

**Ankerberg  
Theological Research Institute  
presents:**

# **Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?**

**A discussion with  
Dr. Antony Flew  
and  
Dr. Gary Habermas  
moderated by  
Dr. John Ankerberg**

The Ankerberg Theological Research Institute  
P.O. Box 8977, Chattanooga TN 37414  
423/892-7722 [www.johnankerberg.org](http://www.johnankerberg.org)

Dr. John Ankerberg, President

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(Aired on *The John Ankerberg Television Show*)

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## Program 1

***What is the case for Christianity?***

***What twelve historical facts about Jesus' life are agreed to by virtually all critical scholars?***

***Do these facts lead to the conclusion Jesus actually rose from the dead?***

**Dr. John Ankerberg:** Welcome! We're glad that you've joined us. My guests are two world-class philosophers and they're going to debate the crucial question, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” My first guest is Dr. Antony Flew, one of the world's most famous philosophical atheists. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of Reading in England. He has also held permanent professorships in philosophy at the University of Keele, King's College, University of Aberdeen; Christ Church at Oxford University, and has been a visiting professor at twelve universities around the world. He holds the M.A. degree from St. John's College, University of Oxford, and a Doctor of Literature from the University of Keele. He

has authored more than 23 books, edited twelve others, and written more than 72 articles in prestigious journals. If you look in your *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the article on “Miracles” was written by Dr. Flew, because he is arguably the Humean scholar in the world today.

My second guest is Dr. Gary Habermas, chairman of the Department of Philosophy and Theology at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. Gary received the Doctor of Divinity from Emmanuel College, Oxford, England; and a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. He has authored 21 books, published over 110 articles in prestigious journals. Gentlemen, I'm glad that you are here.

Dr. Habermas, I think the people who are watching right now, when they hear us ask the question, “Did Jesus rise from the dead?” they would say, “Come on! I mean, you're saying there's evidence? There are facts in history?” When you see magazines like *Newsweek* and *Time* that come out periodically with articles on Jesus—here's another one on “Visions of Jesus”<sup>1</sup>—they all seem to say there's very little historical evidence for Jesus' life. Now, you have come along and written this book entitled,

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1. *Newsweek*, March 27, 2000.

*The Historical Jesus*<sup>2</sup>. You describe the time when you were at Michigan State working on your Ph.D. and were a skeptic. You say the facts brought you to a belief in Jesus. In your book you have stated that there are at least twelve historical facts that are agreed to by virtually all critical scholars today. I'd like you to let us know what that case is. Start us off tonight.

**Dr. Gary Habermas:** Well, John, just to name some of those highlights, virtually everybody today thinks that Jesus died due to crucifixion. John Crossan and others from the Jesus Seminar say it's the most widely known fact in the ancient world. He was buried. Of course, this event inspired some despair in the disciples. Now, the fact that the tomb was empty is admitted by most scholars but it is not as widely admitted as the rest in this list. Probably the single most important fact is that the disciples had experiences that they believed were appearances of the risen Jesus. They were transformed as a result. The Resurrection was their central message. They preached in Jerusalem. The Church was born. We have some individuals like James and Paul, two former skeptics—one a family skeptic, one an outsider who persecuted Christians—and they also came to Christ as a result of experiences that they believed were appearances of the risen Jesus.

By the way, there are a lot of other scholars today in the historical Jesus movement way far to the left of me who also start with lists of facts just like this as sort of a common ground from which we can deal with our data.

**Ankerberg:** Now, Tony, what do you think about Habermas' "facts"?

**Dr. Antony Flew:** Well, I don't dispute those facts but I want to say, Yes, **but** the evidential situation in many ways is very unsatisfactory. For a start, no one knows in

what year the crucial event of the crucifixion, and consequently the other events, occurred. And this is a very remarkable thing that no one knows the birth date—well, there are a great many birth dates of important people that are not known.

The other lack is, all of our evidence is based on documents written by believing Christians, none of whom was himself an eyewitness, and we have absolutely nothing from the rest of the population of Jerusalem to tell us why it was they weren't converted and whether the earthquakes and other alleged miracles actually occurred or not.

**Ankerberg:** What do you think about that, Gary?

**Habermas:** Well, now, when you say none of these early Christian authors were eyewitnesses, of course I think from your writings you exempt Paul. Right?

**Flew:** Oh, gosh, yes. I was thinking of the Gospel writers.

**Habermas:** Right. But with Paul we have an authentic eyewitness.

**Flew:** Absolutely.

**Habermas:** You would grant the number of authentic Pauline books.

**Flew:** Oh, yes. But he wasn't in Jerusalem, of course, at that time.

**Habermas:** Well, shortly afterwards, of course, he was there when Stephen was stoned. But also I would disagree about the extra-biblical data. I think we do have extra-biblical data for most everything. I will say that everything on that factual list that I gave, everything except probably the despair of the disciples—which is a good psychological fact—but all the rest of them can be established through Paul alone. But I also think the majority of them can be witnessed to in ancient extra-biblical literature.

**Ankerberg:** All right. Well, give us some examples. Give us some of the evidential data.

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2. Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1996).

**Habermas:** Well, 1 Corinthians 15, I think, without any question is the central piece of evidence. And that's from the far right to the far left. I mean, I remember being reviewed by a pretty radical scholar, I think to the left of Tony, who said, "Habermas doesn't have any good evidence for the Resurrection except 1 Corinthians 15." And I think you can't say that and disavow the Resurrection. Why? Because 1 Corinthians 15 is incredible data—written by Paul, very early, 55 to 57 A.D.—but more importantly, in verse 3 of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that he received that material that he passed on to others. And that data there—those words, by the way, "delivered and received" are technical words for "passing on tradition."

And when you piece this together, it is most likely that Paul received that material in Jerusalem from Peter and James. Now that is according to Paul's own account in Galatians 1:18 where the word he uses shows that he played the part of the investigative reporter, and the immediate context before and after is the nature of the Gospel. So I think that we have Paul being converted one to one and half years after the cross—that's the date critics use. Three years later he goes to Jerusalem. So we're talking 35-ish A.D. If we use a nice round year 30 for the cross—35 A.D., five years later he gets this material from Peter and James. So as ancient history goes, this is a very, very early move.

**Ankerberg:** And what was the key thing that Peter gave to Paul that he recorded?

**Habermas:** Well, it seems that from Peter and James Paul got this list of appearances in 1 Corinthians 15. And by the way, besides Paul, Peter and James are the only two eyewitnesses named in Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 15. So there's a fairly tight network. And when you look at ancient history...I think of the German critical historian, Hans Von Campenhausen, who says in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff we have material that

meets all the standards of historicity that could possibly be applied to an ancient text. And he's fairly far over on the left so I mean, I'm sure Tony doesn't believe what Paul is saying, but I'm saying that we have this from a very early time and I think that's very, very important.

**Ankerberg:** Tony, what do you think about this being eyewitness information from Paul?

**Flew:** Oh, I have not the slightest doubt that he is reporting something that happened to him with certain companions. But what he was reporting was that he was in contact...or he thought he was seeing the resurrected Christ and so on. But his companions didn't see anything at all, did they? There's a doubt as to whether they heard a voice.

**Habermas:** You only get that from the Book of Acts, though.

**Flew:** Yes.

**Habermas:** Do you allow Acts and the Gospels? I thought you didn't allow Acts and the Gospels?

**Flew:** No, I'm perfectly prepared to accept that Paul had this vision. But what was it a vision of? A spiritual being. He surely thought it was a vision of the risen Christ, yes. But rather like he thought that he and all human beings would be after death, didn't he?

**Habermas:** First of all, let's talk about the companions that were with Paul. This idea that they didn't see the same thing he saw, that's only in the Book of Acts. We don't get that from Paul. So, I'm saying if you're going to admit Acts there, that gives me a wealth of other material to use in the Book of Acts, too. But my other point, I would disagree with you. I think Paul thinks Jesus appeared to him physically and I'd love to show that to you from Paul's own writings if you want to.

**Ankerberg:** All right. We're going to take a break. We're debating the topic, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" and talking

about the Apostle Paul—the information he received from James, and Peter, and what kind of resurrection took place. Was it a spiritual one? Was it a physical one? Was it a hallucination? Was it something else? We'll talk about it more when we come back.

[break]

**Ankerberg:** All right we're back, and we're talking with two wonderful guests—Dr. Antony Flew, considered by many to be the world's foremost philosophical atheist, and Dr. Gary Habermas, a renowned Christian philosopher and historian, considered by many to be the foremost expert on the evidence for Jesus' resurrection.

Now, before we go on, can you comment further on the twelve historical facts? You know, the Jesus Seminar, Gary, says there's very little factual evidence about Jesus. Although, some of their people are coming around and agree that there is a core group of facts. Please, comment on that before we go on.

**Habermas:** Yes. Robert Funk, one of the co-founders of the Jesus Seminar, in a book called *Honest to Jesus*,<sup>3</sup> just a few years ago, also starts out with a list of facts and admits, to my remembrance, virtually everything on this list.

**Ankerberg:** Yes, and E. P. Sanders does as well.

**Habermas:** Sanders does this. Luke Timothy Johnson does this in a list of facts. Norman Perrin, a long-time disciple of Rudolf Bultmann, also starts out with a list like this.

**Ankerberg:** Now, why is it important to have this core of twelve facts that virtually all critical scholars—we are not talking just evangelicals here; we're talking almost all critical scholars out there—why do they accept this data?

**Habermas:** Well, I think they accept it because it comes on good grounds. Today, Paul is widely accepted as Tony has said. Virtually everything on the list can be established by Paul alone. And everybody thinks something can be gathered from the Gospels and Acts here and there. So I think it comes on good evidence. Now, why these twelve facts? This is just something I came up with in *The Historical Jesus*. Others might have a list that's longer or shorter.

**Ankerberg:** And if people question these, Gary, from what I understand in your book, all of these twelve have a lot of evidence from history that supports them. We can get into that as well.

**Habermas:** We can look at any one of them.

**Ankerberg:** Now, Tony, would you agree that these twelve historical facts are accepted by most scholars?

**Flew:** Yes.

**Ankerberg:** All right, since we have these facts, what conclusion can we draw from them? Tony, what do you draw from them?

**Flew:** From these, leaving out Paul, nothing of any great interest. No.

**Ankerberg:** So the fact is, one of those, if I remember correctly—and I'll put it up on the screen, "The disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus." Well, obviously, you're taking that in a naturalistic way. So give me your theory of how it happened? I mean, "something happened." Isn't that true?

**Flew:** Oh, yes. My best suggestion is that these were grief related visions. Apparently, these are fairly common. People who've lost a husband, wife, or close relative and feeling distressed about it suddenly have the feeling or seem to see the familiar person around the house and so on. I take it these were grief related visions and there was

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3. Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (Harper San Francisco, 1996).

nothing there that anybody else could have seen.

**Ankerberg:** You just wrote a review for Jack Kent's book on *The Psychological Origins of the Resurrection Myth*<sup>4</sup>. I think it is out or coming out in the *Free Inquiry* magazine and a couple of others<sup>5</sup>.

**Flew:** Yes.

**Ankerberg:** In essence, I believe Kent was saying there are two reasons for the experiences these disciples had: Grief Hallucination for the disciples and Conversion Psychosis for Paul. Do you want to go with those?

**Flew:** Well, I don't know about Conversion Psychosis, but clearly it was the sort of thing that William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience*<sup>6</sup> would be writing about. What happens in the cases of these rather spectacular religious conversions? Most people's conversions to or from a religion are much more slow moving and so on. But there are a lot of these cases, many of which are found in that great work of William James.

**Ankerberg:** Now, let me clarify why this is so important. Fifteen years ago you two fellows had a debate. Most of us missed it. I read it in your book<sup>7</sup>. It was a tremendous debate. In fact, Jack Kent mentions your debate in his article, but states that all twelve of the facts that were presented by Habermas are great facts. He went on to comment, "The problem is, Flew did not have a theory to explain those facts and he lost the debate."

Now, do you want to go along with the theory of grief hallucination?

**Flew:** Yes. This is what I think I've learned in the last fifteen years. I hope I've learned some other things besides that, but this is the relevant one.

**Ankerberg:** All right. Gary, the fact is, "hallucination" has been around for a long time, but this is a specific kind of hallucination. Do you think Grief Hallucination for the disciples—explain what that is—and Conversion Psychosis for the Apostle Paul are valid?

**Habermas:** They're not even close. Let me take them in reverse order. Let me go with Paul.

In the book Jack Kent tells you that Paul has a "Conversion Disorder," he calls it. What he does not tell you—I mean, it's a real convenient category because most people don't know anything about Conversion Disorder—he cites the DSM-III,<sup>8</sup> which is the standard diagnostic tool for psychiatry. The fourth one is out, but at any rate, the DSM-IV,<sup>9</sup> if Paul has Conversion Disorder on the way to Damascus, we're going to have multiple problems. He doesn't tell you this.

Number one, there's nothing in the diagnostic literature about hallucination. It is simply a very violent and fast change of mind. It's short-lived, and it goes away. So, Conversion Disorder will not do it, even for a critic.

You have to have Conversion Disorder—and this is even from Kent's book. Plus you have to have an auditory hallucination (of hearing); you have to have a visual hallucination (of sight); and lastly, Paul has to be caught by a great psychosis, which is often called the Messiah Complex, because then

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4. Jack Kent, *The Psychological Origins of the Resurrection Myth* (Open Gate Press, 1999).

5. See, for example "The Psychological Origins of the Resurrection Myth by Jack A. Kent Reviewed by Antony Flew," *Philo*, Vol. 2, no. 2, Fall/Winter 1999 (Center for Inquiry).

6. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (Penguin Classics, 1982).

7. Gary R. Habermas and Antony Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, edited by Terry Miethe (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).

8. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Third Edition.

9. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition.

Paul goes out and says, “God spoke to me and He told me to tell you.”

So, four things have to happen simultaneously: a Conversion Disorder, two different kinds of hallucination, and a Messiah Complex had to hit him at one time and then they basically drift away and we never see this again.

Let me also tell you that in a standard reference work by Kaplan and two other psychiatrists<sup>10</sup>, Conversion Disorder—watch the facts here and see if this sounds like Paul to you: up to five to one it happens to women; it happens mostly to adolescents; it happens mostly to people of low economic status; it happens to people with a low I.Q., and to military persons in battle. That’s the five most common circumstances. Not a single one applies to Paul.

So, when you say you have these five problems, he also needs the disorder, two hallucinations, messiah complex, and let’s just add here, there’s not a speck of evidence in Paul that he ever wanted to convert from Judaism to Christianity. I think you have a horrible problem.

**Ankerberg:** What about Grief Hallucination?

**Habermas:** Well, okay, Grief Hallucinations, according to Jack Kent, apply to the disciples and James. And by the way, he would like you to think that this is in the literature. There’s no such thing as Grief Hallucination in the DSM-IV. Nothing.

Now, Tony is right. People do see hallucinations, but what’s the “M.O.”? A person who sees a Grief Hallucination is usually alone. Let’s picture an elderly lady who has lost her husband. She’s alone in her room at night and, I remember a lady from a church I pastored who used to say, “Where’s Daddy? Where’s Daddy?” And she walked around the house and that’s all she said. She’s a

candidate, perhaps, for a Grief Hallucination. But you have problems with groups of people seeing Jesus. Right there in 1 Corinthians 15 you have three groups of people. You have the fact that they had despair. Hallucinations don’t come out of despair. A hallucination is when you believe something so strongly you “make” the image. With Paul, you have too many different people, persons, places. You have women, men; indoors, outdoors; walking, sitting, standing. We could go on. You have an empty tomb.

By the way, I have a friend who has done some research on hallucinations. They do not cause, as a general rule, any kind of transformation. People who have these get talked out of them. Somebody says, “Now, come on! You’re not seeing your husband.” They’ll say, “Oh, yes. Yes. You’re right.” They talk it out of them.

**Ankerberg:** What do you think, Tony?

**Flew:** Well, about the particular psychological transformation, I’m not going to try and be an expert on this. It seems to me that there was plenty of reason for Paul to be upset. After all, he had been involved in persecuting Christians and sometimes people have changes of mind in this sort of thing.

