because we have a responsibility, as Jude says in Jude 3, to contend for the faith as it was delivered to the saints.

That is our responsibility as Christian teachers.

FRANK:

Well, I do disagree with him politically, so I'll say that as well. But my disagreement comes from the Scriptures because we ought to be getting our politics from our theology, not our theology

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from our politics. And it almost seems like the progressives have to do that, that they have to get their theology from their politics. Their politics are more foundational to them than their theology.

And that is dangerous. So we're going to talk a lot more about this with my friend Ryan Crews. Graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, studied under some of the greats like Dan Wallace and Darrell Boch down there. And he has a brand new post on this dealing more with the divinity of Christ and how James Talarico departs from the truth on that. So if you want that, we'll put it in the show notes, and we're going to play some clips from Talarico and respond right after the break.

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Ladies and gentlemen, nearly every book of the New Testament in some way warns against false teachings and/or false teachers. And of course, much of the Old Testament is about that as well. Stop going after other gods Israel, come back to Yahweh. So we have to call out false teachers. And that's one of the things we're doing today. You know, I deal, as you may know, when I go to college campuses with a lot of atheists.

Atheists are much more easy to deal with because where they're coming from. No Christian is going to be confused by an atheist because if an atheist declares he's an atheist, then a Christian goes, okay, this guy's probably not going to share my worldview. But when someone claims to be a Christian and uses Christian-sounding language, but pours different meaning into that language, that's when things can become very confusing and deceptive.

And that's why Paul even says, as my guest Ryan Crews pointed out prior to the break in Galatians Chapter one, Paul says, even if an angel comes to you or one of us comes to you with another gospel, may that person be a curse. Do not listen to that person. So we have to call this out when it happens. I'm reminded of Pastor Loran Livingston here in Charlotte number of years ago, he came out one Sunday and gave this great message about how many in the Word of Faith movement were misleading people.

And he got a whole bunch of emails that week from people in his congregation saying, pastor, pastor, it's okay to talk about this, but just don't name names, just preach Jesus. And so the next Sunday, he came out, and he said, hey, you know, I got a lot of emails from you and you told me not to name names and just preach Jesus. But suppose I were to say to you that I just learned that members on our staff here are leading your children into pornography and drugs.

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What would be your first question? Your first question would be, who are they? What if I were to say to you, I can't name names. I can't tell you who they are, but I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll preach Jesus. You would be furious with me. And the same thing is true now. We need to call out people who claim to be Christians, but are really wolves in sheep's clothing. And one of those people appears to be James Talarico, who's running for the United States Senate in the state of Texas.

And here is a clip of him talking about whether Jesus ever asked to be worshiped.

[VIDEO]:

What's interesting? Not once in the entire Bible does Jesus ask us to worship Him. All he asks is that we follow him. Love like he loved. Love the outcast, welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, heal the sick, free the oppressed.

As the hymn says, they will know we are Christians by our love. We have to get back to that.

FRANK:

All right, Ryan Crews, there's so much that sounds good in this clip. He does get some things right, obviously. What does he get right, and what does Mr. Talarico, in your view, get wrong?

RYAN:

Well, what he gets right is the greatest commandment.

Jesus does, in fact, tell us that we are to love the Lord our God with all of our being and to love our neighbor as ourself. And that is a huge, pivotal part of Jesus's ministry, is extending love. And so, I told you, Frank, before the show, I did want to take this opportunity to remind people, whatever we say about Talarico, this is a good time to check your own heart and ask, am I loving my neighbor? And maybe the answer is yes, and that's great, but, I myself many times am apathetic.

And so it is a good reminder that he's forcing us to come to terms with this at times, very difficult command, that Jesus did give us. That's what he does, right. What he gets completely wrong is that, the bit about worship. So, as with many things that Talarico said—

FRANK:

Before we go to worship, can we just unpack, however, what the word love really means—

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RYAN:

Sure, that is a good idea.

FRANK:

Because I think that many on the left use the word love to mean approval, that if you don't approve of what we do, then you're not loving. Explain.

