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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you. We've got a great show in store.

And hey, if you didn't see the announcement on Instagram, Carlos and I want to feature a small business every time we're visiting on the Here For You Tour in June. Because you know one of my favorite things about traveling is getting to experience what makes your town so special, the fun, the food, the shops.

So check out the link in our show notes to fill out the form, telling us why your small business should be featured. Submissions are due tomorrow, April 25th. You have till the end of tomorrow. We cannot wait to learn more about you, your town, what you do. And as I said on my Insta story, if you make puzzles or gluten-free snacks, you've got a leg up on everybody else.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible partners. This episode is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). As your friend, I want to make sure you have access to ways to process the good, bad, and ugly in your life. One of the ways I like to do that is through counseling. The work my counselor and I have done together has truly changed my life for the better. And I want that kind of emotional and mental health for you too.

Therapy is all about deepening your self-awareness and understanding because sometimes we don't know what we want or why we react the way we do until we talk through things. And we don't have to navigate that alone. Literally, I have counseling today and the number one thing on my list is, why do I keep doing this? Because she helps me see what I can't see.

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This episode is sponsored by BetterHelp. So give online therapy a try at betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun to get 10% off your first month.

Annie: Today on the show I get to talk with Dr. Jeremiah J. Johnston. Y'all, buckle up. Oh my gosh, buckle up. Jeremiah is a New Testament scholar and does ministry internationally as president of the Christian thinker society. He loves the local church and serves as the pastor of apologetics and cultural engagement at Prestonwood Baptist church, a church that I love, as well as the dean of spiritual development at Prestonwood Christian Academy.

He also released a book in March called *Body of Proof: The 7 Best Reasons to Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus--and Why It Matters Today*. And this is the perfect thing for us to talk about as we are reading through the Gospels right after Easter.

When I tell you this is one that you are going to be the mind-blown emoji, just get ready. Just get ready. We were all hollering at the end of this episode. It's so good. You guys are gonna love getting to know him and hearing his thoughts on the resurrection.

So here's my conversation with Dr. Jeremiah J. Johnston.

[00:03:15] <music>

Annie: Jeremiah, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Jeremiah: Annie, it's so great to be with you. Thank you for modeling being a Christian thinker and having fun.

Annie: You're kind. We are having a great time. These conversations, we just had one at the end of February with Tim Mackie. People lose their minds about conversations about the gospel. You are Dr. Johnston but we will call you Jeremiah.

Jeremiah: Thank you.

Annie: You literally have studied in a PhD way the crucifixion.

Jeremiah: Right. Terminally it almost killed me.

Annie: Tell me why. When you are getting your PhD or when you're starting all these studies, what led you to "I want to focus on the crucifixion"?

Jeremiah: For me, Audrey and I, my wife and I were in ministry but I felt like I had so many pitfalls. I wouldn't have self-identified as a Christian thinker. And when I open up the Gospels, and I see that the greatest commandment is Jesus who Messiahionizes the Shema, He changes the Shema, He eschatologizes it to Himself. He said, "If

you're gonna love God, the Shema says, Love God with your heart, soul, and strength." Jesus modifies and says, "Love me with your mind."

And Annie, I've got to be honest with you. I'm growing up in the church, love Jesus but I wouldn't have called myself someone that love God with all my mind. And I have to know, Is this legit? Is there evidence? Can we have faith and evidence beyond?

I heard that in Sunday school. So called my redhead wife, Audrey, one day we had a 12 week old baby, was during the swine flu epidemic, and I said, "Honey, are you okay if we move to Oxford, England and just start studying this and see for ourselves the evidence? And she said, "Absolutely. Let's go."

Now, it went on from there. So for me, it was all about discipleship. For me, it was all about evidence. Do we have enough evidence to say Jesus physically, bodily rose from the grave? What about these mythicists who say that Jesus never existed or that we can't trust the Gospels? So wow. You talk about fun. I've had so much fun studying it. The evidence is so robust, I am now iron-fisted for these signs underneath.

Annie: We have a whole list of resources for people to read along as they are learning about Jesus and reading the gospels this year. And *Body of Proof* is... I mean, people have got to read this. I have goosebumps the whole time I was reading it.

Jeremiah: Thank you. That's kind of you.

Annie: It is unbelievable. In the book, it's you have put your hands on more historic... like literally touched more pieces of historical Bible text than like 90% of Bible scholars.