He wasn’t a person who had absolutely no reason to be upset and to change radically. After all, he was perhaps the most well-instructed of the first Christian believers. After all, the disciples were country folk from Galilee and Paul was clearly a man who was well-read in the law. He was a Greek speaker, whereas all the others were Aramaic, which is a version of Hebrew, isn’t it?

**Habermas:** Correct.

**Ankerberg:** But doesn’t that same evidence knock off the theory that Jack Kent is floating?

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10. H. I. Kaplan, B. J. Sadock, V. A. Sadock, eds., *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, 5th ed. (Baltimore, MD: Williams & Wilkins; 1989), 1009-27.



**Habermas:** How would we get Paul wanting to convert when the evidence indicates he was on the way to Damascus to imprison or kill Christians and without any evidence from his writings he wants to change? He doesn't fit any of those people groups. But my big problem is that he has to have four problems at the same time: Conversion Disorder, auditory hallucination, visual hallucination, and a Messiah complex because he says, "God spoke to me and I have a message for everybody in the world." That's four. That's a pretty complicated theory to have four things happen.

But my point was, Conversion Disorder? These other things don't come from Conversion Disorder in the DSM. So you must have four simultaneous problems at the same time. And I just think that it's highly improbable they would all happen to a man without cause, from his own writings.

**Ankerberg:** Yes. What grounds would Kent give from the data, from the evidence, because we don't seem to get that picture from the Apostle Paul? Isn't that mere hypothesis?

**Flew:** Well, yes. It certainly is. In view of the enormous shortage of evidence from any non-Christian source, you can't expect to produce, with any great confidence, conclusions about what actually happened there. The list of things that we have, okay, this is what we have evidence for. But it's against a great background of enormous ignorance about everything there. I think the most one can reasonably hope to do is to suggest some way of interpreting the evidence that we have without postulating a physical body being actually seen and being visible to anyone who happened to be there—and photographable if cameras had been invented.

**Ankerberg:** All right, we're going to take a break and when we come back, I'd like to go to the crux of the matter—what Tony is talking about in terms of other ancient historical information. What about that? Gary,

there are four key historical facts that you have emphasized in your book that were part of the original twelve facts we started with. You say these four facts are supported by a lot of historical evidence: 129 different quotes from 40 to 49 different sources. We will talk about that in a moment, but wrap up where you think we are right now.

**Habermas:** Well, what we have on the table is that Tony is using the thesis of Jack Kent in saying that the disciples and James had hallucinations—Grief Hallucinations, and Paul had a Conversion Disorder. I think the facts are grossly against both occurring. Also, Tony is right: there are a lot of things we don't know here. But the problem is, the things we *do* know militate against both of these. A great amount of facts, from psychiatry, psychology, and history, militate against these theories. But you're right. I think there are four key facts that I think we need to examine, which, I think, will take us right to the Resurrection. Again, out of that list of twelve facts we have some data that point to the fact that it was Jesus whom they saw.

## Program 2

***Is there any naturalistic (non-supernatural) theory that better accounts for the testimony and transformation of the disciples other than what they said, that "Jesus appeared to them"?***

***Did the disciples have hallucinations of Jesus or actually see Him?***

***Are similar hallucinations happening today at Fatima and Medjugorje to people who claim they are seeing Mary?***

**Ankerberg:** Welcome back. We want to jump right to the crux of the matter: Do we have historical evidence that proves that

Jesus actually lived? Did He die on a cross? What about the disciples? Did they have experiences that they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus? Dr. Habermas, in your book you have emphasized four historical facts, out of the twelve that you presented in our first segment, on which you claim virtually all critical scholars agree. What are the four facts, and the evidence that supports them, that you believe will lead us to Jesus' resurrection from the dead?

**Habermas:** Well, what I did, John, from the list of twelve facts from Friday to Sunday in the life of Jesus traditionally, I've taken four. Now, it's an arbitrary number because to my knowledge, nobody would give you as few as four. I mean, Rudolf Bultmann probably gives you 20 from this last half a week in Jesus' life. But what I've done is, I think there are four facts out of the twelve that do three things:

First of all, I think that with these you can refute the major naturalistic theories using nothing but the data surrounding these facts.

Secondly, you have the best evidences for the Resurrection here.

Third, you're doing all of it with a very small kernel of historical data, so you're not requiring the Gospels, etc. This all comes from Paul.

**Ankerberg:** What are they? What are the facts?

**Habermas:** Well, 1) the first one is that Jesus died due to the rigors of crucifixion; 2) secondly, the disciples had experiences that **they believed** were appearances of the risen Jesus. 3) Thirdly, their lives were changed—they were transformed. They undeniably believed that they saw Jesus—and they turned the world upside down. 4) Fourthly, a man named Paul, as we've discussed—a skeptic, a critic who killed Christians and imprisoned them—came to Christ by an experience that **he believed** was an appearance of the risen Jesus.

**Ankerberg:** All right. Now, Tony, would you agree with all those facts?

**Flew:** Yes, I think I would.

**Ankerberg:** Okay.

**Flew:** But these literal appearances...see, I'm very much a sympathizer of the Thomas who appears very late really in the Gospel story, one with doubts as to whether there is an actual physical body there. And as far as I can see, there's nothing that says that he actually did put his hands in and find...he's told he ought to [touch Him] and then it's reported that Thomas says that he had "seen" rather than he had actually "felt" the body.

**Ankerberg:** Gary, what do you think?

**Habermas:** Well, He tells Thomas to touch Him (John 21:27). Tony's right. John does not tell us that Thomas touched Him. I would add the following, though. Ignatius, just perhaps ten years after the Gospel of John—107 A.D.—Ignatius says at that point that Thomas did touch Him. Be that as it may, we have two earlier accounts from the Gospels of women touching Jesus. One account is the women as a whole who take Jesus by the ankles in Matthew 28:9. Then we have the case of Mary Magdalene who comes back alone. She thinks He's the gardener and she turns around and sees Him and she knows it is Him. He says, "Stop clinging to me." So I get this picture of Mary holding Him for all she's worth.

So we have the women touching Him; Mary touching Him; and at least Ignatius says Thomas touched Him.

**Ankerberg:** Not only that, but the fact is, if you're going to use the account about Thomas, who said "I won't believe!"—you have a skeptic there—"I won't believe until I can put my hands right into the nail prints and see his side." Okay? Whatever happened, you have Thomas' testimony after in which he declares, "My Lord, and my God." So something happened. What do you think?

**Flew:** Well, it is curious that Jesus is reported as not saying, “So now you’ve touched. You believe” and so on, but he is saying that he had seen. It’s a very peculiar thing to my mind. It’s not the way that I would have written a report if I’d been there and seen someone actually touching Jesus.

**Habermas:** What about the women in the two accounts? The women and Mary Magdalene alone. Do you think they....

**Flew:** Well, these are accounts that they did. Yes, indeed. But that we have an account that they touched Him is not a decisive reason to believe that He was touched. This is what they were reported as having done.

**Habermas:** But you would have more to complain about if no one had touched Him in the Gospels.

**Flew:** Oh, yes. Absolutely.

**Habermas:** At least we have these three cases, because Ignatius says Thomas touched Him.

**Flew:** Yes, but it’s remarkably little, actually. After all, we all presumably remember: “Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible To feeling as to sight<sup>11</sup>?” You know? This is surely the first thing anyone would do if they were wondering whether the vision was a seeing of something that was there that other people could see and touch and so on or not.

**Habermas:** If you’re going to admit the data from the Gospels there, the same author of the fourth Gospel, 1 John, starts out the first three verses and says, “We’ve seen Him with our eyes. Our hands have touched Him. We’ve beheld the Word....” (1 John 1:1-3). In John 1:14: “The Word was made flesh.” So John comes back and says that in the first Epistle—if you like that material.

**Ankerberg:** In that passage the Apostle John states five times “we have seen” or looked at something. Three times “we have

heard” something. He says, “That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and the Greek word here means “carefully scrutinized,” and our hands have **touched**” (1 John 1:1-3). I think it was in Luke [24:37], wasn’t it, where Jesus said, “Touch me and see that I am not a ghost”?

**Habermas:** Yes. Then He eats.

**Ankerberg:** Yes. So the evidence seems to indicate that there was a literal physical body there that the disciples were a little bit surprised to see in the first place. In fact, they had quite a few experiences in which they touched Him, they saw Him, and that’s what they’re claiming.

**Flew:** No. They didn’t touch, actually. They saw some vision of someone eating, didn’t they?

**Ankerberg:** No. John says, “That which we **touched**.”

**Habermas:** Well, if you like the straightforward account in Luke 24 [v. 39], Jesus said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.”

**Flew:** Oh, yes.

**Habermas:** And “I’m not a spirit” – if we take the Gospels straightforwardly.

**Flew:** Well, a spirit is claiming not to be a spirit.

**Habermas:** Since He is saying He is not a spirit, I assume that means He’s not a spirit.

**Ankerberg:** There are some people, Gary, some ministers in churches, who claim that Paul and the other disciples were not proclaiming a literal physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Rather, they were proclaiming a *spiritual* resurrection from the dead. Why is that false?

**Habermas:** Well, this is the earlier point at which I was at odds with Tony. I would say today, this is a statement that tells you where some scholars are today. I’m cur-

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11. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene 1.

rently studying 100 sources on the Resurrection from 1975 to 2000 to see if I can get a feel for where critical scholars are. And by far, most scholars today think something really happened. The disciples had real experiences. They believed they saw the risen Jesus. But the majority of scholars who will even admit that Jesus appeared to them, they shy away from the physical body and they think, I don't know—these are my words—that maybe there was some kind of a shimmering hologram or something. So that's probably the typical approach today from skeptics that are somewhere in between the two of us.

**Ankerberg:** Yes, some phrase it this way: “Paul uses the word *spiritual* in 1 Corinthians 15 [v. 44]. Does he mean spiritual in the sense of some ethereal kind of wispy, see-through thing or is this a literal physical body?” What do the words mean there?

**Habermas:** Yes, this is crucial for us. Tony and I have been playing around here with the Gospels a little bit, but we would both say Paul is by far the best evidence.

**Flew:** Right.

**Habermas:** “He is the only eyewitness”—that is what most scholars say today. So what Paul thinks about the Resurrection body is crucial. Now, just a note here concerning 1 Corinthians 15. There's obviously a Greek word for spirit—*pneuma*. Paul doesn't choose that word. He says “spiritual [*pneumatikos*] body [*soma*].” So I assume there's some change going on, but the idea is, there is a physical body there.

Now, to show my earlier comment, I would not think that Paul is saying Jesus appeared as a spirit. If you want, I can give that to you briefly in a Pauline book accepted by all critics: Philippians. By the way, critics almost always accept Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Philippians. G. A. Wells, who is probably to the left of Tony, accepts eight of Paul's writings. He accepts those five and three others.

**Ankerberg:** Hold on to your thought while we take our break, and we will hear the reasons why it is not a *spiritual* resurrection, but a literal physical resurrection from the dead, when we come right back.

[break]

**Ankerberg:** We are back. Dr. Gary Habermas and Dr. Antony Flew are debating the question, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” Presently we are discussing what *kind* of resurrection happened. If you claim that Jesus came forth from the dead, what kind of body did He have? Was it a spiritual body? Was it a physical body? What happened?

**Habermas:** Well, I think it is crucial to talk about Paul here because everybody admits the Pauline data. Critic after critic claims there is no eyewitness data except for Paul. And so it's important to know what Paul thinks he saw on the way to Damascus.

Now, I said before in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul could have chosen to only use the word *pneuma*. He doesn't. He does say “spiritual,” but he's got an adjective there. He also says, *soma*, “body.” What did Paul mean?

Philippians Chapter 3. It's a short chapter. There are 21 verses, but Paul says three things in one chapter that indicate he's talking about a physical resurrection. In the opening verses he says, “I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews” and “as touching the law,” he says, “I was a Pharisee.” Now, it's very well known that the Pharisee believed in a bodily resurrection. In fact, according to Acts 23, as Paul was being taken captive by the Romans to prevent his being killed, he shouted out to the group of people, “Why are you taking me? Because I believe in the resurrection of the dead?” He meant a literal resurrection.

When the Pharisees heard that, they said there's nothing wrong with this guy. But the Sadducees [who didn't believe in the Resurrection] didn't like it. So as a Pharisee,

Paul's agreeing with the Pharisees.

So, the first evidence is from Philipians 3. As a Pharisee, Paul believes in a physical resurrection.

Secondly, in verse 11 he says, "That I may attain the resurrection of the dead." Now, the normal Greek word for resurrection is *anastasis*, but in this passage, Philipians 3:11, he puts a prefix on there, **ek anastasis**. **Ek anastasis**, according to all Greek scholars that I know of, is translated in this passage: "The out resurrection from among the dead." Paul said, "I want to attain the out resurrection."

Now, to a Jew, "out resurrection" means "what goes down is what comes up." You come out from death. And then just a few verses later, Philipians 3:20,21, he said, "From Heaven, we look for Jesus who will change our vile *soma* (body) to be like unto His glorious *soma* (body)," when he should have said *pneuma* (spirit), according to this other view.

So he's a Pharisee who believes in a physical resurrection. **Ek anastasis**—"resurrection from out among the dead ones."

Thirdly, Paul says, "He [Jesus] will change **my body** to be like **His body**."

So right there in Philipians 3 alone, I think the picture of Jesus being some wispy spirit that appeared to him on the road to Damascus doesn't fit Paul's own data.

**Ankerberg:** Tony, you are an empiricist. You are dedicated to following the evidence. Where does this evidence lead?

**Flew:** Well, I find the idea of a spiritual body very peculiar in that, after all, when you say something is spiritual it's rather like saying it's immaterial. You're not—well, if you say it's immaterial, you're not telling us of any characteristic at all that you know of that it has. It seems to me that immaterial substance is really nothing at all. And a spiritual body seems to me not to be a body at all.

**Ankerberg:** All right, let me ask you a question. If I say the Bible is a spiritual

book, does it mean that it's not a material thing?

**Flew:** No.

**Ankerberg:** Well, could it be a spiritual body and still be a physical body?

**Flew:** Well, it might be the body of someone you would say is a spiritual person.

**Ankerberg:** Now, I assume you're saying that because Paul uses that illustration a couple of chapters back [1 Cor. 3:1-3], when he talks about "fleshly men" and "spiritual men."

**Flew:** Yes. Yes.

**Ankerberg:** But in referring to spiritual men there, wasn't he talking to real flesh and blood guys who were walking around?

**Flew:** Yes, but they're spiritual in the sense of how they behave and what they think about and what they do, aren't they? The spiritual in "spiritual body" is not talking about how the body behaves. It's surely talking about what sort of body it is.

**Ankerberg:** Gary?

**Habermas:** He's exactly right. It's an ontological comment, not a behavioral comment. However, I think the issue here is, Tony is looking at the phrase "spiritual body" with 20<sup>th</sup> century empiricist or analytic eyes, and I think Paul has to describe what he means by spiritual body. And he has already indicated three things from Philipians 3: "I am a Pharisee so I believe in the resurrection of the body." Two, *ek anastasis*, "out from among the dead ones," and three, he calls it "He will change my vile body to be like His."

There it's "glorious body." It's not "spiritual body" in Philipians 3:20,21. It's "glorious body." So now you have body plus something else—I suppose some kind of glory but not less than a body. So maybe the problem is, we're looking at this word "spiritual" with our 20<sup>th</sup> century eyes.

But I guess here is the issue: If Paul is clear in Philipians 3 that this is not some wispy spirit, then we can't have the problem

of saying that this is non-physical because he's telling us what he means by it. I take Philippians 3 to be a bit of a commentary on 1 Corinthians 15.

**Ankerberg:** Gary, illustrate further what you're saying. So far we have had intellectual discussion on the evidence, but I'm going to throw in a personal note, Tony, if you don't mind. I'd like to hear what Gary has to say.

Gary, in 1995, your wife, Debbie, of whom every one of your students in letters, etc., said you had a love affair that was made in heaven, came down with something at just forty years of age?

**Habermas:** She had stomach cancer. Tony was at my house in 1985, and just yesterday we were talking about this because he didn't know it had happened. My wife passed away in the summer of 1995—ten years after we met, ten years after he was at the house—with stomach cancer.

And, you know, my first thought—you mentioned my skepticism earlier—I literally thought to myself, "Oh, no. Here come the doubts again." But they never came.