RYAN:

Yeah, so that's the thing about love, is that love also rejoices in the truth. And so it's unloving to be untruthful. And, for those who think that love means that you can't be divisive at all, well, Jesus would not agree with you. Jesus said that he came not to bring peace, but a sword.

That he would divide families and others, and that you had to be willing to follow him, and hate all others. And now, by hate, he didn't mean hate in the way that we usually use it today. You despise somebody emotionally, but you had to be willing to reject everyone else to follow Christ, if that's what it came down to. And so, yes, we are called to love our neighbors and to pursue both vertical and horizontal reconciliation, if you will.

You can find that even in the announcement of John the Baptist's birth in Luke. But we do not do so at the expense of truth. Both truth and grace have to be held in dynamic tension. You cannot do one without the other. You can't have all grace and no love, but you can't have all love. I'm sorry. You can't have all truth and no grace, but you can't have all grace without truth either. Those two things cannot be separated.

FRANK:

Yes, love does not mean approval, ladies and gentlemen. Love means seeking what's best for the other person according to God's will, not whatever they want. You're unloving if you approve of evil. But the second part, Ryan, where he starts talking about worship. Jesus never said worship me. How do you respond to that? It almost seems like he's saying Jesus wasn't God.

RYAN:

Yeah, so that's the thing, with a lot of things that Talarico says, there's a grain of truth here in that Jesus in the Gospels never explicitly said the words worship me, which would imply that he is not deity, because if he were a deity, then he would be worthy of worship.

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The problem is that if you look at the way that Jesus understood himself in the Gospels, he clearly had a divine self-consciousness. And there's a lot that we could say here. You can check out the blog for more detail. Let me just give a couple of headlines. Excuse me, headlines here. For one thing, Jesus acted with God's authority on multiple occasions. He did things that only God could do. And the chief example that I want to bring is his ability to forgive sins.

So if you take, for example, Mark chapter 2 or the parallel in Luke 5 or in Matthew, there's a paralytic man. People love this story, right? Paralytic man. His friends try to bring him to Jesus. They can't get to him because it's too crowded. So they go, and they let him down through the roof of the house on his pallet. And he ends up just in front of Jesus. And Jesus looks at the man, and he says, son, your sins are forgiven.

And everybody's kind of like, okay, that's not what we expected. The paralytic man's probably thinking, hey, man, I just want to walk, and you're telling me my sins are forgiven. What's that about? What's really important is what the scribes and the Pharisees think. They don't even say this. They're just thinking it to themselves but Jesus perceives their thoughts. They say, who is this who claims the ability to forgive sins? No one can forgive sin but God alone.

Bingo. That's the point. And Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, says to them, so which is easier to say to this man, pick up your mat and walk? Or to say, your sins are forgiven. But so that you may know that the Son of Man, that is Jesus, we'll come back to the Son of Man later, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to you, pick up your mat and walk. So he does perform the miracle, but he actually deals with the man's spiritual needs, which are more important than his physical needs.

And the physical miracle is just confirmation of that authority to forgive sin. And the Pharisees get it right. Only God can forgive sins. Exactly. And Jesus just did that. Let me go to another, just very quick example, Frank. In the Old Testament, who is it that can command the seas or nature or the wind and the waves?

FRANK:

Yahweh.

RYAN:

Yeah, exactly. Who performed the miracle at the Red Sea and led the people of Israel across on dry ground? And then throughout the rest of the Old Testament, that passage is brought up as a

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signifying moment in Israel's history. Well, it's God, right? And in the Gospels, when there is a torrential storm on the Sea of Galilee and the seas are raging, who calms the storm?

It's Jesus. And the disciples, they ask themselves, who is this man who even the wind and the waves obey him? And they don't say anything else. And Jesus doesn't answer the question, but you know as the reader. If you've read your Old Testament, who can do that? God can do that. And so Jesus, clearly, he's doing these things. We could say many others. You can find them in the blog.

He's doing the God stuff, if you will. He's doing things that only God can do.