Jeremiah: I can say that without blinking, without flinching. I mean, when you're in Oxford... So I worked in the Sackler Library, the Griffith papyrology room in Oxford. And what's so great is there's like half a million more fragments that they haven't published. If anyone's listening to this right now and you want job security, be a classicist, because it will outlast your lifetime. I'm sitting there I have an electron microscope—they have these on plates—and I'm looking at the-

Annie: Like between two pieces of glass like you'd look in science class?

Jeremiah: Exactly. But it's not like a movie. It's not like we have to like put nice gloves on. It's really not like that.

Annie: Control the air.

Jeremiah: Yeah. At least in Oxford in the Griffith papyrology room, it looks like shoe boxes full of papyrus fragments. So papyrus, for our audience, that's like paper, notepad 2,000 years old that were just preserved for us in the dry sands of Egypt.

And I'm sitting there, Annie, in Oxford, I mean, the setting couldn't be more intellectually robust, I'm looking at a third-century Gospel of John fragments.

Annie: That is believable.

Jeremiah: My brain almost broke. And then the Holy Spirit say to Jeremiah, "I'm giving you these experiences to be a reservoir, not a channel." We need to replicate being a Christian thinker. So my life since that very moment, I remember it like it was yesterday, has been all about replicating Christian thinkers.

And the cool thing about the Gospels and what I love about That Sounds Fun, you invite us into a conversation. And that's exactly how Jesus taught. In the Gospels, since we're focusing on it, Jesus asked 322 questions.

Annie: I love that you're doing this to us. He asked 322 questions.

Jeremiah: Three hundred and twenty-two questions. In fact, a great Bible study, y'all should do some time with the gospel study, is literally just do a Bible study on the 322 questions that Jesus asks.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Jeremiah: So for the skeptic-

Annie: Why don't you write that book?

Jeremiah: I know. ...even the seeker who's listening right now who thinks that you can't bring questions to our faith, that's not the faith we see reflected in the Gospels. In fact, I'm fascinated, Jesus asks more questions than He answers in the Gospels. Just let that sink in for a minute. He asks more questions than He answers.

So for Jesus, He wanted us to love Him with all our minds, which meant He was a big boy, He is a big boy, we can take our toughest questions to Him.

Annie: Three hundred and twenty-two questions. Will you say the other thing? We sat down, and you said, "Well, you know..." and started giving me Jesus facts, and I was like, "Hold on, Jeremiah."

Jeremiah: I know you know this. Listen, this emphasis on the Gospels-

Annie: I definitely don't know. But I was like, "We got to hit record. I don't want to miss a piece of this."

Jeremiah: I'm a normal person. I have five kids, triplets who are six.

Annie: Triplets.

Jeremiah: I haven't slept in six years. My name is gold-plated at Costco for all the diapers I've... So I'm just normal. But one thing I've totally given my life to is to study the Gospels. PhDs know about a little, Annie. The little I know a lot about are the Gospels.

And what's fascinating to me as a historian, if we were right now in your studio to put all four gospels up on the wall here and we wanted to trace the life of Jesus, I asked myself, how many days could we come up with? Not 24-hour periods. But like, how many Monday, Tuesday, you know, days? And it's only 26 days? We can't do more than that.

The Gospels when you think about the impact, and you just went through the Gospel of John, to ask, you know, John says, "These things are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God." But then John adds, if we were to write everything Jesus did, the libraries couldn't contain it. The gospels only give us about less than a month, three and a half weeks of the life of Jesus.

Annie: That is unbelievable. Across 33 years, we get three-and-a-half weeks' worth of days.

Jeremiah: And that message transformed the world.

Annie: Jeez, that is unbelievable.

Jeremiah: We have to let that just set in. So when we look at His life, when we study the questions He asks, but then we actually look at the content of the Gospel, the Gospel focuses on—And by the Gospels, I mean, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the canonical gospels—they focus on this central event: death, burial, and resurrection.

That is what I focus my studies on. Because if you're a Christian listening to this today, the center point of a Christian worldview is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Annie: The resurrection. Yes.

Jeremiah: You know, we can agree to disagree about a lot of things around the table. That is a hill we die on. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, Paul uses the word... It kind of sounds like prototype and English. It's protoise in Greek. Paul says, "This is a matter of first importance."

So when you think that Paul writes 32,000 words of the New Testament, and then you think about the fact that, you know, Paul says, "Hey, I've written a lot here, but this is the most important," then we need to take note of that. And he said, "What is it? I'm going to give to you what was given to me that Jesus died for our sins," so we can talk about that, "that He was buried, and that He rose again." That is first importance for the Christian.