I had a graduate student, who is now on our faculty, who called me at the time and he said, "Where would you be right now if it weren't for the Resurrection?" And for me, Paul's point there about mourning—Christians mourn, "but not as those without hope." It makes all the difference in the world whether you mourn with hope or without hope. We all despair when we lose a loved one, as in this point made about the disciples. But you know, to me, mourning my wife without the Resurrection and mourning my wife with the Resurrection makes all the difference in the world.

So to me, the answer to my questions in 1995 went something like this: If this is a world in which God has raised Jesus from the dead, if that was true in 30 A.D., it's still true in 1995, and I can rest assured. I didn't know the answer; I don't know the answer to pain and suffering. I don't know anybody

who does—theist or atheist. We don't know the answers to pain and suffering, but with something like the Resurrection, it made existential sense to me because it said something about her—where she was going, and where I am going.

**Ankerberg:** So, spiritual, physical—what kind of way do you expect to see your wife, then?

**Habermas:** Right now I think she's existing without a body, but I think we will be together and she will have a body, as I will.

**Ankerberg:** Explain that.

**Habermas:** Again, that's Philippians 3:21.

**Ankerberg:** Explain the intermediate state. In between, what happens?

**Habermas:** Yes, well actually the orthodox Jews, the Pharisaic Jews of that day, believed that the intermediate state was a disembodied state and that the resurrection—now, see this is one more reason for the resurrection of the physical body. It was believed by both Jews and Paul to be a corporate affair. Paul never says the phrase, "Resurrection of the dead," except that he says it in the plural. He says, "The resurrection of the dead ones," the corporate resurrection of all. So for Paul, this is sort of a sociological body that's raised: everybody is raised together. So you go from a body to a bodiless state, to a re-embodied state. And as far as I know, the orthodox, the Pharisaic Jews in the first century, shared that same belief with the Christians and that Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 5.

**Ankerberg:** When Paul says "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" [2 Cor. 5:8], what does that mean?

**Habermas:** I think at the moment of death, before the Lord returns, believers are in the presence of the Lord without a physical body.

**Ankerberg:** Okay.

**Habermas:** I've a friend, a philosopher buddy, Peter Kreeft at Boston College, who says Plato was right as far as he went. He

just didn't go far enough. Plato believed in a disembodied state. What Plato did not believe in was a re-embodied state. And I think orthodox Jews and Christians share that same hope.

**Ankerberg:** All right, Tony, we're still debating the question, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" If the disciples saw something, what do you think? With the evidence that they gave, were they lying?

**Flew:** Oh, good heavens, no, because lying involves intention.

**Ankerberg:** So they didn't intend to lie.

**Flew:** Well, to lie, you *intend* to say something which is false. And what is so often called lies among people's opponents in politics are not lies at all, they're simply what the people saying they are lies believe to be false statements. The crux of lying is the intention of the liar. Someone may well tell a lie, I suppose, or be guilty of lying though he utters what is the truth because his intention was to say something that was false.

**Ankerberg:** Gary, do you think the early Christians didn't intend, but still gave different information than what they really meant?

**Habermas:** Well, Tony has mentioned a very key point here. What I indicated earlier was the key list of four facts on that list of twelve: The disciples had experiences which **they believed**—not lied but **they believed**—they had seen the risen Jesus. The crux of this discussion, I think the closest we will get to an answer, is the question, "What did they see?" The disciples claimed it was something visual.

Now, Tony's view—hallucinations and two different kinds—also claim something visual, but something visual for which there is no external referent. I think you have a problem here. Because if Paul is not a victim of Conversion Disorder, and if the disciples are not good candidates for hallucinations and yet we admit the disciples thought they saw something, you're running out of possibilities.

**Ankerberg:** What do you think, Tony?

**Flew:** Well, it may be that we are here confronted with something for which we have no other experience. Perhaps one has to raise, in considering any alleged miracle, that what is rational for you to hold depends on what your prior beliefs were. For a person like myself confronted with an apparent miracle, the rational thing is to think that there must be some mistake here. Though I could be persuaded that a miracle occurred, it would need something really very spectacular. But of course, for people in Jerusalem who were virtually all believing Jews of some sort—either Sadducee or Pharisee or whatnot—the question of what it is rational to believe is entirely different because they all were committed to the idea that a Messiah was going to come and that the Messiah would work miracles and so on.

So I think you could argue that it was entirely rational for all these people to believe this is so and, of course, for Christian believers now. It may be rational for them to take this as a miraculous thing, but it isn't for me.

**Ankerberg:** Gary.

**Habermas:** So, if I heard you right, Christians at least are rational in believing the Resurrection.

**Flew:** I think that could be said. Yes.

**Habermas:** I think that's an incredible admission but an honest admission from an honest man because Tony is a very honest person. I've always found him to be that way. But I think that's great evidence because if we're rational, then that means we have reasons for it.

**Flew:** And reasons for your belief in God, of course.

**Habermas:** Well, reasons for belief in God, too. I'd like to find out why he doesn't think those reasons are good tonight.

**Ankerberg:** All right. We're going to talk more about this, but in our next segment we will discuss "the empty tomb" and what that has to do with this whole topic. Stick with us.

### Program 3

***Was Jesus' resurrection body merely a spiritual body (a ghost-like, wispy, see-through, non-material body) or a real physical body?***

***Did Jesus ever claim to be God?***

**Ankerberg:** We are debating the topic: Is there solid historical evidence for Christians to believe in the Resurrection—the literal, physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?

Now, we have already discussed hallucination. Dr. Habermas, you have stated that there are twelve historical facts that have been accepted by virtually all critical scholars. Then you've cut that list down to four facts. I would like to come back to a couple of those. One is, some people doubt that Jesus actually died on the cross. Tony brought up the point at the beginning of this debate that we do not have a date for Jesus' birth; we haven't got a date for the end of His life. What about that? Further, how do we know that Jesus actually died on the cross? Let's start with that data. Do we have any other sources outside of the New Testament that document Jesus' crucifixion?

**Habermas:** Well, when I think of a case for the crucifixion, you have data coming in from a variety of angles. First of all, medical data; second, you have critical data from scholars, and third, you have extra-biblical data in wide variety. I said earlier that John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg, co-founders of the Jesus Seminar, both said that the fact that Jesus was crucified is as sure as any fact in the ancient world, certainly in the life of Christ. Why do they say that? Well, there are medical facts written

briefly in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* article about fifteen years ago<sup>12</sup>. There are dozens of other medical articles.

For example, death by crucifixion is essentially death by asphyxiation. The centurion or any other person standing at a crucifixion does not have to have an EEG or an EKG. If you're hanging low on the cross for any amount of time—studies from volunteers actually show a cut-off point of about twelve minutes—if you're hanging low for any amount of time, you're not faking. You are dead.

And you have the problem of the spear in the side. This is found in the Gospel of John, but also confirmed from two other sources outside the Bible—one Roman; one Christian—that they did these things. They offered a *coup de grace*. You have David Strauss' critique, a famous critic who said that if Jesus got off the cross and He was alive, you have a horrible problem. If Jesus shows himself to the disciples, you have the problem that He is living but not raised. If they didn't believe He was raised, there is no Christianity. Now, that's some of the "medicine."

I told you about Borg and Crossan. Why did they think there is historical evidence for Jesus' crucifixion? Well, there are a lot of reasons. I think they take the Gospels very seriously here, but the extra-biblical data that you asked for, of the seventeen extra-biblical, non-Christian sources within about 100-150 years of the life of Jesus, twelve of them—roughly two-thirds—mention the cross and all kinds of details. And also, Paul is our number one scholar here....

**Ankerberg:** Give me a couple of the outside sources.

**Habermas:** Outside sources—Tacitus<sup>13</sup> mentions the fact that Jesus died on the

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12. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, March 21, 1986, Vol. 255, No. 11, "Jesus Certainly Died on the Cross."

13. Tacitus, a Roman historian (55-120 A.D.): "Christus (Christ),...suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate." *Annals* 15:44.



cross. He said Pontius Pilate was the Judean procurator. He said that Tiberius was the governor.

You have Lucian,<sup>14</sup> the famous satirist, who called Him “a crucified sophist.”

You have Mara Bar-Serapion, a Syrian writer,<sup>15</sup> who tells his son to emulate Jesus who gave His life and so on.

Jewish historian Flavius Josephus<sup>16</sup> in a passage—although it’s disputed, virtually everybody believes the portion about the cross there, that He died—and Josephus also mentions Tiberius Caesar. So this is all right there. You have some gnostic sources<sup>17</sup> that mention these things.

You have Thallus<sup>18</sup> and Phlegon<sup>19</sup>, two scholars who mention that darkness surrounded the world when Jesus was crucified.

So there are a bunch of them. You have Paul, whom we both consider the best source here. Paul mentions the crucifixion of Jesus on several occasions and says that it is his major preaching point.

**Ankerberg:** Okay. But the Qur’an says that Jesus didn’t die on the cross. What would you say about that?

**Habermas:** Well, first of all, the Qur’an has two passages: one that implies He did

die; one that implies He did not die. But I’d say it’s beside the point. The Qur’an is written in the seventh century. That’s six and a half centuries after the cross. By historical standards, I find it hard to believe that the Qur’an has much to contribute to an event that happened six and a half centuries earlier.

**Ankerberg:** What do you think, Tony?

**Flew:** Well, the prophet’s knowledge, certainly knowledge of, say, the New Testament, insofar as it existed, is sketchy, to put it mildly.

**Habermas:** You accept the fact that Jesus died on the cross?

**Flew:** Oh, gosh. Yes.

**Habermas:** I remember when we debated in 1985—fifteen years ago—we had a “Q&A” from the crowd. One of the students must have gotten the wrong impression, because he said, “So you believe Jesus didn’t die on the cross.” And I distinctly remember him calling the Swoon Theory rubbish.

**Ankerberg:** Now, John Dominic Crossan, although he admits that Christ died on the cross, when He was taken down, speculates that Jesus’ body was laid in some trash heap and torn apart by wild dogs<sup>20</sup>. He

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14. Lucian, a Greek satirist, states, “Christians... worship a man to this day... who... was crucified on that account.... [They] worshipped the crucified sage....” *The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13.

15. Mara Bar-Serapion wrote: “Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teachings which he had given.” British Museum, *Syriac Manuscript*, Additional 14, 658.

16. Josephus (38-97 A.D.) wrote, “Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die.... His disciples... reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive.” James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1988), p. 95.

17. Cf. *The Gospel of Truth* in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 10:11-14, 25-34, where it is stated, “Jesus...was nailed to a tree.”

18. Thallus, a wealthy Samaritan, wrote (circa 52 A.D.): “On the whole world there presented a most earful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down.” Julius Africanus, *Extant Writings, XVIII in the Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973, vol. VI, p. 130.

19. Phlegon (80 A.D.) wrote: “And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place....” Origen, *Contra Celsum XXXIII in the Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

20. John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994), pp. 152-158; John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 391-394.

doesn't believe Jesus' body was buried in a tomb. Now, what is the evidence? Was Jesus buried in a tomb?

**Habermas:** Well, the interesting thing about Crossan is, very few of his colleagues agree with him here. There's not a bit of evidence, not a bit, that says Jesus was buried in an unknown plot and chewed up. And there's a lot of data to think that He was buried. Let's put it this way. The data I'll get to in a second on the empty tomb. Crossan also argues that He was buried in a separate plot but there is no data. And you know, it's usually the Christians who are often thought of as being put back on their heels, by asking, "Where's the data?" But when Dr. Crossan says Jesus was buried in a common grave and chewed up by dogs, I think it's real easy to respond. Just say, "Give me one source."

**Ankerberg:** All right, Tony. Are we still on board on this one so far?

**Flew:** Well, I should have thought that this sort of detail is something in which we're entirely dependent on the Gospel evidence, aren't we, for this sort of point?

**Ankerberg:** Are we?

**Habermas:** I disagree.

**Ankerberg:** Why?

**Habermas:** All right, two examples. 1.) Acts 13. Not the Book of Acts but in Acts there are a lot of creedal passages, small creeds. And in Acts 13:28-30 we are told that He was laid in a tomb and God raised Him. So we have an empty tomb.

Back to Paul. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, Paul uses a long sentence with what's called a "triple *hoti* clause"<sup>21</sup>. In the Greek it reads like this. Paul said: "He died for our sins according to the scriptures, **and that**

He was buried, **and that** He was raised, **and that** He appeared."

So, if you have a person who is dead, buried, raised, and appears, it's very hard to imagine that sequence without "what's going down is what's coming up." I think Paul is very clear that what went down is what comes up. You have this "and, and, and"—triple *hoti* clause. "That Christ died; **and** He was buried; **and** He was raised; **and** He appeared."

Then you have Philippians 3:11, again: *ek anastasis* — "coming out from among the dead." You have the combination that you can't be a Pharisee and believe that something which goes down is not coming up. I think we do have Paul on the empty tomb.

**Ankerberg:** Yes, and if he wrote that in 55 A.D. and preached it in 51 A.D.; and he received it from Peter in 35 A.D. Peter had to get it from someplace. Further, Paul said all the Apostles were preaching the same thing.<sup>22</sup>

**Habermas:** Sure. And you have that early text in Acts 13. But this is Paul on the empty tomb. I think we have a number of other reasons for believing the empty tomb, also.

**Ankerberg:** Why do you think that the evidence shows He was put into the tomb and that the tomb was empty on the third day?

**Habermas:** Okay. Evidence for the empty tomb. Well, the one hint I just gave is that we do have some early accounts—a creedal passage in Acts 13 and 1 Corinthians 15 on Paul's sequence. But a couple of other things. The Jews admitted the empty tomb<sup>23</sup>. And we have three sources: not just Matthew, but we have Justin Martyr and

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21. Triple "*hoti*" clause = three "and that" clauses.

22. Why this information is early eyewitness testimony: 55 A.D.—Paul writes 1 Corinthians; 51 A.D.—Paul preaches to Corinthians; 35 A.D.—Paul's trip to Jerusalem to meet Peter and James and receives their testimony; 32 A.D.—Paul becomes a Christian; 30 A.D.—Gospel is preached by Peter, James and the other apostles; 30 A.D.—the Cross.

23. The Jewish book—*Toledoth Jesu*—refers to Jesus, saying His body was removed from Joseph's tomb.

Tertullian. All three tell us that the Jews admitted the tomb was empty. The fact that Jesus died in the same city in which the disciples did their earliest preaching—everybody realizes that early Christian preaching happened in Jerusalem. I don't know that there is anybody who disagrees with that. And yet, there is a problem. The city where He died is the city where they began preaching a few days later. If Jesus' tomb is full, don't you think somebody would say, "Fellows, we have a little problem here—this little matter of a body." So, Jerusalem was a bad place to be preaching it. They should have been preaching in Galilee or Rome, not Jerusalem.

So you have the city of Jerusalem as evidence. You have early attestation. You have the Jews admitting it. And you know, there is a critical historical principle: *What your enemies admit is usually true*. It's called the principle of "enemy attestation."

I could throw some others in there, too. If Rudolf Bultmann is right and the Gospels are Monday morning quarterbacking—reading ideas of 80ish A.D. back into the Gospels—you don't pick **women** as your witnesses.

**Ankerberg:** Why?

**Habermas:** I don't want to offend people in the crowd here, but in the first century, a woman could not testify in a court of law. Jewish writing said women are liars. An interesting thing is Luke 24:11, when the women came back from the tomb and told the disciples—Luke 24:11—they thought they were spreading gossip. They thought they were spreading tales.

So, if I'm writing the story and retrojecting it back from 80ish A.D. to 30 A.D., I don't pick women as my prime witnesses. So there is another big problem.

Those are just some of the evidences for the empty tomb. You have the women. You have early attestation by Paul. You have the Jews admitting it, and Jerusalem as a city—that's a big "No-No." You don't preach in the

city where the body is in the tomb.

These are four to which I would love Tony to respond.

**Ankerberg:** All right, we're going to take a break. Tony, when we come back, we will let you respond. Stick with us.

[break]

**Ankerberg:** All right, we're back and we're talking with two guests about the question: "Did Jesus rise from the dead?" We're talking with Dr. Antony Flew, considered by many to be the world's foremost philosophical atheist; and Dr. Gary Habermas, a renowned Christian philosopher and historian, considered by many to be the foremost expert on the evidence for Jesus' resurrection. It's a fascinating and crucial discussion.