FRANK:

In fact, in the new version of *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, which will be out in October, ladies and gentlemen, but somehow I have an advanced copy of it right here. We have a section in here on how in nearly every chapter of Mark, as my guest Ryan Crews is telling us today, ladies and gentlemen, Jesus is depicted as God.

Let me just read this very quickly. It won't take long. Chapter one. When John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus, Mark quotes an Old Testament passage, which happens to be Isaiah 40:3, that says he's preparing the way for Yahweh. So he applies a Yahweh passage to Jesus. In chapter two, as Ryan just said, Jesus forgives sins, and his opponents rightfully think, who can forgive sins but God alone.

He also claims to be the divine Son of man and the Lord of the Sabbath. In Mark, chapter three, Jesus heals diseases and drives out demons just like God. In Mark, chapter four, as Ryan just said, Jesus calms the storm and brings the boat to safety, which Yahweh does in Psalm 107. Go read Psalm 107 and compare it to Mark, chapter four. You're going to be shocked. In Mark, chapter five, Jesus raises the dead not by praying to God, as other prophets had done, but by his own power.

In John, in Mark, chapter six, Jesus produces bread from heaven and feeds thousands, like Yahweh did with manna. And he then walks on water, as Yahweh is said to do in Job, chapter 9, verse 8. In Mark 7, Jesus heals the deaf mute, which, according to Exodus 4:11, is the power of Yahweh. In Mark, chapter 8, Peter declares Jesus is the Christ, after which Jesus claims he will later come in his Father's glory with the holy angels. In Mark, chapter 9, Jesus is transfigured on a mountain with the only two men in the Old Testament to ascend a mountain to meet God, Moses and Elijah.

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I mean, we could go on, but you get the point. In Mark, Jesus proves to be God by demonstrating authority over sin, disease, demons, nature and death. And he also directly declares to be God, Ryan, in Mark, chapter 14. Explain that passage, if you would.

RYAN:

Yeah, so this is my favorite passage in the entire Gospel of Mark. And maybe in all, it's just so rich.

It's the biggest mic drop by Jesus. And it's wonderful when you know what's going on. So, Jesus, he's doing all these things. He runs afoul of the religious authorities in Israel, of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Sanhedrin, which is the ruling religious body, in the government of Judah under the Romans. And he comes before the Sanhedrin after he's arrested.

And Caiaphas, the high priest, asks Jesus at one point directly, he says, are you the Christ? Are you the Son of the blessed? And the blessed, there is a euphemism for the divine name. He doesn't want to pronounce it. And he gets a lot more than he bargains for when Jesus answers that question. Because Jesus answers in the affirmative. But then he said, you will see the Son of Man, and you can tell he's referring to himself. You will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Now, Jesus is doing two things here. He's combining two Old Testament texts. One of them is Psalm 110:1. The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Which, written by David, presumably first applied to Solomon and his children after him. That the Davidic kings would be God's agents on the earth. But it's kind of metaphorical, right? Because who can really sit at God's right hand?

You know, nobody can do that because that's sharing authority with God. So Jesus is going to do that, and he combines it with Daniel 7, which is the exalted Son of Man figure who rides the clouds. Who rides the clouds? Only God rides the clouds.

FRANK:

And we'll unpack that further right after the break. Jesus not only is depicted as God, but he directly claims to be God, contra James Talarico.

And we'll cover more right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek.

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FRANK:

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network, and other stations around the country. My guest today is Ryan Crews, graduate, Dallas Theological Seminary, author of a brand new series of blogs. The first one is now out on our website, crossexamined.org. CrossExamined with a D on the end of it. We're looking at the theological beliefs of one James Talarico, who is running for Senate in the state of Texas.

And, he has made some very odd claims, some very heretical claims. We highlighted some of them at the top of the program. But we're trying to get underneath those claims and to see what kind of theology this man has and how that might inform his claim to be a Christian and also inform his policy claims, and why he is for or against certain policies.