And yet, you know, unfortunately, we're living in a time where most Christians can't really share what are the evidential facts behind the gospel. We put our faith in facts, not feelings. Our faith is what we believe, not what we feel. So as a historian, I'm there in Oxford, what evidence is there. I ended up writing a 93,000 word [Foreign language 00:10:53], which is you use those words on Oxford because-

Annie: I've never heard any of those words.

Jeremiah: We have to bring in a little German and Latin in Oxford just to join the club. But it literally means a history of interpretation. So I trace the whole history of resurrection belief and the Judeo-Christian motif from the earliest writings of Hebrew Bible through second-century Christianity and the extra-canonical gospel to say, what can we believe?

Annie: First of all, what I would pay to see all of our listeners' insides' temperature going up? Because we are all getting so lit up by this conversation. I'm barely staying in my sleep.

Jeremiah: Let's go.

Annie: In *Body of Proof*, one of the things I love that I would love for you to talk about is you talked about the book of Peter and all these other books. Will you help us understand (a) are we supposed to be reading those? And (b) how do they help us if they didn't end up in the Bible?

Jeremiah: So let me take you back in time. I was at an academic conference called Society of Biblical Literature in Chicago, 5,000 Bible scholars come together of every stripe, every... It's a very unique thing. If you ever want to have fun, go to an SBL conference.

Annie: Oh, listen, I would be the mouse under the table eating the scraps. I would love it.

Jeremiah: I was blown away. I was invited by William Lane Craig to give a presentation called Extra-canonical Confirmations of New Testament History. "Tell me something about New Testament history, just don't give me the Bible."

Annie: Oh, okay.

Jeremiah: So that's essentially the layman's version. I'm the only non-Craig to present-

Annie: I love that you wrote about that.

Jeremiah: ...which made me stick out like a sore thumb. They're these heavyweights, Craig Keener, who his one footnote on miracles became a multi-volume. You know, the guy's a classicist. There's Craig Blomberg, gospel scholar, Craig Evans, finest Jesus scholar, 700 publications, Craig Hayes, and William Lane Craig, who Richard Dawkins won't even debate. And then there's this guy Jeremiah.

I just was trying to hide under the table.

Annie: No way.

Jeremiah: But I was a professor and a candidate at the time and I've decided to say, if the gospel writers made up the story based on second-century writings, based on writings that we can compare with, you know, that didn't make it into what we call the canon or the scriptures as we have them today, if they made it up, they did a really bad job. And I presented this.

And the cool thing about an academic conference is the panelists are gonna respond and say, "I don't agree with that," or the audience can respond. In fact, you could actually distribute the paper in advance if you want to. So you have a robust peer-reviewed academic conversation.

Craig Keener walks up to me afterwards and he said, "You need to pursue this. This is a fun new way to argue for the resurrection of Jesus." Because hey, if you look at the embarrassing details that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John keep in there, but then you compare that with like the Gospel of Peter, second century, Gospel of Thomas or any of-

Annie: Are those books that are written by Peter and Thomas that just didn't make it into the Bible?

Jeremiah: No. They're early Christian cartoons. They're extrapolations. They are apologetic works for an unsophisticated audience. So yeah, the Gospel of Peter was not written by Peter. The gospel of Thomas not written by Thomas. There's about 60 to 65 gospel-like writings. There's the Gospel of Barnabas. There's the gospel of Mary.

Annie: Oh my gosh!

Jeremiah: And when do you study those... Should people read them? Yeah.

Annie: Where do you read them?

Jeremiah: You can pull them up. They're 2,000 years old. So you can pull up the Gospel of Peter and read. Just make sure you're reading a good translation of it. So when you read them, and you actually compare them with the Gospels, you can see why they're not thought of as gospel-like writings. Because they're just so far-fetched. And they seem to be filling gaps that the gospels were criticized by.

So when I'm up there presenting, Annie, the canonical gospels leave themselves open to attack. They leave themselves open to disagreement because why on earth Celsus and Porphyry, these early objectors from the second and third century? You mean you have women as your first witnesses? What kind of lowbrow religion is this that you would have women be your first witnesses? Why didn't He appear to the Jewish High Priest or the Roman governor Pontius Pilate?

Second-century gospels come around, and guess what? They changed the details. They have Jesus appearing to Pilate. They have Jesus appearing to the high priest. Jesus comes out with something called polymorphic Christology—He comes out like He's a giant because a bigger Jesus is better. And then the cross follows Him and talks.

Annie: And the cross talks?

Jeremiah: Yeah. So they call it the cross gospel.

Annie: Jeremiah, what is happening?