Tony, I want to know, what do you think about the evidence which Dr. Habermas has just presented on the empty tomb? Do you go along with it?

**Flew:** I'm not impressed by this point about the women. I don't think you should be apologetic about this at all. These facts are facts and I could rather wish that in these topics more people were prepared to face facts rather than run away and say, "Mustn't say that." No. This is a very impressive piece of argument, I think.

**Habermas:** So you accept the empty tomb?

**Flew:** Well, I think this is an impressive testimony...

**Habermas:** Thank you.

**Flew:** ...because, you know, it's very difficult to get around this.

**Habermas:** This just occurs to me, if the tomb is empty, what does that say to hallucination because hallucination required that the body be in the tomb?

**Ankerberg:** Well, yes. But the first question is, "What happened to the body?"

**Habermas:** That's your question.

**Flew:** Well, we have no independent

witnesses. There are all sorts of ways of removing bodies. I'm not going to offer a theory because I simply don't think one *can* reconstruct the story of what happened in the city all that long ago and we haven't the sort of evidence that one might have today with the invention of cameras and all the rest of it.

**Ankerberg:** Gary, in your book, *The Historical Jesus*, you have a whole chapter on how Tony's friends, other naturalists, "shoot themselves in the foot" by proposing all kinds of different ideas for what happened to the body. Hit some of the high spots.

**Habermas:** Well, we've talked about several. Some people say Jesus didn't die on the cross, although there's virtually no scholar out there who says that today. But if someone thinks Jesus didn't die on the cross, you have the medical data; you have to go with Paul; you have the extra-biblical evidence; you have the Gospels. You've a lot of things. You asked Tony earlier, "Did the disciples lie?"—of course, some people think so—and he said, "No."

Some people think the disciples stole the body and then lied about the appearances. That doesn't work because they were transformed. Most of them died for what they believed to be true.

We have talked about hallucinations. That's an important theory because it's the one he holds.

Some have said the whole thing is a legend. But one of the main problems with a legend is, you have a man like Paul for which we have early data. And for legend theory to be true, you want to probably get that out of the hands of the eyewitnesses and removed a bit in time. I mean, for example, our two best biographies of Alexander the Great are not written for three to four centuries after Alexander. And it's after that time that mythology starts creeping in—miraculous stories about Alexander which, by the way, are post-Christian. They

come after Christ and Alexander lived in the fourth century B.C.

So, for legend, since you have early eyewitnesses, it is a real problem. I think the data can respond with six or eight refutations of every naturalistic theory.

That's important because the one which has been on the table tonight is "hallucination" and I think the empty tomb is one more huge problem, because now Tony has to have two of these theories. He has hallucination—well, actually, he must have three. He has to have one kind of hallucination for Paul; one kind of hallucination for the disciples—that's what he chooses; and now he has a problem with the body and the tomb. Now, he's right, bodies vacate tombs for different reasons; however, he must have the body vacating the tomb happening simultaneously with the disciples seeing the appearances. And of course, he has Paul later.

So, now he's starting to pile up these theories and they are becoming more improbable.

**Ankerberg:** Didn't Tony write an article on that?

**Habermas:** Somewhere.

**Flew:** Look, I'm not offering a naturalistic account of what happened. I'm not trying...I don't think it's possible to offer any satisfactory naturalistic account to what...

**Habermas:** ...hallucination theories.

**Flew:** But I do think "hallucination" covers a lot of the data. But I don't offer anything to cover the empty tomb evidence.

**Ankerberg:** Tony, do you believe in group hallucinations?

**Flew:** I don't see that it is necessary to rule this out. But I think it's important to make a distinction that doesn't seem to have been made in the Gospels between a group of people seeing something severally and their seeing it together. You know, statements that these things were afterwards "seen by the Twelve." This is not a

categorical statement that they were all together when they had the experience.

**Ankerberg:** What do you think, Gary?

**Habermas:** I think Tony is getting himself in a lot of hot water.

Number one, he has an empty tomb with no cause ventured for the tomb.

Secondly, he has “hallucinations” for the disciples that do not work for the half dozen reasons I gave earlier. Groups do not see hallucinations. They weren’t in the right frame of mind. You have different times, places, people, gender, doing different things.

The empty tomb, “it doesn’t transform lives.”

James, Paul. All reasons.

Well, his comeback is—and in our debate book he also says, “No group hallucinations.” So he’s correct arguing for his own theory when he says, “Maybe a number of people could have single hallucinations.” But people need to see what’s going on here, there is no response to the empty tomb. Paul was the last candidate for Hallucination Psychosis or Conversion Disorder. You’ve got a bunch of individuals seeing hallucinations.

Hallucinations are pretty rare. I’ll tell you the conditions under which they occur. Bodily depravation or when someone is taking drugs—and these aren’t the conditions of the disciples. So Tony says “no group hallucinations,” but ten or 20 people are having their own hallucinations without medical warrant. He’s got to have everybody having them, and I think it’s a real issue.

**Flew:** All these things I’ve “got to do” if I were going to offer what I don’t believe is possible for anyone to offer: a full, naturalistic account of what was going on there.

**Habermas:** You’re doing a good job, because he has single hallucinations to everybody....

**Flew:** Wait a minute. Another thing that I noted in the last fifteen years is that there

are one or two very spectacular cases of mass hallucinations: the supposed “miracle of Fatima,” you know.

**Habermas:** Or Medjugorje.

**Flew:** Yes. How many were involved?

**Habermas:** Tens of thousands. But the only problem with these and with Fatima, where people come to see the so-called apparitions of Mary, is that it’s exactly the opposite of what the disciples are seeing. Because people go to Lourdes or to Fatima or to Medjugorje; you have 10,000 people watching the children watch Mary. The only problem is, the 10,000 people in the crowd don’t see anything except they say they see “signs in the heavens.” But they don’t see Mary. Of course, they don’t see Jesus.

**Flew:** But the hallucinationists were seeing the on-goings in the heavens, weren’t they?

**Habermas:** That’s an illusion, though, not a hallucination. If you’re going to report that the sun is moving.... Remember Kent’s differentiation between illusion and hallucination? An illusion is when you see something and think it’s something else. A hallucination is when there’s no objective referent. And so the people standing there in Medjugorje say they see signs in the heavens, but after all, there are stars, there are trees, there are mountains, a sun. What they say is, the sun was moving and the stars were moving, but it really is the sun and stars. That’s far different from saying they saw Mary. I mean, my point is that at Medjugorje, 99.9 percent of the people do not see Mary.

**Flew:** No. No.

**Habermas:** But with the disciples you have the whole group seeing Jesus. So I just don’t think it’s an analogy. I think there’s a real problem in using that. And I definitely don’t think it’s a mass hallucination. It may be a mass illusion, but an illusion, once again, is when you see something—water on the highway, or take your hat off and put it

on your bed at night and wake up and think someone is standing in your room, or a magician. Those are illusions. But a hallucination is a much more radical concept and hence, what I'm saying: when he says twelve or fifteen or twenty people have to have individual hallucinations, this is **very** radical, very tough to prove.

**Ankerberg:** Okay, over the fifteen years Tony has been thinking about this, you've been thinking about Tony, haven't you?

**Habermas:** Yes. I have been thinking about Tony.

**Ankerberg:** What would you like to say to him?

**Habermas:** I've dialogued with a lot of atheists, a lot of skeptics. I've had two and three and five year correspondences. I'm currently involved with an eight-year correspondence right now with an agnostic. But Tony—I'm saying this sincerely—Tony is the kindest, most moral, most sincere—I'm serious—atheist that I know. And we've been friends for fifteen years. I have photographs in 1985 of my two-year-old daughter sitting on his knee. He would not let her go to bed until he gave her a goodnight kiss. Now, she's seventeen-years old. We still have those photos before and after. He's a good guy. But I've also been praying for him for fifteen years. Tony, nothing is impossible, buddy.

**Flew:** Could we go back to St. Paul?

**Ankerberg:** Yes.

**Flew:** As I understand it, what happened on the Road to Damascus was that he had an experience and nothing appeared to his companions other than possibly they heard a voice.

**Ankerberg:** All right, that will be our question after the break. We'll be right back.

## Program 4

### ***What caused the transformation of Jesus' disciples from cowards to bold proclaimers of his Resurrection?***

### ***What caused the skeptics Thomas, Paul and James to believe in Christ?***

**Ankerberg:** We're talking with two world-class philosophers. I think everybody who has taken a graduate course in philosophy knows Dr. Antony Flew. He is one of the world's foremost philosophical atheists. And Dr. Gary Habermas, a renowned Christian philosopher and historian is considered by many to be the foremost expert on the evidence for Jesus' Resurrection.

We're discussing the question: "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" What is the evidence? Is there any evidence?

One of the key things, gentlemen, that we have to talk about is, What **did** happen to this fellow by the name of Paul who was killing Christians? He wasn't in the frame of mind to believe. He didn't want to believe. He thought that Christians were dead wrong. All of a sudden, he becomes one of the greatest propagators of the Christian faith. Something happened. Tony, what do you think happened to Paul?

**Flew:** Well, the account seems to be that he had some companions, the people who later after he had unfortunately temporarily lost his sight and took him on in to Damascus, he thought that the risen Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, he had seen and had talked to him. But his companions, apparently, most "heard"—in some accounts heard a voice and some they didn't. But they certainly are not said to have **seen** something that you could push around—any sort of ordinary or even abnormal human body.

**Ankerberg:** All right. So Gary, what do you say?

**Habermas:** Well, again, I think the crux of the data is that we have Paul himself on several occasions—1 Corinthians 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:8; Galatians 1—saying he saw Jesus. But I don't think he's a candidate for Jack Kent's theory—not a candidate for "Conversion Disorder,"<sup>24</sup> because like I said, Conversion Disorder does not involve hallucination. So Paul would have to have a Conversion Disorder; number two, an auditory hallucination because he thought he heard a voice; three, a visual hallucination; four, a messiah complex—visions of grandeur, so to speak—because he believed God spoke to him and gave him a message for the whole world; and five, there's not one speck of evidence from Paul's account that he was in the mood to be changed or why he would want to change.

So it seems to me we have four psychological problems and then a biblical problem from Paul's writing. I'm wondering how you can change a Conversion Disorder of Kent—your theory—how you can change, or combine, let's say, a Conversion Disorder with a visual hallucination, with an auditory hallucination, with visions of grandeur—Messiah complex? And this all happened at once!

**Flew:** Most of the time I'm not trying to offer a naturalistic or any other explanation. I want to know what the alleged phenomena are here.

**Habermas:** But that is a naturalistic theory.

**Flew:** Well, it is a possible one. There may be something wrong with that. I don't profess to be a psychological expert who knows what a Conversion Disorder is. I have read William James and so on.

**Habermas:** I'm just saying it doesn't even follow. Even if he had a Conversion Disorder, it doesn't follow that he would see, hear, and think God gave him a message.

**Flew:** Oh, no. Okay. These are reasons for not accepting Conversion Disorder as an explanation. I'm not particularly worried about that. I mean, I read this in Kent's....

**Habermas:** You're not giving it up.

**Flew:** No. What I want to raise is what it was that Paul actually saw. What he thought he saw was the risen Christ. But what was there to be seen? And his companions apparently didn't see the risen Christ or anything else other than Paul obviously having some very important transforming experience.

**Habermas:** If you take the three texts in Acts—Acts 9:7, 22:9 and 26:13-14—they did see a light. The companions did see a light. They all fell down on their knees. They heard a voice but they didn't understand what the voice was saying. So I don't want people to get the idea that what I'm agreeing with you on is that they were just standing there and saw nothing. They saw light; they heard a voice; they fell down to the ground. So plainly there's an objective effect on them, too, which, by the way, is an additional problem for Conversion Disorder. If Paul has a conversion disorder, how come his companions are falling down to the ground, seeing a light, and hearing a voice?

**Flew:** Okay. Okay. Okay. I never professed to be a psychological expert. Okay, Conversion Disorder won't do. But still, in order to have something that is going to transform your life...

**Habermas:** That's right.

**Flew:** ...this is, of course, entirely agreed. This is absolutely crucial. But unless there was something there that the television cameras could have picked up and all that, we don't have *any* reason for thinking that, other than if we already have reasons for believing that God's going to communicate with Paul.

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24. Jack Kent, *The Psychological Origins of the Resurrection Myth*. Kent says Paul experienced an hallucination of the risen Jesus as a result of a conversion disorder.

**Habermas:** You have Philippians 3. You have those three arguments in Philippians 3 that Paul thought this was a physical body.

**Flew:** Yes. Okay. He *thought* that, but....

**Habermas:** That's right.

**Flew:** But the fact that he thought that is not a reason for being decisive in saying that it was *there*.

**Habermas:** That's correct, but earlier you said Paul taught a "spiritual" body. I'm just saying Paul did not teach a spiritual body. Paul taught a physical body. And you've still got to account for the friends falling down on the ground, seeing the light...

**Flew:** Well, do you believe surely that in a future life everyone would have a different sort of body, at least those people who are going to have a future life at all?

**Habermas:** Yes, but I mean, when you said Paul believed in a spiritual, sort of a ghostly appearance of Jesus, Paul is very clear that what appeared is a body. So he must have thought he saw a body, and if you like the Acts accounts, you still have the three companions falling down, seeing a light, and hearing a voice. And that's not a Conversion Disorder. Did you say you are giving up the Conversion Disorder?

**Flew:** I don't care. I'm quite happy to give it up. I've never really been in defense of this. Okay, the thing I want to maintain is, there wasn't anything there to be seen. How he came to have that, you know, this is the business of psychologists of which, thankfully, I'm not one.

**Habermas:** If it's not a Conversion Disorder, I'll just turn the question around to you. If it's not a Conversion Disorder, and he did not see Jesus, then what did he and his companions see? Why did they all fall down together? What happened on the way to Damascus? If it's not a hallucination and it's not a resurrection, then what is it?

**Flew:** I'm not here to tell you what it was. What I want to know is what he's supposed to have seen there when his companions

apparently didn't see anything at all.

**Habermas:** But they did see the light...

**Flew:** Yes.

**Habermas:** ...they fell down, they heard a voice.

**Flew:** Well, this doesn't seem to me like a resurrected Jesus.

**Habermas:** The point I'm making is, it wasn't an absence of something. They saw things, and then Paul, as you admitted a moment ago, in Philippians 3 Paul believe it was a physical Jesus.

**Flew:** Wait a minute. We're only told that they heard something and they saw a light. We're *not* told that they saw the resurrected Jesus, you know, flesh and blood creature that you could have poked and pushed....

**Habermas:** That's what the voice said, though. The voice said, "I am Christ whom you persecute." You don't have to believe that, but what I mean is, that's Paul's story. Paul said this is Jesus who appeared to me. And in Philippians 3 he says it was a physical body. You can disbelieve it. I'm just saying, if you disbelieve it—Paul's an authority, we both admit.

**Flew:** Yes.

**Habermas:** Paul says this. It's not a hallucination. What are you left with?

**Flew:** If it wasn't visible to his companions, then it *can't* have been a physical body.

**Habermas:** Who said it wasn't visible to the companions? I mean, they see a light; they fall down; they hear a voice.

**Flew:** That's all we're told.

**Habermas:** Let me put it this way. Philosophically, as you know, a contradiction—two things cannot both be and not be at the same time, same place, same manner. We're told what they saw but we're not told what they didn't see. There could have been a physical body standing right there. We're not told there was *no* body. The text nowhere says there was no body here. And then in Philippians 3 Paul says He's a body.



The only data we have is Paul's, right? We don't have the companions'.

**Flew:** Yes.

**Habermas:** We only have Paul's, and Paul seems to think it was a physical body. So, here's the problem. One of our four facts: Paul **believes** he saw an appearance of the risen Jesus. If it's not a hallucination, where do we go?

**Flew:** But this is what virtually all the people in the Gospels who saw the risen Christ seemed to have thought. The only cases of them actually poking and trying to see whether it was tangible are a very small group compared with all the others.

**Ankerberg:** All right, let's hold on and let's talk about the others we were mentioning? What happened to them? We'll talk about it in just a moment.