And just before the break, Ryan, we were talking about not only was Jesus portrayed, or is Jesus portrayed in the Gospel of Mark and the other synoptic gospels, and of course the Gospel of John, we haven't even been able to get to yet, but he directly claims to be God in Mark, chapter 14, when he's asked by Caiaphas, are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One? Complete your thought there, because we got cut off by that hard break.

RYAN:

Yeah, absolutely. So, as I was saying, Jesus combines Psalm 10:1, sit at my right hand, which is a way of saying that you're sharing in God's Authority with Daniel 7. And this is where I think I left off Daniel 7:13, 14 is this visionary experience that the prophet Daniel has, where he sees this figure that looks like a human being. That's where the name Son of Man comes from. But this person rides the clouds, which is something that only the divine does in the Old Testament or the ancient Near Eastern literature in general.

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And he comes before the Ancient of Days, that is God, and he's given authority over all of the cosmos. So he is the supreme ruler, judge, holds dominion over all of creation. Well, who does that? Well, that's God. So Jesus is attributing these divine things, that he's sharing God's authority, that he's executing divine judgment to himself.

And here's the thing. Caiaphas gets it because what Caiaphas does is he tears his robes, and he cries blasphemy. Right? And that charge is appropriate if Jesus is claiming to be, you identified with God, if he were, in fact, not God. And so it's a hugely important passage for understanding who Jesus is. Incidentally, it also is foreshadowing the resurrection a little bit, because I think Jesus is challenging Caiaphas that, hey, you don't believe me, but God will vindicate me.

His verdict will come in, and you will see that I am innocent. And you know, the way that we're going to get that is through the resurrection that we'll find later on.

FRANK:

Yeah, he does resurrect from the dead. And then, of course, the city is judged. And of course, the temple is destroyed. In 70 A.D. So the Son of Man did come in judgment on Jerusalem and on the Jewish religion at that point, it destroyed their temple and has never been rebuilt.

By the way, ladies and gentlemen, Old Testament Judaism is impossible today. You can't practice it because there is no temple to which you can bring a sacrifice. And so Judaism has moved on to synagogue worship and is more wrapped around the Talmud than it is the Old Testament in many cases. But going off on a tangent here, let's go back to what we're talking about.

It's interesting, Ryan, that that clip, where Talarico says that, you Jesus never commanded, us to be or us to worship him, makes it seem like he's saying, well, Jesus isn't God. But on nine occasions in the Bible, Jesus is worshiped by people. And Jesus never says, don't do that. There are other places in the scripture where angels show up and people start worshiping the angels, and the angels are going, hey, hey, no, I'm just an angel.

I'm just a messenger. Don't worship me. But Jesus never says, don't worship me. There seems to be some significance to that. No?

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RYAN:

Yeah. I think there is now one thing that I'll say up front. I think that in some of those passages, especially in Matthew, I suspect that the person doing the worshiping, if you will, proskyneo is the verb in Greek, which literally means to bow down and worship.

I think some of them probably did better than they knew. I don't know that the Canaanite woman who Jesus raised her daughter or healed her daughter, I don't know that she knew yet that Jesus was God. I don't know that when the blind man and John was healed that he yet knew that Jesus was God. But Jesus did. And the thing is, the Gospel authors did, and they did something kind of clever that clues us into this. And let me go to Luke as an example.

Although this is also found in Matthew in the temptations of Jesus when he's led out into the desert for 40 days to be tempted by Satan, which is at the beginning of his ministry. In all three of the Synoptics, there's a point where Satan asks Jesus to worship him, and in exchange, he'll give Jesus dominion over all the earth. Whether or not Satan had that authority, that's a different conversation. We'll leave that alone for now. But he asked Jesus to worship him, and Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, which says, you shall worship no one but God alone.

I'm paraphrasing there a little bit, but that's the thrust. Only God warrants worship. And so as you go through Matthew and all these people are worshiping God, it's the same verb. And you know, as the reader, Jesus said only God gets worship. And so even though some people may do better than they realized, Jesus is actually owed all that they can give and more. Now, what Luke does is very interesting because in Luke's Gospel, it's like he deliberately avoids the verb proskyneo.