Jeremiah: Sorry, I don't want to go down the rabbit hole too much.

Annie: Oh, I love all this. No, no.

Jeremiah: Take the blue pill or the red pill, Annie. Let's go.

Annie: That's right. With all those writings, how do you use those to prove the gospel if those are sideways?

Jeremiah: This isn't original to me. There are great other thinkers out there like Richard Bauckham, Peter J. Williams from Cambridge. I've just taken some of the ways they argue to just the resurrection narratives. No gospel narrative actually describes the resurrection event itself. What we have in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we have empty tomb tradition. So we have this discovery that the tomb is empty. Then we have what's called appearance tradition.

And this is where scholars say, we cannot argue with the fact that a whole lot of people had an experience of seeing Jesus alive over 40 days. We can't argue with that. Like you can't make up alternative facts when it comes to the experience of hundreds of individuals. And then you have these hostile witnesses to Christianity.

I mean, you have James, the Lord's brother, you have Peter, who was a complete misogynist. I mean, he grew up in Judaism, which said better to burn the Torah than teach it to a woman. And then he gives us something like Galatians 3:28, "There's neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free. There's neither male nor female. We're all one in Christ Jesus."

Because of our historical distance, Annie, we just don't get, I'm sorry, how seditious the Gospel writings were. I mean, they were hitting Rome in the face. So then when you read the second-century gospels or third-century extra-canonical gospels... And I have to just be careful. Like, why isn't he calling them apocryphal gospels? Because as a historian, that's seen as me having bias and being pejorative. So I don't call them apocryphal gospels as some people do.

Annie: And the Apocrypha is... but that is what Catholics have in addition, right?

Jeremiah: Yes.

Annie: They don't have the book of Peter though, right?

Jeremiah: You are a great Christian thinker, Annie. I love this. I'm having fun on this conversation.

Annie: Okay, great. Me too.

Jeremiah: There's an Old Testament Apocrypha which—this will spin people's heads around—was included in the original King James Bible. So if you ever meet these KJV people, just say, "Oh, do you enjoy the Apocrypha?" Because that was also included, depending on how you count them, 13 to 14 intertestamental books.

Then fast forward, you have the New Testament Apocrypha, which lasts for a couple 100 years. It's all these gospel-like writing. So you know, Jerome actually translated from Israel. A lot of people don't know this. If you go to the Church of the Nativity, and this is where you go down to the Grotto, Jerome translates the Bible of 1000 years, the Latin Vulgate. He includes the Apocrypha, the Old Testament Apocrypha, books that Jesus would have found inspirational like 2 Maccabees that speak about resurrection.

So please, I encourage my students to read the Apocrypha. Absolutely read it. Because then you're going to understand some of the battles that Jesus and His early followers were facing in that first-century world. And then yeah, definitely read those extra-canonical gospels because they get weird, they get odd. Jesus isn't a fun playmate-

Annie: But we don't take them as truth?

Jeremiah: No, we do not. There's nothing historical about it, other than the fact that this is how the Gospels should have been written if we were making up a narrative and not reporting on a factual one.

Annie: Wow. So what we can see in that is when people take some facts that were true that they know from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and they write fictitious story around them?

Jeremiah: They embellish them. They literally embellish them. That's the term.

Annie: And somehow, 2,000 years later, the actual gospel has survived.

Jeremiah: Exactly, in its full force. We're right now at nearly 6,000 fragments. I want to encourage your audience who are doing the Gospels like I am with you, when you look at the manuscript evidence for the Gospels, this is where it gives me all the goosebumps. I have to, as a historian, and I've mentioned this, I think, in *Body of Proof*, I have to appeal to Roman emperors for the same level of manuscript at a station that we have for Jesus of Nazareth. Do you realize how amazing that is to think about if we can't believe that Jesus is a person from history, we shouldn't believe anything from late antiquity?

There's a lot of people that you're reading the Gospels for the very first time, they are indeed historical documents. And if you don't take them as that now, whether you believe in Jesus as your own personal Savior, that's a different story. But what we can say is the history, the data is so good, I have to appeal to Roman emperors for the same level of source data that I have for Jesus.

Annie: Oh my gosh. So cool.

Jeremiah: I mean, I feel like today that can be lost on people. So when you're reading it, wow, there's not a closer second.

Annie: Oh, man. Are you having the best time, Craig? I know. I'm having the best time.

Jeremiah: We're just scratching the surface. Let's keep going. This coffee is so good.

Annie: Yeah, we're just starting.