[break]

**Ankerberg:** All right we're back and we're talking about "Did Jesus Actually Rise from the Dead?" If so, what kind of body did He rise in? That's where we are right now. What did the disciples see? We talked about Paul. You still have Peter; you've got James; you've got Thomas; you've got the women. You have all the others who were mentioned. Where would you like to start?

**Habermas:** Well, he introduced the case of the women touching Jesus in Matthew; Mary touching Jesus alone in John; and Thomas at least close enough that he could have and later, Ignatius says Thomas did [touch Jesus]. I'd ask the same question. Are the disciples good candidates for hallucination or did they touch somebody who seemed to be Jesus? We have the hallucination theory again.

**Flew:** Well, they are the cases where there's a **claim** of tangibility—a minority of the total cases.

**Habermas:** How many times do you have to touch somebody for them to occupy time and space?

**Flew:** Not very many.

**Habermas:** Once would do it, right?

**Flew:** Oh, yes. But the point is, what is the minority is the cases of people who are mentioned as having **seen** the risen Jesus of whom we are also told that they did something to verify whether there was an object there to be seen.

**Habermas:** Of course, now, somebody wouldn't have to touch Jesus.

**Flew:** Oh, no.

**Habermas:** You can be objectively present in this room and me never touch you.

**Flew:** Oh, yes.

**Habermas:** So, we have the women touching Jesus; Mary touching Jesus; you have Thomas given the opportunity to touch—if you like, in the Gospels. But even Paul's account, again, Philippians 3. If Paul's thought is that Jesus appeared physically, at least that's Paul's conviction.

So it seems to me you have the two horns of the dilemma again. With the disciples, you either have hallucinations, because they believed they saw something. Kent says "Habermas' facts are okay but I think it's a hallucination." Do you still like hallucinations for the Gospels, for the disciples?

**Flew:** I'm not sure about what labels apply. What seems to me is crucial is whether there was something there to be seen, hallucinated or whatnot, not whether you call it a hallucination or a vision or whatnot. The crucial thing is whether there was something there to be seen and it seems to me the evidence for that is pretty weak, really.

**Habermas:** You have the disciples saying Paul and the others had experiences that they believed were appearances of the risen Jesus. Okay?

**Flew:** Yes.

**Habermas:** You have a tomb that's empty. So something physical is going on.

Only some of the texts claim they touched Jesus. This all points in the direction of a body being there. They know this person. They've been with Him for three years. He's their best friend. In some cases He's their relative—He's their brother; He's their son. Where can we go from here? You still have to take hallucination, right?

**Flew:** They were said to have been, for instance, walking along with Him for some time without apparently noticing He is the risen Christ.

**Habermas:** That's a good point. I haven't seen you for fifteen years, and I recognized you in the hotel yesterday. But there were changes and there were changes for me after fifteen years. I mean, if there are slight, subtle changes in the resurrection body—which I think there are—that's all you need.

You know how you look at somebody and you look back and you say, "Is that you?" I think the fact that Paul does say "spiritual body," I think it's a literal body, and I think it occupies space and time and could be touched, but there are changes. So I think that accounts for the fact that He looked just a little different.

**Ankerberg:** Can I throw in, too, the fact that I think it's always fascinating that you have another skeptic, a very tough skeptic during Jesus' own life—His brother—who actually at one time implied Jesus ought to go up to Jerusalem and get Himself killed. Suddenly, this boy ends up as the head of the Church in Jerusalem. Now, he didn't believe in Jesus the whole time Jesus was living. What happened to James, Tony?

**Flew:** Don't know. Why am I expected to know? Why is anyone expected to know what went on in Jerusalem at an unknown date?

**Ankerberg:** I think it's like going into court and saying to Habermas, "Except for your ten witnesses, you have nothing!"

**Flew:** Oh, no. I think he has a lot. I think he has a rather few of these people clearly

reporting that they saw something that was there and took some steps to discover whether it really was. Thomas is a rather curious minor figure among all these people seeing the resurrected Jesus.

**Habermas:** You like him, don't you?

**Flew:** Yes, I do, because he seems to me to be doing the thing that virtually anyone with any skeptical inclination at all would do right away.

**Habermas:** I think where John is going is, this is just a part of the multifaceted nature of the Resurrection evidence. You have a group of women. You have a lone woman, Mary Magdalene. You have a group of men. You have a lone man, James, who, in 1 Corinthians 15:7 we have Paul's testimony about James. Now, James is no longer a skeptic. He believes he sees Jesus. You have Paul. You have an empty tomb. And we have one strand after another after another. And that's why I think Christians say we have a lot of evidences. Just about the time the skeptic says, "Well, what about this?" you say, "But what about Paul? What about James?" The evidence comes in from a variety of aspects and you know, as a historian, that's what a historian wants. A historian wants a lot of evidence coming in from *different* angles: from enemies, from believers. You have two skeptics who were enemies. You have the Jews admitting the tomb was empty. You have women who are not supposed to be good witnesses and they're seeing Jesus at the tomb and grabbing Him. I mean, there's a lot of data here that say this. And that's why I think Christians are Christians—because this is the key fact in the Christian faith.

**Flew:** Well, I think it's worth going back to the thing I said earlier on how you rationally respond to these things depends very much on what your previous beliefs were. And if your previous beliefs were Jewish beliefs: believing in the coming of a Messiah and so on—deriving from the Mosaic theist tradition—then it seems to me all this sort of thing

becomes for you very reasonably persuasive.

**Ankerberg:** But the thing that wasn't persuasive for those guys is that this fellow also claimed to be the Son of God. Now, Kent in his book said Paul never said anywhere in the New Testament that Jesus was God. I would challenge Dr. Habermas with what the critics say, "Show me where Jesus claimed to be God." You claim that there are five strands of data to which you can go and Jesus shows up saying He's the Son of God, Son of Man in all five strands. Do you want to go that direction?

**Habermas:** Yes. I think we very clearly have Paul saying he believed Jesus was the Son of God; but here I would say we have data that predates Paul. A huge question today is, what was Jesus' messianic self-consciousness? Or as we'd say today in the West, "Who did He think He was?" And what critics do here is, they don't like the Gospels as much as they like... as we've said several times, Paul's evidence is the best. But they do like passages in the Gospels that meet certain critical criteria. In several of those passages, you have Jesus claiming to be either the Son of God or the Son of Man. I would just say as a footnote, "Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite title for Himself, but His usage of it is apparently taken from Daniel 7:13,14<sup>25</sup>. He virtually quotes Daniel 7:13,14 twice when He stands before the high priest at His trial.

Now, here's an example. You have to have a reason "why" Jesus dies. Why did the Romans do what they did? Why did the

Jews want the Romans to do it? In Mark 14:61-64 the high priest says, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"<sup>26</sup>

Now, notice, to the questions, "Are you the Messiah? Are you the Son of God?," Jesus responds in the Greek, *Ego Eimi*. His first comment is, "I am."

Secondly, He changed a "Son of God" question to a "Son of Man" answer. He said, "Henceforth, you will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven and He is going to judge you."

Now, the high priest should have said, "Oh, no. You said 'Son of man.' I asked if you were the 'Son of God.'"

No. He knows right away when Jesus says, "Son of man" that's a claim to be Deity. And by the way, that phrase, "coming with the clouds," occurs dozens of times in Scripture and is always a reference to God. So Jesus says, "Yes, I am" to Son of God. He says, "I am the Son of man. I'm going to come in judgment."

And at that point the high priest says, "All the rest of you witnesses can go home. We've got you! That's blasphemy." So, there's an example.

You have the so-called "Q" sayings,<sup>27</sup> statements that are in Matthew and Luke but are not in Mark. And whatever you call that, they're in the Gospels. In one of those passages, Matthew 11:27 and its parallel in Luke, Jesus says, "No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom He will reveal them."

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25. Daniel 7:13,14: "I kept looking... and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom... his dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away;..."

26. Mark 14:61-64: "The high priest was questioning him,... 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One (the Son of God)?' And Jesus said, 'I am' [Ego Eimi] and henceforth you will see the Son of man... coming in the clouds of heaven...."

27. Q: "Conventional symbol for the source of material in both Matthew and Luke that differs significantly from the text of Mark. This symbol was coined in a 1890 essay by Johannes Weiss, who used it as shorthand for the German word 'source' (Quelle). But the Q hypothesis itself is credited to C. H. Wiesse (1838), who was the first to maintain that Matthew & Luke independently edited Mark and the same 'sayings source' (Redenquelle)." (<http://religion.rutgers.edu/nt/primer/q.html>)

Mark 13:32, He claims to be the Son of man. And the reason critics find this very hard to explain away, again, it's the principle—what historians call the principle of embarrassment. Jesus says, "That day or hour knows no one except the Father, not even the Son."

Now, if you're claiming to be the Son of man, why do you say you don't know something? As one British theologian says, "If the Church were just trying to make Jesus say He is the Son of man, well just have Him say it. Don't make up this problem of his not knowing the time of His coming. But in that passage He calls Himself the Son of man.

He refers to God as "Abba," which is an Aramaic term in the middle of a Greek text which is a familiar term. Some have even said "Daddy," which the Jewish leaders dare not call the Father of the universe. So these are some of the senses in which Jesus seemed to have thought of Himself as Deity. And Paul clearly calls Jesus deity<sup>28</sup>. He calls Him God on a few occasions and his two favorite titles are Lord and Christ.

I'll just say real quickly, in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, Lord is the translation of Jehovah. So Paul, who quotes the Septuagint, has to know that, and He calls Jesus "Lord" repeatedly.

**Ankerberg:** Wrap this up concerning the terms, "Son of God" and "Son of man." If Jesus identified Himself as such, and you have a resurrection, what does it all mean? Is this sufficient evidence to persuade a skeptic?

**Habermas:** Well, yes. You have some authentic verses that even critics appreciate in which Jesus calls Himself the Son of God. You have some authentic verses where He calls Himself the Son of man. In Paul's earliest witness he calls Jesus Son of God, he calls Him Lord, he calls Him Christ. By

the way, in Romans 1:3,4 Paul says the Resurrection proves all these things<sup>29</sup>. So that's your point you just raised a moment ago. Yes, in the New Testament the Resurrection is God's stamp of approval on who Jesus thought He was.

Now, in our 1985 debate Tony made the comment that if Jesus was raised from the dead, this is the best evidence that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. I think it's pretty close to a quote. Of course, he doesn't believe in the Resurrection, but I'm saying, if the Resurrection occurred, that's why people think Jesus is the Son of God: because only God, the presumption is, can raise the dead. And if God raises this man, He can't be a heretic. What He said about Himself must be true.

**Ankerberg:** In our next segment we will discuss, "Where does the evidence pile up, pile up, pile up to where you ought to believe in Jesus?" Please stay tuned.

## Program 5

***What factual evidence in our world today inclines us to believe miracles are possible?***

***If all of our experiences of funerals inform us dead people stay dead, then what kind of evidence is needed to convince a skeptic Jesus rose from the dead?***

***Can naturalists explain how people with no brain waves or heartbeat can see what is happening a mile away in near-death experiences?***

***Can a naturalist explain the double-blind study on prayer published in the***

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28. See, e.g., Phil. 2:5, 6, 11; Rom. 9:5.

29. Romans 1:3-4: "Christ Jesus... who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."

**Southern Journal of Medicine which concluded people who were prayed for were statistically better in 21 out of 26 categories?**

**Ankerberg:** What we want to talk about in this session is a question that comes up time and time again. How can we believe in Jesus' resurrection if we, and all of our friends, have never seen a resurrection?

Dr. Habermas, of all the funerals I've ever gone to, I have yet to see one dead person come back from the grave. So all of my **experience** says "dead men stay dead." Now, how can you take me from "Ground Zero" here of saying "dead men stay dead," all the way up to believing in a miracle—not just a little, tiny miracle, but the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? I must tell you that I have no "personal experience," no background, on ever seeing something like that happen. Help me out.

**Habermas:** Well, that's good. I mean, I think you've just explained well the issue that philosophers call "antecedent probability" [Is it possible to accept that miracles can happen?] I would guess that is probably the single biggest issue on the miracles issue.

I think there are two ways a theist could go. One is to say your view of the world is wrong. It's not that we're here and the Resurrection is "Mount Everest." If this were an extended debate, I would want to talk about data for God's existence. I would ask, "What does our world look like?" I would want to talk about near-death experiences, because, see, if God exists, the playing field rises up quite a bit.

Some would say, like my colleague here, Dr. Flew, said in our '85 debate, if we have some reasons to think that God exists, the Resurrection becomes "enormously more likely." I think those words "enormously more

likely" are his words. So the existence of God would change that picture.

If there are miracles present—I'm thinking about the double-blind study with 400 cardiac patients at a San Francisco hospital a few years ago in which they had a double-blind experiment: half the people were prayed for; half the people were not prayed for. They monitored these patients in 26 categories and the ones that were prayed for were statistically better—now, that's significant. Not just "better" but **statistically** better—in 21 out of 26 categories. "So, this was published by *Moody Monthly*?" No. It was published by the *Southern Journal of Medicine*<sup>30</sup>. Nothing against *Moody* but I mean, the peer reviewers of the *Southern Journal of Medicine* thought it was medically significant that the people who were prayed for were better in 21 out of 26 categories.

Also, near-death experiences. If life after death is true—and I think near-death experiences are a great argument—the playing field comes up.

So, one way you can do it is object to the playing field and say there are other things going on here, too.

The other thing you could do is to say the sheer body of data for the Resurrection causes us to say something fantastic happened.

**Ankerberg:** Tony, in light of this, let me give you an illustration, and ask you a question. There was once a farmer who grew up on the farm. The only animals he had ever seen were chickens, cows, and horses. One day he visited the big city and went to the zoo. As he walked around, he came around a corner and, lo and behold, he saw a giraffe. He looked at it, he stared at it, and then declared to his wife, "There ain't no such animal!"

You see, the giraffe was outside of his

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30. Randolph C. Byrd, M. D., "Positive Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer in a Coronary Care Unit Population," *Southern Medical Journal* 1988 Jul; 81(7): 826-9.

experience. Now, aren't you kind of like that farmer when you say, "Since I've never experienced a resurrection before, I won't believe the very evidence that is standing in front of my eyes"?

**Flew:** I don't think this will do, because the idea of a miracle is parasitical on the idea of a law of nature—to show that something is happening all the time. There is no reason to think it's impossible not to produce anything that's going to change people's religious or other beliefs, you know. The whole point of arguing that this Resurrection occurred is to say that it was impossible and could only have been brought about by a supernatural power. If you know, as we all know, that giraffes are possible—very worthy creatures—and there was never any good reason to think they were impossible anyway—this is not going to prove anything exciting.

I think this is the crucial point: that the idea of a miracle depends absolutely on the idea of natural law and physical impossibility. It's only because there are laws of nature, there are things that are impossible for human beings, that it becomes exciting to say, "Here! Has something impossible been done?" It's not possible for human beings. It's only possible for a supernatural power.

**Ankerberg:** I think I understand what you're saying. Some time ago, I was asked to conduct the funeral of a lady I had known. Four weeks after conducting the funeral, I came back to that area to speak and the family was gathered together. I asked the family members, "What would you say if your daughter, who was a lawyer, came to me and said, 'While I was having lunch yesterday, I saw mom walk by the table.'?"

Even if she's a lawyer and usually gives credible testimony—none of us would say, "Well, since she said she saw her mother, I need to put her mom's phone number back in my phone book"!

In other words, I think you're saying that because of our past experience, we do not

assume that dead people come back from the dead, even if credible people were to testify that it happened. So let me ask Gary, "How do we get to the point of coming to accept the fact that there could have been a Resurrection in past history?"

**Habermas:** Well, like I said, there are at least two ways. One is to say we have experience in nature of incredible things—answers to prayer, healings, or near-death experiences which argue that life after death is true.

On the other hand, you could argue that if your lawyer friend just *said* that, you'd say, "No. That's not sufficient." But what if she kept going and gave you other data?