He uses it when Satan asks Jesus to worship him in Luke 4. And it does not show up again until the very end of the Gospel in Luke chapter 24, after Jesus is resurrected and he ascends into heaven, the disciples worship Jesus. And this is what gets really interesting. Back in Luke 4, after Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:13 to Satan, Satan takes him for his final challenge to Jerusalem.

So it says they go to Jerusalem and then to the highest point of the temple. Fast forward to Luke 24. The sequence of events: The disciples worship Jesus, and then they go to Jerusalem, and they go into the temple, and they begin worshiping or blessing God is the verb there. And so it's almost like Luke has set up a deliberate parallel between the beginning and the end. You know, we might call this an inclusio or bookends.

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And this man is a literary genius. We could talk about Luke all day. He does a lot of clever things like this. But he wants you, as the reader, to see, you know how Jesus said that only God gets worship? Well, now Jesus is getting worship because Jesus is God. There's deliberate parallels between those two passages. And on that, let me just give a quick shout-out. I learned that from Robert Bowman and Ed Komoszewski in a new volume that they published back in 2024, the *Incarnate Christ and His Critics*, which is an excellent discussion of all these things that we're talking about today.

So I'd encourage everybody to go and check that out.

FRANK:

Yeah, that book is the go-to book on the deity of Christ, so check that book out. It is very, very well done. In fact, I quoted in the new edition of *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* because it's so well done. Let's, we don't have time to get into the, you do in the article on the website. We don't have time to get into, of course, the Gospel of John, but it's just liberals to avoid the Gospel of John.

They think you can't quote from it and just quote from the synoptics. But if you just want to quote from the synoptics, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you can do that just fine. And show Jesus claims to be God and the disciples think he's God. The people who are writing the text think he's God. But let's move on to another theological belief of James Talarico. Here he is talking about the incarnation.

[VIDEO]:

TALARICO:

Jesus is not just a great teacher. Jesus is the embodiment of the pattern of the universe. Right? This is trippy, trippy stuff.

JOE ROGAN:

I like trippy stuff.

TALARICO:

Yeah, he, in his person, his life, his death, his teachings, that we somehow learn something about God, this ultimate reality, and Jesus' life, again in our tradition, the milestones are incarnation.

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That's Christmas, right? When God takes human form. Incarnation, by the way, is not just limited to Jesus. It's everybody, right? Everybody bears the image of the sacred, right? Joe Rogan does. James Talarico does. Every listener to this podcast bears the image of the sacred. Made in the image of God. A radical view, right? So that's incarnation.

[END VIDEO]

FRANK:

Okay, so he's on the Joe Rogan podcast.

He's talking to Joe about this. That sounds good, Ryan, but it's just a little bit off. Satan comes as an angel of light. It's going to have a lot of truth in it. But what's wrong with what he just said?

RYAN:

Yeah, that's exactly right. It's another half-truth. So certainly the image of God, the imago dei, is taught in scripture. It's a very important theological doctrine, and we fully affirm that.

But he is here confusing what it means to be made in the image of God with being the unique one, God himself come in the flesh. And here is where I will go to John, because, Mr. Talarico, what exactly do you think monogenes means in John 1:14 and 18? That word in Greek means the unique one. Right? And so what exactly does that mean?

When John says that God took up residence and dwelt among us, he literally uses the verb tabernacled among us, if we were to translate it literally. And who dwells in the tabernacle? God. So that's not the same thing as saying that we are made in the image of God, that we share in God's communicable attributes of intellectual agency, moral reasoning, and stewardship over the earth to be his vice-regents.

Those are things that are part of being made in the image of God. That's not the same thing that anybody, any of the Gospel authors is saying about Jesus. And it's not what Jesus thought about himself, for all the reasons that we've already discussed.

FRANK:

It almost seems like the Christ consciousness of Richard Rohr —

RYAN:

Yeah, it does.

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FRANK:

What he's talking about, doesn't it? It's just kind of this ethereal thing. It's not really that Jesus is, we're all kind of God. We all have his image, that kind of thing, which, as Ryan just pointed out, ladies and gentlemen, no, Jesus is God in the flesh.