**Ankerberg:** Tell us about it.

**Habermas:** Well, for example, I have an illustration I call my "Wal-Mart illustration." Let's say that I'm at Wal-Mart and I also bump into your lawyer friend's mother. Then, two aisles over the mother says, "Hi" to another friend of mine, and two aisles over from there, she says "Hi" to three other friends who are talking together. All of the friends get together in the store and start talking about this, and lo and behold, she appears to the whole group. But in addition to all that, there are other signs. Let's say she was tracking mud on her shoes, and we see the mud on the floor. Let's say she reached over and touched some of the people in the group and shook hands, patted others on the shoulder. Let's say I paused for a photograph with her. Now keep in mind, that if the last time we saw that person was at her own funeral three or four weeks earlier, I'd be saying to myself, "That can't be the person we buried! I mean, I've seen the medical examiner's report. I know this person is dead!"

Okay, but what are my options? We'd start by saying, "She must be somebody else...whatever." These would be naturalistic theories. But let's say this person says to you while you are talking at Wal-Mart, "Come on, Gary. You know I was injured in a

serious car accident. Look, here's the scar. It's not somebody else. It's me."

You might respond, "You really can't be here."

But she says, "Well, pinch me! Pinch me!"

And I'm saying, after a while, the mud on the feet, the pat on the shoulder, the conversations. There's going to come a point at which you say to her, "Goodness! I don't know what to do. I have a medical report, I was at your funeral, I saw the car accident, there's the scar on your head. You've been my friend for three years."

Then, you ask the other people who were with you at Wal-Mart, "Did you also see her over there? Did all of us see her? Did you see her singly?"

Someone says, "Maybe it was a hallucination."

"No. It couldn't be, because we saw her as a group, as well as in different smaller groups. Okay, now, did anybody else touch her?"

So, I'm saying, there reaches a point at which you say, "This doesn't fit my experience, but it does seem to be the same person who died." I think that's Thomas' point. There's no way this person can be walking around.

So Thomas says, "I want to check it out."

And Paul says, "I don't believe what the witnesses are saying, so I'm going to kill all of them." But in going about that, he, too, sees Jesus!

James says, "No way"—until Jesus appears to him.

I'm saying that the second way to go after it is to say, "There can be **so much data** that it overrides what we think the natural scheme of nature is."

And I'll add this about the laws of nature. The laws of nature are not some Humean or, let's say, some Newtonian principle—and Hume is better than Newton but, they're not something to keep things from happening.

**Flew:** No.

**Habermas:** "Laws of nature are statistical descriptions of what usually occurs when nature is left to herself"—to quote C. S. Lewis. Since they are statistical descriptions and not rock walls, statistics can be overridden and therefore I have to be open to the fact that the lady we saw at Wal-Mart was the same lady at the funeral. I at least have to be open to that.

**Ankerberg:** What do you think, Tony?

**Flew:** Well, I don't think it's the thing to go on about here but I radically disagree with this idea that laws of nature are merely statistical.

I want to go back to the point that a miracle is an overriding of a law of nature, or if you like, doing something that is known to be practically impossible for human beings. And I think there can be evidence for this, but it depends on your having justified prior beliefs, not merely about the existence of a supernatural power, but a fair amount of supplementary belief about the nature of and the intentions of that supernatural power. Just to say, "Oh, there must have been a sort of personal force at the beginning that set off this..." What is really wanted, and is available, surely in this particular case that we're arguing about, is the whole tradition of Mosaic theism. It's not just God as a super power, omnipotent power. It is the God of the whole tradition of Mosaic theism, the God of the Old Testament. And it is the belief in **that** that I think is going to make belief in these miracles rational belief.

**Ankerberg:** Dr. Habermas.

**Habermas:** I agree. I agree. But in the last segment we were talking about Jesus claiming, and therefore plugging into the God of that tradition, saying, "I am the Son of God. I am the Son of man." Then He rises from the dead with all this evidence. It's precisely plugging into that tradition, which is the strongest argument for Jesus being

who He claimed to be.

**Flew:** Yes.

**Habermas:** So if He *is* raised, you have somebody who claims to be the Son of God, and God doesn't raise heretics from the dead.

**Ankerberg:** All right, we're debating the topic, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" and when we return, we will talk about other evidence that might persuade a skeptic to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Stick with us.

[break]

**Ankerberg:** We're talking with Dr. Gary Habermas and Dr. Antony Flew. And Gary, what other evidence would you present to the naturalist who says there *has* to be a naturalistic explanation? Tony doesn't seem to know how to explain the historical evidence for Jesus' Resurrection that you've presented so far. But his concern is, "Hey, just in the ordinary *experience* of things, it couldn't happen." Now, what else would you say to him?

**Habermas:** Yes. One is just the overpowering evidence for the Resurrection. But the other way to go after it is to say, this world admits other exceptions. Now, near-death experiences, to give an example, would not be a miracle. However, if near-death experience is evidence of afterlife, Jesus' Resurrection would still be unique. But if people are living after death, now that makes you take a whole new look at the Resurrection. So, my interest in near-death experiences is not the tens of thousands—if Gallup is right, almost 8 million—Americans who have had near-death experiences. My interest is not the tunnels and the lights because that could be "temporal lobe"; it could be lack of oxygen. Since 1972, I've collected almost 100 cases of near-death experiences where

something evidential happens two blocks, or in some cases, two miles away.

Now, if I can just give one example—this is a real recent one. Medical doctor and cardiologist, Michael Sabom, in his 1982 book, *Recollections of Death: A Medical Perspective*,<sup>31</sup> said, "When I wrote that book we only had *near*-death experiences. Now we have *post*-death experiences."

In his most recent book called *Light and Death*<sup>32</sup> he gives the case of a Southern mother in her 30's who had a brain aneurism. They had to fly her out to Arizona for a special technique. I'm given to believe that only one doctor in the world does this, but it took 30 doctors and technicians in the room helping.

What happens is this. When he opens up her skull, if the aneurism is right there, you repair it. But if it goes down deep, they put into effect what they call "Operation Standstill." And this is crazy because they basically kill their patient.

Now, this lady went out to Arizona. He cut open her skull, went down and found this aneurism. It was way too deep, so they had to kill her. And what they did was cool her body temperature down to 59 degrees and get all the blood out of her head. They stopped her heart; they stopped her brain. These were stopped for hours.

He's doing his work and to make a long story short, he got the vessel, he repaired it, and she is doing fine today. Okay? But the interesting thing is, in her testimony, when she heard the saw turn on, she said she was out of her body and as it were, "looking over his shoulder at the top of her head."

Now, when they were getting near to the point where they were going to kill her, she described six points of corroboration. She said, "I had this idea that the drill would look like a pizza cutter or something, but," she

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31. Michael B. Sabom, M. D., *Recollections of Death: A Medical Perspective* (Harper Collins, 1982).

32. Michael B. Sabom, M. D., *Light and Death* (Zondervan, 1998)



said, “it looked like a pen with a little tiny.... Where did you get that pen? You had a socket wrench next to you.”

And the medical doctor said, “What do you mean socket wrench?”

And he’s wanting her to give evidence. She said, “Well, there was a box that sat open with all these interchangeable parts.”

He said, “Draw me a picture of the drill.” She drew it.

“Draw me a picture of the socket set.” She drew it. And then she tells things that went on in the room. They couldn’t find her artery. They had to go to the other side. She identified which doctor made the decision, which doctor couldn’t find the artery. It’s in her medical report.

Interestingly, she tells a joke that one of the doctors told—a very politically incorrect joke. And I have the original manuscript and the joke is in there. But when the book came out, they excised the joke because they didn’t think it was good for people to read it, I guess.

But during this experience, they had to kill her. I mean, she was dead for three hours and she has all these points of memory. I could go on and give others.

In one other case, a girl drowned. She was under water for nineteen minutes. She reported what her parents were doing at home that night. What her mom did for dinner. Where her dad was sitting. A G. I. Joe that her brother played with. A doll that her sister played with. She talked about a popular song that came on the radio. She had no brain activity and was comatose. She came to three days later, looked up and told the doctor, “You’re the one that resuscitated me.” She told this big, long story and the doctor checked the data from just three days earlier.

Now, I think these are some hard cases and there are dozens of others like them. Now, if this is true and there’s life after death—this isn’t Jesus—but if there’s *life*

*after death*, it allows us to understand a model for what we call Resurrection.

**Flew:** Is that supposed to show life after death?

**Habermas:** Well, I think it....okay, not extenuated life. Not heaven/hell, but what I would argue is minimalistic life after death. By minimalistic life after death, I mean minutes—sometimes hours, minutes after cessation of heart or brain waves.

Now, to me, if a person is recording something, if it’s in my medical report that I flat-lined at 3:02 and I had no brain wave at 3:15, and I report something that happened a few minutes after that, or an hour later, and I can tell you what went on, say, a police report and it’s after the event; no, I don’t think this proves life after death in the traditional view of heaven/hell but in the sense of having data from minutes after death. I would think life after hours of death would be tough for a naturalist. I mean, naturalism doesn’t normally admit life after death.

We can talk about A. J. Ayer’s case. He had a near-death experience. He stands before a light that he says is the Governor of the Universe. He’s a friend of Tony’s. One of a triumvirate of British atheists.

**Flew:** An acquaintance.

**Habermas:** An acquaintance. And Ayer has this near-death experience. He’s 80 something years old and he writes an article called, “What I Saw When I Died,” and he argues that it was veridical. He argues that it was truthful, that he truly stood before this red light and he said, “I’m open to the view of life after death.” But he said, “I hope it’s not real.”

And then he ends the article and he says, “For all my American friends, I’m still an atheist.”

**Ankerberg:** Tony, does that open up the door in terms of the possibility of more than naturalism?

**Flew:** Hum? Not really, I think, but this is

another subject. It's one of my favorite subjects actually. I've written a lot of literature about a possibility of a future life.

**Ankerberg:** What would you say happens in terms of those cases then, naturalistically?

**Habermas:** They report something miles away when they have no heart or brain activity?

**Flew:** This is the sort of thing that's normally called "out of the body" experiences, isn't it?

**Habermas:** Except in OBE the person's not anywhere close to death. In an NDE, they are close to death. In the case of this lady from Alabama, I think, or Georgia, she's *post*-death, by all accepted standards. You know, 59 degrees blood, no blood in the head, no heartbeat, no brainwaves for hours. She shouldn't be reporting anything, should she?

**Flew:** No. But if she was really dead, she shouldn't be recovering in this way. This was not a miraculous recovery.

**Habermas:** Well, yeah, you're right. I don't think these are miracles. But in a naturalistic world view, why does A. J. Ayer think he's standing before the Governor of the Universe? And why does, ... by the way, that little girl who was under water for 19 minutes, she said she was with an angel named Elizabeth. We don't know if any of that's true. But what I'm saying is, this is intriguing evidence for somebody who has no brain activity. She was on a lung machine. By the way, her doctor gave her a ten percent chance of living and a one in ten thousand chance of living with her faculties. Three days later, she came to spontaneously and said, "You're the guy who resuscitated me. Where's the tall guy without the

beard."

He said, "I'll get him for you."

This guy is an agnostic and I've talked to the doctor myself. Guess what. He's no longer an agnostic. He's a theist. He's not a Christian, but he's a theist.

**Flew:** Well.

**Habermas:** So it's evidence for something.

**Flew:** Yes. I mean, this is the sort of thing that societies for psychical research, or nowadays it's called parapsychology, investigate. And it seems to me one begins to start talking about, not psychokinesis, extrasensory perception, and so on.

**Habermas:** But you don't believe in ESP.

**Flew:** No.

**Habermas:** So what does a naturalist do with reports from miles away when there is no brain or heart activity?

**Flew:** I don't know about this one. I know what to do with most ESP reports because basically people, again and again, try to establish evidence for this and the only way we'll demonstrate this is a repeatable demonstration.

**Habermas:** But, of course, all these people have functioning brains and hearts.

**Flew:** Yes. Yes. This is a new angle.

**Habermas:** But with no brainwave and heartbeat, this is quite extraordinary.

**Flew:** This is a new one to me. Yes. This is certainly a new one.

**Ankerberg:** Dr. Habermas, in terms of all that we've been talking about, where do near-death experiences fit in? What is the evidence showing so far?

**Habermas:** Well, we haven't talked about this a lot, but Christians want to talk about a theistic world view<sup>33</sup>. As Tony said, it's not

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33. Evidence for a theistic world view: 1.) Good arguments for God's existence; 2.) Evidence for God being the true author of Scripture; 3.) Evidence from Old Testament of God acting in time; 4.) Jesus doing miracles; 5.) Jesus rises from the dead; 6.) Today—double-blind experiments on prayer—In 21 out of 26 categories the person is statistically better. 7.) Documented near-death experiences. Conclusion: The Resurrection is not an isolated event but part of the "big picture." God is working in other ways, too.

just God out there, it's the God of the Old Testament. There's a whole tradition here. So if we have good arguments for God's existence and we have evidence for God's writing Scripture, if we have evidence for His acting in time, if Jesus does miracles then rises from the dead; and if today we see cases of double-blind experiments where a medical journal publishes answers to prayer where 21 out of 26 categories the person is statistically better; we see some healing examples for which I wish we had time to go into; near-death experiences; and then we talk about the evidence for the Resurrection, I think the Christian's point is, the Resurrection is not isolated, it's part of a "big picture"—what we would want to call a theistic world view. It's part of a big picture and in that picture, the fact that God raised Jesus is extraordinary. It is one of a kind and shows Jesus is who He said He is. God is alive and working in other ways in the world, too.

**Ankerberg:** All right, please stay with us. Next, we're going to have questions from the audience.

## Program 6

### Questions & Answers

**Ankerberg:** Welcome. We're glad that you have joined us. This is the time we entertain questions from our audience. So here's the first question.

**Audience Question 1:** This is for Dr. Habermas. Dr. Habermas, in order to give Dr. Flew some evidence for a biblical world view, can you give a scientific or philosophi-

cal argument for the existence of the Old Testament God?

**Habermas:** Are you asking me if the God of the Old Testament is the God of Jesus, the two Testaments together? That sort of thing?

**Audience Question:** That God actually does exist philosophically or scientifically. Because it seems like Dr. Flew's argument is, "I can't believe in the Resurrection because my world view is that resurrections don't happen." And he's saying that if you can give him perhaps some evidence that God exists, then perhaps the evidence for the Resurrection is more believable.

**Habermas:** Okay, I think there are two parts here. Is this a theistic universe? And is Jesus who He claimed to be in that universe?

This is not a debate on God's existence, but if I were to identify the arguments that I like the best, probably my favorite arguments right now are the complexity, the scientific complexity arguments that are sometimes indicated or identified as scientific teleological argument. I'm impressed with arguments from the complexity of life—people like Michael Behe, Sir Fred Hoyle, and Chandra Wickramasinghe.

Also, some of the cosmological arguments for God's existence and in particular I think the Kalam argument<sup>34</sup> has some promising things to say. If God exists, you want to know that He's the God of the Bible and if I think there is one such Being—and I think that's part of the philosophical argument—if He has the same characteristics as the God described in Scripture, then they're the same Being. But I think you could continue to follow this right down the line. In the Old Testament I think we're told that the Messiah is going to be divine. Isaiah 9:6 calls

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34. The Kalam Cosmological Argument: (1) Everything that has a beginning of its existence has a cause of its existence. (2) The universe has a beginning of its existence. Therefore: (3) The universe has a cause of its existence. (4) If the universe has a cause of its existence then that cause is God. Therefore: (5) God exists. (<http://www.philosophyofreligion.info/kalamcosmological.html>)

Him God; Micah 5:2 says His goings forth have been from everlasting; Daniel 7:13,14 might be my favorite because we're told about the Son of Man, He is coming in the clouds, and He's there with the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7. So I would argue that the Resurrection ties Jesus in with the Old Testament hope and with the God of the universe to have precisely this line that Tony is talking about. I agree with him that it has to be a whole picture, not snippets here and there.

**Ankerberg:** Tony, what do you think?

**Flew:** Well, I've been insisting on the difference between the rational approach for someone who does not believe in the Mosaic Deity and someone who does. And I'm relatively happy with the idea that people who believe in the Mosaic Deity think that the Resurrection occurred and so on.

**Ankerberg:** Let me ask you a question, then. In your debate with Dr. William Lane Craig, you were talking about the Big Bang. Craig was arguing that scientists claim there was a start and so philosophically he was saying there has got to be a "Starter." Now, you didn't seem to like that. Why not?

**Flew:** Well, if the physicists can go no further than the Big Bang, this is not any sort of positive reason for believing in a Creator. It's a reason for saying it is beyond the capacity of human beings to discover what, if anything, produced the Big Bang. This is where investigation has to stop. This is all we can find out.

**Habermas:** Well, Tony is a friend of mine but it seems to me that when the going gets tough, Tony opts for "no evidence." We just don't have enough. If science says there is a Big Bang and everything that begins to exist has a Beginner, I don't see how the universe is an exception. We get to the Resurrection and he agrees with the facts, bails out a little bit on hallucination, and says, "But we don't have enough evidence." But we do because we're debating about facts we both believe.

Near-death experiences are another. I'm just saying, every point in which we get a little too close, it seems to me the table has turned on naturalists. For a few decades I think the table has turned against them. And I'm not used to naturalists of great repute saying things like, "I'll opt out of the conversation at this point because I can't go any further."

And I'm saying they can't go any further because that's the state of the evidence and we must decide on the evidence in front of us.

**Ankerberg:** All right. Next question.

**Audience Question 2:** My question is for Dr. Flew. One of your fellow countrymen, C. S. Lewis, came to Christ late in life. As you know, he came there because he was tired of listening to himself point out that Evil existed in the world and realized if there was Evil, he had to have a referent that was Good, an ultimate Good from which to contrast Evil.

I'm wondering in listening to you talk tonight and answer these questions, Sir, whether or not you've wondered or worried about putting yourself into a sort of metaphysical straightjacket over the years?

**Flew:** I'm not sure how one goes from there, but it may be of interest to you to know that I was acquainted with C. S. Lewis in my time at the University of Oxford, both as a student and graduate student. I went frequently to meetings of the Socratic Club, an organization which he founded and, for certainly through most of the 40's and 50's, chaired. You might also be interested to know that in his later life, he became very distressed about Evil because basically he was confronted with the choice: Are things good because God says so, or does God approve of them because they were good? And he couldn't see the way out of any way other than saying that absolute power is its own justification, as Calvin and others said.

**Ankerberg:** But you still didn't answer the

question, though, and that is, what would it take for you to cross the line? Because you do have Jesus showing up in history and you do have the historical evidence that He was killed, put into a tomb, and He appeared to His disciples. You aren't doing anything with the evidence. It's one thing to say, "I don't believe it." That's an assertion. It's another thing to say, "Here's evidence to back up my assertion to knock your assertion."

**Flew:** What I would regard, or I do regard in all these things is that the evidence of what was going on in Jerusalem is baffling and inexplicable. I think that I would have reason to believe that the explanation that the Resurrection actually happened if I accepted the background of, well, basically what at least the Sadducees and the Pharisees believed—the whole tradition of the Old Testament—and I don't.

**Ankerberg:** Gary, do you want to respond to that? Do you have to be a Jew to believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead?

**Habermas:** No. And I think a number of people have come to believe. I mean, I won't give the biographies but there's a number of people—C. S. Lewis was one—who have come to believe because of the evidence. I was serious when I said Tony is a very moral person. But Lewis' problem was, "What is your ground for saying you have a problem with evil? These evil things are going on, why are they going on?" You can't say that unless you have an absolute moral standard of good. At least I think so.

**Ankerberg:** Well, isn't the amount of evidence kind of pushing you over the line? In other words, we're not talking about mathematical equations here where two plus two equals four, and you just put in the numbers you want, because history is probabilistic, isn't it?

**Flew:** Yes.

**Ankerberg:** And in dealing with probabi-

listic evidence, isn't it like going into court in a sense, where you look for enough testimony to take you beyond a reasonable doubt—not a hundred percent certainty—but to the point where probabilistically, you **should** intellectually cross over to Christ's side.

**Habermas:** As Lewis said he did. He said, "I came kicking and screaming, the most reluctant convert in all of England."

**Ankerberg:** Now Tony, I know you are married. You were telling me about your wonderful marriage and it sounds delightful. If we analyze the basis upon which people get married, we realize it's not an absolute mathematical certainty. One person is projecting to the other; and they are both gathering evidence to try and answer the question, "Does this person really love me?"

You can't get inside the other person's mind one hundred percent. You can only analyze the data that you're getting. And you made an ultimate commitment to her when you said, "I do." Some have made their commitment of marriage on far less evidence than what we have for Jesus rising from the dead.

**Audience Question 3:** My question is for Dr. Flew. Dr. Habermas cites quite an enormous amount of historical evidence for the Resurrection. Do you have any evidence as far as books or claims of people in early centuries disputing the Resurrection? And if not, why not? Further, how could the disciples go around proclaiming Jesus' Resurrection, if others were denying it?

**Flew:** Well, presumably the majority of the people in Jerusalem at the time didn't believe it. And that's one of the great shortages of evidence which I pointed out at the beginning. One of the reasons I think the whole thing is so difficult to be sure is we do not have anything at all from the non-believers in Christianity. We don't have any explanation as to why they were not converted.

**Ankerberg:** Well, it seems to me that

Paul was a proven skeptic, and at first persuaded against Jesus, and James was a skeptic and against him, and it seems that Thomas was a skeptic and against him, and yet they were all converted.

**Flew:** Yes, they did. But these are the people we have heard about. But there wasn't a great sweep in Jerusalem. After all, there were a lot of persecutors and so on. They were not persuaded. And again, if the earthquakes and so on that are recorded in the Gospels and the darkening of the skies did occur, we need some explanation as to why people were not persuaded by these dramatic things.

**Ankerberg:** Well, it's interesting, isn't it, that some non-Christian historical sources did mention the darkness and the earthquake, didn't they, Gary?

**Habermas:** Two. Thallus in about 52 A.D. and Phlegon a few decades later both mention the darkness. Phlegon mentions the earthquakes. And this is an example, I mean, I want to be kind to him but this is an example as I said earlier, when he gets real close to the evidence, he pulls away. The question was, what first century evidence do we have, not why don't we have any first century evidence? And he said, "Well, that's a great question. We don't have any first century evidence." And I'm thinking, then how is this position established? If the Christian can be asked to give first century evidence—we've had three hours of testimony on first century evidence—the critic should be able to produce some first century evidence. But he said there isn't any. That's the problem—there isn't any.

**Flew:** Say, wait a minute. We don't have any evidence about why the people in Jerusalem around 30 A.D. didn't accept this.

**Habermas:** But there is no contrary evidence to the Resurrection, except for the lone report: the Jews said the disciples stole the body—which doesn't hold.

**Flew:** No.

**Habermas:** See, what I'm saying is, Christians could be asked to produce first century data. And by the way, Josephus not only records the disciples' belief that He was raised from the dead, so does Phlegon. The same guy that records the earthquake and the darkness—Phlegon, a freed man of Emperor Hadrian—says, "Jesus appeared to His disciples and showed them His wounds so He could be touched." That's a non-Christian source about the end of the first century, seventy years later.

**Ankerberg:** And doesn't Tacitus, isn't he the one that documents this happened under Tiberius Caesar and Pilate?

**Flew:** How is this man at the end supposed to know what was happening in Jerusalem at this time?

**Habermas:** He wrote a book called *Chronicles* and he was an ancient historian or chronicler and he thought there was enough data to record that. But I mean, my point is, there's no contrary data and since there's no contrary data, if we're talking history now and not philosophical world views and biases, then what first century data is there?

**Flew:** What do you mean by contrary data here? It is alleged that someone rose from the dead. What contrary data could there be other than a direct investigation of that particular case?

**Habermas:** That would be wonderful, wouldn't it?

**Flew:** Yes, it would be. But....

**Habermas:** But you can't argue from the absence of evidence.

**Ankerberg:** The other thing is, what would motivate people like Tacitus, Suetonius, Josephus to put these facts in their writings?

**Flew:** My goodness! They didn't put in a Resurrection occurred there.

**Habermas:** Josephus does. The belief in it.

**Flew:** Oh, yes, he said that people be-

lieved it, but that's quite a different thing from producing evidence that it occurred, isn't it?

**Habermas:** Plus, Phlegon says "He was raised and showed Himself to His disciples." A freed man of Emperor Hadrian. He wrote the *Chronicles*. He was born about 80 A.D.

**Ankerberg:** Yes. And to argue that it didn't happen but they put it in there anyway would be saying that non-Christians are in on this conspiracy. In other words, what's the motivation for them to include it?

**Flew:** Well, the motivation I would presume to be that they believed that this was said at the time....

**Ankerberg:** And why would they believe it was said?

**Flew:** Well, they may have had some contact with people who were there at the time.

**Ankerberg:** Now, Tony, isn't that good evidence? I mean, you said in the Craig debate that what is needed is evidence as strong as we have for Tiberius Caesar. We need something similar for Jesus Christ, but you went on to say that you don't think we have it. And I'm saying, what's different about the evidence for Tiberius Caesar? If we can show that the data for Christ is actually better than for Tiberius Caesar or for Alexander the Great, do you want to say that Tiberius Caesar didn't live, or Alexander the Great didn't live and do the things that are recorded about him?

**Flew:** Yes, but data about these chaps is not data about a miracle, is it?

**Habermas:** By the way, the Roman historians—he's right. On Tiberius Caesar you have four sources. On Jesus you have basically four major sources.

A historian named Velleius Paterculus who wrote about Tiberius and he lived in Tiberius' own lifetime, that's a great source.

But the only problem is, he wrote about Tiberius' military exploits; nothing about him being caesar.

All right, the next source for Tiberius is Tacitus, and it jumps eighty years.

The next best one is Suetonius—jumps ninety years.

And the fourth source for Tiberius is Dio Cassius, 212 A.D.—almost two hundred years later.

The best sources for Alexander are three to four centuries later, yet we turn around and say Mark is too far away at forty plus years. Matthew and Luke are too far away at fifty plus years. John is too far away at sixty years. It seems we're not playing by the same rules for evidence here.

And by the way, you say they don't record miracles. But they do. They do. In Suetonius' account of Tiberius Caesar he ends his chapter on Tiberius Caesar by talking about these miraculous prophecies and portends of coming things. And nobody shrinks back and says he must be a loser and his history can't be history. But we do have miraculous stuff with Jesus. I wonder why the rules aren't the same?

**Ankerberg:** Tony, didn't your former professor on ancient history, Sherwin White, mention that to you?

**Flew:** No. The one thing he was producing was some evidence that had something to do with Herod, wasn't it?

**Habermas:** Well, when Tony and I were dialoguing in 1985, I was talking about Sherwin-White and his excellent book, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*<sup>35</sup>. He was a specialist not only in Roman history, but a specialist on Roman law. And that book, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, reads like F. F. Bruce or something. He's talking about all the points in which the New Testa-

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35. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1963).

ment is true and I just brought this up in the debate to Tony in '85 and I said, "What do you say about Sherwin White?" And I was surprised when he said, "Far be it from me to disagree with my old Oxford tutor." And I had no idea he had studied under him at Oxford.

**Audience Question 4:** This is for Dr. Flew. Could you give me a brief summary of your case for philosophical naturalism?

**Flew:** Well, I don't think it is something that really needs to have a case for it. This is the history of science and the achievement of science and I don't need to produce some argument to show that a great deal has been discovered about the world.

**Ankerberg:** Right along that line, what do you do with history that, on a probabilistic basis, seems to break the naturalistic worldview? Again, using the illustration of the farmer, the animals in the zoo were outside of his experience. So when he saw them, he didn't want to accept them. Much is outside of our experience, but isn't the evidence pointing to a conclusion outside of our experience?

I think of the folks who looked at the world at one time and thought the evidence pointed to it being flat. If you start with that view, how could you ever get to it not being flat? It was **evidence** that changed their minds. Whether it is medicine, or science, or the leaps that we have taken, putting a man on the moon, people at one time did not believe it was possible. But there have to be strides. You can't come and say, "This is how the universe is" *a priori* and simply conclude, "It's this way." It would seem to me you have to investigate whether this took place or not and be open to going with the flow. Don't you?

**Flew:** Well, in a sense if one found that resurrections were going on left, right and center, then clearly one would have to revise

one's view about this.

**Ankerberg:** Do you think that's right, Gary, that you have to have resurrections going on left, right and center?

**Habermas:** No. It's all the better that there's only one. I agree with Richard Swinburne<sup>36</sup> that the best case for a miracle is a one-time event that the laws of nature could not be expanded to accommodate. And that's truly the case with the Resurrection and that's why I think left and right that the Resurrection is taken so seriously because it is an exception which would seem to indicate God's hand if it occurred.

**Ankerberg:** Question.

**Audience Question 5:** This is a question for Professor Flew. According to the records in the Gospels, Jesus said, "Touch me not for I am not yet ascended to my Father." My question is, Was Jesus talking to Mary or was she having a hallucination?

**Flew:** Well, I don't believe there was anyone there. No. Because I regard this sort of thing as practically impossible.

**Audience Question:** For what reason?

**Flew:** Well, it's a matter of the whole development of natural science. And, of course, it's only because you think that this sort of thing is normally impossible that you think there was something remarkable about a particular case where you believe that it happened.

**Ankerberg:** Let me ask a follow-up question. Remember Dr. Habermas' illustration of seeing a person you witnessed as previously being buried now showing up at Wal-Mart. Add to that, your wife and friends who are with you also see this person. Twelve students from your class also happen to be at Wal-Mart and they, too, see your friend. Now, at what point does the mounting evidence change your philosophical viewpoint? I mean, how would you persuade a fellow professor at school who

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36. Richard Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle* (London: MacMillan, 1970).



holds to a naturalistic world view that you and your friends actually saw this person?

**Flew:** What am I supposed actually to have seen?

**Ankerberg:** Somebody you witnessed as previously being buried who is now walking around at Wal-Mart.

**Habermas:** You saw a buddy and you have a lot of evidence that he was there but you were at his funeral a week earlier. How much evidence would it take you to convince you? Would you deny your own senses if he were in front of you? What would you do if you were in Thomas's shoes?

**Flew:** Well, I must say I find it very difficult to answer this question. I mean, if you describe a situation which everyone here believes is altogether impossible, and then ask me, "What would I do if confronted by this?" If I **were** to be confronted by this, I should have to think of an answer. But I cannot at the moment predict what I would do confronted by an absolutely ridiculous and impossible situation which everyone knows to be ridiculous and impossible.

**Ankerberg:** But again, if you really did see that person, how would you go about convincing another Dr. Antony Flew of what you saw? Wouldn't it be ironic to actually have the evidence, but not be able to persuade another person?

**Habermas:** I mean, what would you do if you were A. J. Ayer and had a near-death experience and believed in your mind that you stood before the Being who is responsible for the whole universe? See, he was in that situation.

**Flew:** Yes. I should wonder really why this sort of thing as described by Ayer should persuade me of such an extraordinary conclusion.

**Habermas:** But if you thought you were there and stood in front of this Light who was responsible for the universe, that might shake you up a little bit. It apparently shook

him up.

**Flew:** Well, yes, I'm very puzzled about this: why this should lead Ayer to think he was confronting the Maker of the Universe when what he actually says he experienced was some sort of patch of light. I find his reactions are simply unintelligible. I can't understand why a person like Ayer should believe that this experience was sufficient. I would have thought if you were going to see the Maker of the universe, you're going to see something a bit peculiar, you know? Somehow dramatic and surprising. But what he says he saw is the same sort of thing that most people who have seen that sort of thing, say they have seen. He said, "I saw a colored patch." Why does someone seeing something utterly unexciting, utterly undramatic, say, "Ooh! I thought I was confronted with the Maker of the Universe! My goodness! I must rethink my whole philosophical position."

It seems to me this was a reason for thinking he was getting a little crazy. It's such a grotesque, utterly inappropriate, utterly extraordinary reaction to what he says he saw.

**Audience Question 6:** Dr. Flew, I want you to know that I believe you're real even though we haven't touched. Would you agree that proving a person rose from the dead today would be the more difficult to prove than two thousand years ago, considering our abilities to create special effects with cameras and mirrors, computer imagery, and laser generated holograms?

**Flew:** You're probably right. Yes.

**Audience Question:** So would you say that if someone was bent or set on disbelief, it would be very difficult to ever present enough evidence to convince them?