He has a divine nature. We don't have a divine nature. We're maybe made in God's image, but we don't have a divine nature. We have a human nature. Jesus has a divine nature and a human nature. All right, let's move on to what Mr. Talarico says about the crucifixion and, more important importantly, the resurrection.

[VIDEO]:

The second is crucifixion, right? That's Good Friday, where Jesus, because he confronts the powerful, is executed on a cross, a humiliating death, along with other criminals.

And then the last step is resurrection. That something new and beautiful, rises from those ashes. So those three things, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection.

FRANK:

Something new and beautiful arises from the ashes. What is that something? To which is he referring here, Ryan?

RYAN:

Yeah, so this is the, if you listen to the rest of the Rogan podcast, this idea of resurrection in allegorical terms comes up again and again.

He never outright says that he denies the literal resurrection of Christ, but I have yet to ever hear him mention it. And there were many times when he should have on Rogan's show, and he didn't. And that's very concerning for at least two reasons. And let me try to do this quickly. First of all, I alluded to this earlier, but the way that Jesus challenged the religious leaders to prove that he was who he claimed to be was the resurrection.

Now, that's somewhat implicit in the passage we looked at in Mark 14, but it's explicit in John, chapter 2, verses 18 to 22. I might have gotten those verses wrong, but John, chapter two, go look there, and you'll find this. When Jesus clears out the temple, the religious authorities ask him, hey, by what authority are you doing this? What sign will you perform so that we know

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that you have the right to do this? And Jesus says, tear down this temple and in three days I will build it back up again.

And they laugh at him because they think he's talking about the physical temple. But John reflects that, no, Jesus was talking about his body. So the resurrection proves that Jesus was who he claimed to be. So without the resurrection, Jesus cannot save anybody.

FRANK:

And what about the Bible being silent on abortion? That's what James Talarico says. Is that really true? We're going to cover that right after the break and some other topics with my guest Ryan Crews.

You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. We're back right after the break. Please don't go anywhere. Ladies and gentlemen, if you haven't noticed, there's a war on reality. How do we deal with that? I want you to go to war on reality.com. Thewaronreality.com, that is the website for our forthcoming book I wrote with the great Phoenix Hayes.

You're not going to want to miss it. Thewaronreality.com. Here's the cover. Recovering Truth in a World that Celebrates Lies. We cover so much in this book that's going to help you deal with the war on reality. We'd be very appreciative if you would pre-order it. It helps more people see it as it rises up the charts, which means that more people hopefully will, easy for me to say, will benefit from it.

Thewaronreality.com, check that out. We'll have some shows on it coming up here over the summer. Also want to mention if you're a pastor or a Christian leader, go to the pastorsbrief.com. Thepastorsbrief.com. We've noticed that many in Christianity, particularly leaders, are having trouble dealing with what we call the four I's, immigration, Israel, Islam and identity.

And we're going to do the research for you so you can be briefed on those four topics. Immigration, Israel, Islam, and identity. Coming up in August, we're going to have a series of Zoom sessions you'll be invited to if you're a Christian leader or a pastor. But you got to sign up at pastorsbrief.com, check that out there. All right, let me go back to my guest, my friend Ryan Crews.

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We are talking about the theological beliefs of one James Talarico, who claims to be a Christian, but seems to disagree with many of what, many, doctrines that the Bible makes explicit. And we're going through some of them. And we were just before the break talking about the resurrection. We'll get to abortion here in a second. You wanted to make another point about James Talarico and the resurrection, if you would, Ryan, go ahead.

RYAN:

Yeah, very quickly. I want to draw everybody's attention to First Corinthians, chapter 15. I mean, the resurrection, I made this point before the break, it's the verification of Jesus's identity. It's God's verdict in the debate that Jesus is in fact who he claimed to be, which means that he can do what he claimed he was going to do, and that is to deliver us from sin. Part of that entails dealing with the consequence of sin, which is death.