**Flew:** Yes, conceivably if I were in the position of a Creator wanting to persuade people of something, I would find, given the powers of omnipotence, it was comparatively easy to do it, you know? I wouldn't set

about trying to do it in the capital of a Roman colony, you know, and at that time and do it before the invention of modern media and so on. But if I were...actually, one of the ways if I were doing it at any time would simply be to produce an appropriate voice making some prediction of some dramatic effect and doing this once or twice, you know, to be heard right throughout the world.

**Ankerberg:** But the fact is, to pontificate and say this is how you would have done it is one thing. But you still have to posit a cause for the Christian church, the origin of which goes right back to these events. The main message of the Church has always been, "We saw Him."

Dr. Habermas, could I ask you to comment and differentiate between the early Christians and the people who believed that the Hale-Bopp Comet was coming for them? There's a lot of people who sincerely believe in crazy things. How are Christians different?

**Habermas:** Yeah, there's a huge difference. People who say that they're waiting for the Hale-Bopp Comet or people who say, "David Koresh is the Messiah" or something like that, the difference between those people and the disciples is that it's much easier to mistake David Koresh than it is to be a first century disciple and say, "I believe He is the Messiah because He was raised from the dead." What I'm saying is, the disciples have data that nobody else has. No major founder of a religion is believed to have been raised from the dead. I mean, there are "dyed-in-the-wool" followers in those groups who would never make that claim. So what the disciples had that nobody has is experience with a resurrected Being. In other words, we can be wrong on our beliefs about people, but in the case of the disciples, their beliefs were tied to empirical data.

**Audience Question 7:** Dr. Flew, are you aware of the fact that every disciple, includ-

ing Paul, died a martyr's death, I mean, horrible deaths because they believed and taught about the resurrected Christ? James was thrown from the temple mount. Peter was crucified upside down. Paul was beheaded. I believe it was Thomas who was skinned alive. Do you think that they would have died these horrible deaths if they simply believed in a hallucination?

**Flew:** Well, I'm afraid that if it had seemed absolutely real to them, they might have done it.

**Ankerberg:** The problem is, if it was just a hallucination, Jesus' body would still be sitting in the grave, and skeptics could have checked it out and the message would have been squashed in Jerusalem. How could the disciples stand in Jerusalem and say, "Jesus is alive. We saw Him," when His body was still in the tomb three blocks away? How did they get away with spreading this message when it would have been so easy to disprove it? And even the Jewish sources down through the years reported that the tomb was empty. Why would they do that? Doesn't the evidence pile up higher and higher until it's not probable to hold to any other view. Isn't it more probable to believe Jesus actually rose from the dead?

**Flew:** The more persuasive you make the case for the Resurrection, the greater difficulty you have in explaining why so many people in Jerusalem at the time who were in a position to know this apparently did not believe it. I don't know what the answer is.

**Ankerberg:** Gary, what do you say to that?

**Habermas:** Several things. First, we can't argue from non-evidence. We don't know who didn't believe. I mean, as far as we're concerned, maybe the majority of people believed. We don't know because we don't have data.

Second, a real intriguing verse: Acts 6:7b says, "Many priests became obedient to the faith." We're not told why. That's another

insight.

Third shot. I think philosophical world views overpower evidence in many cases. I think people don't believe because they don't want to believe. That doesn't touch the evidence one iota.

**Ankerberg:** Another way of saying it would be, let's say you had a kind of "Agatha Christie" scenario, where the police broke into a locked room that only had one door. Inside they find a body on the floor that is cut into 18 equal pieces. They also find a person standing over the body, holding a bloody knife, with blood dripping off his hands. They bring this person into court, present all the evidence, and then the jury goes to the jury room to make its decision. When the jury comes out, the judge asks the foreman of the jury to, "Please give the verdict."

The guy stands up and he says, "Your Honor, we find the defendant completely innocent." The judge can't believe it. He says, "I need an explanation here."

The foreman of the jury says, "We find the defendant innocent, your Honor!" The judge is absolutely astonished and asks for an explanation. The foreman says, "Your Honor, even though we have seen all of this evidence, and admit it is quite persuasive, we realize it's possible that something else might have happened. For example, isn't it possible that an invisible Martian came down here, took his ray gun and cut the body into eighteen equal pieces, making it look like the defendant did it?"

His Honor would throw a tantrum because he told the jury members they were to give attention only to the facts and **evidence**—not everything that **could** possibly be.

And isn't that the case here? Don't we have to deal with the evidence we have?

**Flew:** Yes. But when one is confronted with a case, some people reporting something that is not possible—a Resurrection....

**Ankerberg:** "Not possible" has to be defined. What *is* possible?

**Flew:** Well, look, unless you think that it was practically impossible, there's nothing to be excited about at all.

**Ankerberg:** Isn't that where near-death experiences come in, where prayer and healing cases enter the picture? Aren't they outside the box? Don't they open the door?

**Flew:** Well, any of these things are things awaiting explanation. Yes.

**Audience Question 8:** Gentlemen, this question is for Dr. Flew. Jesus clearly was a conundrum to the religious leaders of His day. They didn't understand Him. They couldn't explain Him. They asked Him repeatedly who He was. According to the Gospels on many occasions Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. The basis of His claims were the miracles that He performed. He said on more than one occasion, "If you don't believe me because of the words that I speak, then believe me because of the miracles that I perform."

The miracles of Jesus are recorded by both secular historians and religious writers, as is the performing of miracles on the part of the disciples in the name of Jesus. These miracles are also recorded events that Luke wrote about in Acts the second chapter when he said: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

Do you not agree that it would have been fatal to Luke's purposes of evangelism to point to these miracles and wonders and signs as well as these well-known historical events that had occurred "among you" unless he was confident that his readers had personally witnessed these supernatural events and that they would confirm these remarkable events to others?

My question is this: If Jesus was not who He claimed to be, by what power did He

perform such miracles? If His miracles were real, if He claimed to be the Son of God, should it not be unreasonable to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?

**Flew:** Again, I think the only thing I can say is that, if you are starting with the Old Testament background, then that is the reasonable reaction for you.

**Audience Question:** Quite the contrary. I'm starting with a New Testament background. Jesus performed miracles as recorded by secular and religious writers and historians of His day. The miracles that He performed were not without question. In fact, they were so obvious to the religious leaders of His day that they questioned who He was and they were fearful of Him. Jesus' explanation to them was, "I am the Son of God, and if you don't believe me because of my declaration, then believe me because of the works that you see me do." So my question is, by whose power did He perform those miracles which are clearly recorded and evidenced by secular and religious writers alike. And if He performed those miracles by the power of God, is it not unreasonable to believe then He is in fact the man He claims to be, Jesus, the Son of God and was in fact, resurrected from the dead?

**Flew:** If He performed these miracles, then it would be not unreasonable, but in all this, if this is right, why didn't more people believe in this?

**Ankerberg:** Going back to our courtroom illustration, wouldn't you agree that it is not how many people didn't see the fellow pick up the gun and shoot the person, but how many people did see him shoot the other guy? We keep coming back to the point, that apart from the many witnesses, you Christians have nothing.

**Ankerberg:** Dr. Habermas, what do you think?

**Habermas:** I agree. What we have to deal with is the data we **do have**, not the

data we don't have.

**Audience Question:** My point is, focus on the fact that Jesus is who He said He was by virtue of the miracles that He performed. And if those miracles were true as recorded by many, then surely what He said about Himself must be true—which leads you to the conclusion that He was the Son of God and in fact raised from the dead.

**Flew:** Yes. I think, granted the premises, this conclusion follows. Yes.

**Audience Question:** So you agree. He was who He said He was.

**Flew:** Granted the premises, I would agree with that. Yes. I just don't believe these miracles happened.

**Audience Question:** Why would Luke write to the people making an attempt to evangelize people and convert people to Christianity by saying, "Ye men of Jerusalem, you know this man Jesus of Nazareth who has performed these miracles among you." If Jesus had not performed those miracles among them, wouldn't they have said, "Who are you talking about? We never saw any miracles"?

**Flew:** Well, didn't some of them?

**Habermas:** Even the Jesus Seminar today, the miracles of Jesus are "in" right now. And Marcus Borg gives three reasons for accepting Jesus' miracles and one of them is, the enemies couldn't do anything about it. The enemies admitted them. Marcus Borg, the co-founder of the Jesus Seminar. He has a hard time with the supernatural element, but he believes that many of the things that the Gospels reported happened.

**Ankerberg:** What do critics do with the creedal sayings in Acts 1 through 10, where Peter is preaching to other eyewitnesses and appealing to their knowledge of the facts? What do the critics make of that?

**Habermas:** They struggle with that and they especially struggle with 1 Corinthians 15. In fact, Marcus Borg takes the 1

Corinthians account very seriously. He says, "Reading Paul in a straightforward manner, I have to assume he saw something. He definitely believed it was Jesus. I don't know what else to say." And in a couple of places in the Gospels he said Jesus supposedly raised the dead. Now, this is the co-founder of the Jesus Seminar. He said Jesus supposedly raised the dead. He said, "Can I deny that?" He said, "Most of my colleagues deny it." But he said, "I don't think we can be quite so fast here." He said, "He was an extraordinary man and I'm not sure what He did and what He couldn't do." That's Marcus Borg.

**Flew:** Basically, I don't believe in anyone's accounts of a miracle, period.

**Audience Question:** So no matter who wrote them or how often they wrote them,...

**Ankerberg:** I don't think you want to say that, Tony, do you?

**Flew:** No, this is in fact the method of critical history. You try to discover what actually happened guided by your best evidence as to what was probable or improbable, possible or impossible. And the miracles are things that you take to be impossible.

**Ankerberg:** Gary, what would you say to Tony? Is he being unreasonable?

**Habermas:** Tony said something to me going to the airport, if he recalls this. 1985. I was taking him to the airport to drop him off, and I said, "How much evidence would it take for you to believe? Do you wish there was more?"

And he said, "No."

And I said, "Why not?"

And he said, "Christians believe because they want to believe. Atheists don't believe because they don't want to believe."

I don't know if you remember saying that.

**Flew:** No. I don't.

**Habermas:** But I'm guessing that's where he is. It's a volitional matter and he chooses not to believe. And we can't twist anybody's

arm. Jesus never did.

**Flew:** Well, thank you.

**Ankerberg:** I'd like to have a closing comment from both of you. Dr. Habermas, would you go first?

**Habermas:** I think the best case for the Resurrection is one that builds on facts that critics accept for two reasons: it's a common ground that we can both talk about as we did tonight; and secondly, we accept only evidences which are multiply attested for a lot of reasons. When you go with those facts, you have to make a decision based on that data. And if the evidence seems to indicate that Jesus was raised, I think you have to be strict. I think you can be a skeptic but I think there's a point at which you have to say, all the evidence we have is in its favor. None of the first century evidence is against. Then you narrow this list almost arbitrarily down to four, five, six facts—and these facts can disprove the naturalistic theories. These facts can show that Christ was raised from the dead—evidences. And you do it on this minimal basis.

Tonight I think we've shown that of all the naturalistic theories, including hallucination, there are serious problems with them. But here's where everybody agrees. Here's the bottom line. Every critic believes that the disciples *thought they saw* the risen Jesus. So here's the issue. If the disciples thought they saw the risen Jesus, and hallucinations don't work, as far as we know nothing else works. All we have is this is an incredible event. There's got to be a time at which we say what they gave evidence to occurred, especially if this is a world where I can see God, prayer, healing, life after death and this man is claiming to be the Son of God. And I do think the Resurrection evidences who Jesus claimed to be.

Back to my wife. I think two thousand years later, the Resurrection says if Jesus was raised and He offered that life to everybody else, I mean, I think when the disciples saw Jesus, they saw walking, talking Eternal

Life. I mean, that's just to bring it down to the lowest common denominator. They saw Heaven walking on earth. And I think that allows me to say someday I will be able to see my wife—on the authority of the Resurrection. Let me just end this way. Every ounce of evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus is evidence for my resurrection if I believe.

**Ankerberg:** One last thing before Tony talks and that is, what is the message that Jesus gave? Let's assume for a moment that it's not just intellectual facts that we're trying to have people accept here. How would you illustrate what real belief is versus just holding to historical evidence?

**Habermas:** Sure. Your example of marriage is fantastic. I think what Christianity is about is saying "I do" to Jesus. You gather data about somebody. Nobody would suggest getting married in a vacuum. You learn facts about somebody and then you exercise faith. You say, "I do." You don't know if it's going to be a perfect marriage, but you have facts that lead you to say, "I do."

I think that's what the case is with Jesus. He has invited us to check Him out and there's a point at which you've got to say, "I do" or "I don't." And the point at which you say, "I do" is what Christianity is all about. It's not something...I mean, there is something mystical there, but I mean, for all intent and purposes, it's about as mystical as marriage is. I mean, we've got data to go on and we make a decision. And all I can say is, after ten years of skepticism myself, I'm not trying to stand up here and say I'm special but I'm just saying God gave me a shot and I said, "I do." God gave C. S. Lewis a shot, and he said, "I do." I think we were able to make a decision based on the data we have, not on data we don't have.

**Ankerberg:** Dr. Flew, I really appreciate your willingness to come from England to be with us, knowing your busy schedule. And I've also appreciated your honesty. Please give us your closing remarks. Summarize

the evidence that we have been talking about.

**Flew:** Well, I think the most important thing I said was that what it is rational to do about any evidence depends on what you already believe with good reason. And therefore, what it is rational for, well, people with the background of Jews at the time of the events in Jerusalem, is very different from what it is rational for people from a completely different background of belief and knowledge.

**Ankerberg:** But you would admit that the hallucination theory needs a lot of work?

**Flew:** Oh, yes. But this idea that some may think impossible about saying that it was a hallucination, if you believe that people had some experience and they believe that they were seeing something, do you believe that that something wasn't there, this seems to me just what a hallucination is. You may say that sort of thing doesn't occur, but what I'm claiming, if I claim that people believed they saw something that wasn't there, I am just claiming that they had that sort of belief in something that wasn't there.

**Habermas:** But if the data say these are the last people to see hallucinations—say, Paul with the conversion disorder, the disciples who saw Jesus in groups. In other words, if hallucination doesn't work, then what do you do?

**Flew:** Well, it does work with individual cases; therefore, you've got to....

**Habermas:** Then you have to have 500 individuals...or twelve or 20.

**Flew:** Now, this is the first mention of those 500. And as this is the first evidence we have, it seems to me if there had really been a collective thing of 500 people, we'd have heard something about this in the Gospels.

**Habermas:** But Paul predates the Gospels.

**Flew:** Exactly so.

**Habermas:** We have it in Paul.

**Flew:** Yes, exactly so. And if this really occurred and you know, Christians were talking about it, it's impossible to explain why it's not...the story is not repeated.

**Habermas:** By the way, in the Gospels you have an appearance in Galilee with an unspecified number of people. You have an appearance in Jerusalem before the Ascension with an unspecified number. Some people think those are one of the big groups. But we do know there were twelve

and the Gospels say that, too. So even twelve individual hallucinations would be incredible. It would just be incredible. Hallucinations are rare.

**Ankerberg:** Well, gentlemen, we must cut it off here. Let me say "thank you" to both of you for spending this time with us and presenting and debating the facts. Those of you watching, I hope you will examine these facts and draw your own conclusions.

Jesus's disciples claimed that he rose from the dead. They reported that he appeared to them over a period of 40 days. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul lists in detail several occasions in which Jesus appeared to different people, including groups of over 500 people at one time. Most of those people were still alive at the time that Paul documented these things in writing, and therefore, the chances he would get away with just making it up are very slim. If he did, these witnesses would have immediately refute him if they knew he was lying. Since there was no one who claimed that Jesus di... If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then the foundation for the Christian Faith would forever be destroyed. Jesus Predicts His Own Death and Resurrection. Seven hundred years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah had written about a future Messiah, who would suffer and die for our sins, but later be restored to life. Having eliminated the main arguments against Jesus's resurrection due to their inconsistency with the facts, Morison began asking himself, "did it really happen?" Instead of looking for evidence against Jesus's resurrection, he wondered how strong the case was for its actual occurrence. Several facts stood out. The Resurrection of Jesus is the Christian belief that Jesus Christ came back to life on the third day after his crucifixion in approximately AD 30/33. As recounted in the New Testament, after the Romans executed him, Jesus was buried in a tomb, but God raised him from the dead, after which he appeared to many people over a span of forty days before he ascended to Heaven.