Right? If you go back to Genesis, that's the penalty for rebellion against God. And so Paul waxes eloquent on this in a couple of places. You Romans 6 is excellent, where by virtue of our being joined to Christ, just as he died and rose again, so too we will rise to new life with him because of our unity with Him. And so in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul's dealing with some people who are denying that there's a real resurrection. And he says to them, if you're faith does not have room for the resurrection, again paraphrasing, then your faith is empty and futile because you are still dead in your sins.

I think that's really poignant because something that stuck out to me in a debate on the Texas House floor, about the so-called Ten Commandments bill to put the Ten Commandments in schools, which I have thoughts on, but we won't deal with that today because it's a different topic. Talarico said that he thought that any religion which required a poster to prove its validity was a dead religion. And he said, my religion is not a dead religion. Well, Mr. Talarico, if your religion does not have room for the resurrection, then according to the Apostle Paul, your religion is a dead religion.

Because the resurrection is in fact the core of the Christian message. Without it, there is nothing.

FRANK:

That's right. Christianity is a religious worldview. You can investigate and discover whether or not it's really true because it's at least partially dependent on historical events. Certainly, the Resurrection is the key historical event, in other than creation itself, in the entire Bible.

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And that event, if it happened, Christianity is true. If it didn't happen, Christianity's false. And it's not an allegorical sort of resurrection where Jesus is just a nice thought and he can resurrect you out of your problems. That's not—

RYAN:

What we mean.

FRANK:

What is talked about in the scriptures, but it appears to be. And this is one of the problems with somebody like Talarico is he kind of dances around these issues and doesn't really come out and just say it, but he speaks as if he's talking about an allegorical rather than a literal resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, one-thousand nine-hundred and ninety-three years ago in the ancient city of Jerusalem.

So, his other issue that we talked about, at the top of the program we should get to now is Mr. Talarico says the Bible is silent on abortion. Here he is.

[VIDEO]:

I trust Texas women to make decisions about their own bodies, to shape their own destinies, in consultation with their family members, their doctors, their faith leaders.

I don't believe that's a place for government. I don't believe it's a place for politicians. I don't believe it's a place for the state. And that is, that's a belief I hold, not despite my faith, but because of my faith. Jesus never talks about abortion. The Bible is silent on abortion. And when that happens with a social issue as important as abortion, we Christians have to take scripture as a whole, and we've got to try to make some kind of ethical determination.

FRANK:

So I guess thou shall not murder isn't Good enough for Mr. Talarico. What's the issue here, Ryan?

RYAN:

Another half-truth. So, yes, the Bible does not use the word abortion. However, it doesn't condemn a lot of things that we would say are morally wrong and reprehensible. What people need to understand here is that, you let's go to the greatest commandment. Love God with all your being, and love your neighbor as yourself. It turns out, if you look at the Ten Commandments, the Ten Commandments reflect the greatest commandment.

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You know, four of them are Godward. Love God with all of your being. Six of them are directed towards your neighbor. And so you might say that the Ten Commandments are actually contextualizations of the greatest commandment of love God, love neighbor. The rest of the Torah, incidentally, are contextualizations of the Ten Commandments, taking those principles and playing them out in different ethical flavors, depending on if Israel is a nomadic society, if they're a settled agrarian society.

And so why I bring this up is because if you want to know, how do I solve a biblical ethical issue that I don't have direct commentary on? All you need to do is remember the greatest Commandment, or the Ten Commandments at least, and contextualize them in the situation in which you find yourselves. You brought up the commandment not to murder. That's part of the Ten Commandments. If the unborn are people, if they are persons, then they are your neighbor.

And so the loving thing to your neighbor is to protect them and not to murder them. Right? Certainly, the women who bear them are also your neighbors. I do not mean to downplay that, and we do need to, as Christians, as churches and parachurches, do our best to care for and take care of them. Not saying that we shouldn't do that, but the solution is not to murder other neighbors, which is the unborn. And there's a lot of passages that we could go to.

Let me just for the sake of time, go to one that I think is really, really powerful. And I'm going to write about this later. I'll send it to you, Frank, and you guys can post it, and people can read about it later. But the one passage that I'll mention here is in the beginning of Luke, in the infancy material, John the Baptist. Gabriel, when he tells Zechariah that your wife Elizabeth is going to bear a child, John the Baptist, and kind of describes what John will do.

He says that the child will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

FRANK:

The child.

RYAN:

Yeah, right, the child. That's a good catch, actually. I hadn't thought about that. The point that I was going to make, in addition to that, is how exactly can you be filled with the Holy Spirit if you are not a person? The Bible nowhere describes the Spirit filling anybody except for a human being made in the image of God.

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So how could John be filled with the Holy Spirit if he were not a person? And we see the fulfillment of this when later Mary comes to visit Elizabeth, and Mary is bearing Jesus and John jumps for joy in Elizabeth's womb. Right? And Elizabeth calls this out. That's a signal that exactly what Gabriel said is happening, that this spirit.

I said that a little bit oddly, the Holy Spirit is indwelling John even in utero, and he recognizes his Messiah, even in another woman's womb.

FRANK:

Yeah, John is six months old from conception, and Jesus has just been conceived. And John, in the presence while he's in the womb of his mother, recognizes Jesus as being his Lord.

Even though Jesus has just been conceived in the womb of Mary. These are human beings. And the crazy thing is that Talarico tries to say his faith is what informs him to say that abortion is a good thing or abortion should be legal and the state shouldn't be involved. Well, the state's job is to prevent innocent people from being murdered. Sorry, go ahead.

RYAN:

I was just going to say it's totally a non sequitur. It does not make sense to me at all.

Because he says you have to read the whole Bible and make an ethical decision. Well, if you do that, there is no way that you come to the decision that he came to. And that's why I, I just don't understand.

FRANK:

He also says this about consent. Check this out.

[VIDEO]:

But I say all this in terms of, in context of abortion, because before God comes over Mary and, and we have the incarnation, God asks for Mary's consent, which is remarkable.

I mean, go back and read this in Luke. I mean—

FRANK:

All right, stop, stop, stop. Stop the tape. Stop the tape. Stop. Because that's just false. There's no consent by Mary given. Read the passage, if you would, Ryan.

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RYAN:

So, Gabriel says to Mary, and I'm reading out of the New English Translation, the Net here, listen, you will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.

And let me just stop there for a second because there's already enough to put this to rest. In Greek, the two verbs here, syllempse and texe, which are become pregnant or conceive and give birth. They are what we would call future indicative verbs. The indicative is a mood in Greek, which just means how are you representing reality? Are you representing it as something that is actual, that's going to happen, or something that might happen?

The indicative is the mood of presenting reality. Gabriel is saying this will happen. There was a way that Gabriel could have said, this may happen if you consent. He could have used the subjunctive. He could have used the optative. I don't expect that listeners know what those are, but you can look it up if you'd like to. There are ways that he could have signaled, hey, Mary, if you, this is an option that you could give birth to the Messiah. He didn't do that. It's a future indicative.

It's saying this will happen. The other thing that he could have done is he could have used, you know, a conditional sentence. If in English, he could have used, you if you consent. That's what we would call the protest to a conditional clause or a conditional statement.

FRANK:

We got 30 seconds, so keep going. 30 seconds.

RYAN:

It's not there. So there's just, grammatically, it's nonsensical. Contextually, this doesn't make sense because it's parallel with the story of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist, his announcement to Zechariah that was not given any option there, because there's a bit of a foil between Zechariah and Mary. Zechariah, doesn't have strong enough faith, and so he's muted until John's born. Mary does show a lot of faith, so that doesn't make sense. The thing I'll close with. Intertextually, we know from the Old Testament that the Messiah must come. How could Mary choose not to bear the Messiah?

This passage is about God's sovereignty, not Mary's choice.

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FRANK:

That's right. Mary was never asked for consent. She was told, you will have a son and you will call him Jesus. So James Talarico is just not reading his Bible, ladies and gentlemen, and these bad theological positions inform his bad political decisions. We'll put more in the show, and we'll see you here next time.

God bless. See you next time.

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