[00:20:14] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners that I love so much, the [Hallow App](#). You know, we'd love to talk about prayer around here. But the best way to learn more about prayer is to actually put it into practice, like we talked about last week with Addison Bevere.

Hallow is the number one prayer app in the world with over 10 million installs, 150 million prayers completed, made by our Catholic friends for all of us. It's an incredible way to help you connect with God when you feel like you don't know where to start. It has thousands of prayers, meditations, and peaceful Christian music for all parts of your day.

So if you want to be more intentional about having a plan when you sit down to spend time with God, Hallow is a great resource. When I use Hallow, one of the things I love to do is just scroll through and pick out prayers or devotionals that fit the topic or the conversation or my theology that I really want to learn more about. Not only will it help you dive deeper in prayer, but it'll help you build that daily prayer habit.

You know, you know, I love Eastertide, it's last all the way to Pentecost. And Hallow has a really cool easter Bible study happening right now where you dive into the book of Acts with our friend Jonathan Roumie from *The Chosen* and you know him because he was here on the pod, and world-renowned biblical scholar, Dr. Scott Hahn. They are helping us figure out what it looks like to follow Jesus as we learn from the apostles in the book of Acts.

Alongside the new Bible study, pray and meditate using more than 10,000 guided prayers, including prayers alongside Mark Wahlberg, I love listening to him pray, and NBA champion Drew Holliday, you'll know we love his wife, she's been on the

pod, lots of the cast of *The Chosen*, Jim Caviezel from *The Passion of the Christ* and our buddy, Father, Mike, and so many more.

You can get an extended three-month trial of all 10,000-plus prayers and meditations at hallow.com/thatsoundsfun. Again, hallow.com/thatsoundsfun.

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And now back to our conversation with Dr. Jeremiah.

[00:23:29] <music>

Annie: When I read *Body of Proof*, I actually had never heard the skeptics, like the case against Jesus's resurrection. Things like He wasn't really dead. Like they say about Abraham Lincoln, that there's scratches on the top of his coffin because he wouldn't actually dead.

Jeremiah: I haven't heard that one.

Annie: I heard it in forever ago.

Jeremiah: Wow.

Annie: I don't know if it's true.

Jeremiah: Okay.

Annie: So that is extra apocryphal. No, I'm just kidding. Will you talk a little bit about what are some of the big high level... I mean, I know there are people who don't believe in Jesus that would go, "Ah, that's just not a true story." But there are some real skeptical thoughts like Jesus was a factual person but here's why the resurrection isn't true.

Jeremiah: Let me give them to you as if it were role-playing and I'm a skeptic. They would say that Jesus' body was buried in a mass, criminal burial pit.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jeremiah: Other thinkers would say Jesus' body was left hanging on the cross and likely, are you ready for this, eaten by dogs?

Annie: Oh gosh. Is that what happened-

Jeremiah: No.

Annie: ...to people on the cross? Is that hurting the history?

Jeremiah: No.

Annie: Oh, weird.

Jeremiah: This is where I bring up... I give the round actually nine. It says seven but I had to kind of plus at the end. But one of my evidences in here, Annie, is when you look at Jewish burial traditions, the evidence of how Jews buried their dead, that never happened. It never happened that a body was left hanging on across eaten by dogs.

So you can't foist facts that don't have verisimilitude. That's a word your audience needs to know. Verisimilitude means it's like it really was. It corresponds to reality. It's very similar to how we would expect it to be in the first century.

So I kind of go on this short... And again, you don't need any prerequisites to read my book. I wrote *Body Proof* to where anyone could pick it up and within three hours of reading, you're going to be totally up to date on the resurrection of Jesus.

Annie: It is such a hand-it-to-all-your-friends book.

Jeremiah: I'm able to jump in on the deep end with someone like you. I mean, you're a teaching pastor, you are a Christian thinker. You get this. But I also don't want to intimidate anyone from like, Oh, do I need a prereq? No, you can pick it up if you've never read the gospels.

The archaeology is so recent in my book, where we discussed the fact that nobody lost track of burying the dead in Judaism. Only during wartime. So we're talking 66 to 70 when literally Jerusalem is surrounded by Titus. That's the only time bodies were left hanging on a cross or unburied. In the Jewish mind, burial was a sacred honor.

What do we see in the Gospels? Well, if the Sanhedrin condemned someone to die, it was on the Sanhedrin to be in charge of their burial. We know that from the Mishnah. What do we see when we open the Gospels? Two members of the Sanhedrin? What are their names? Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, they asked for the body of Jesus to give Jesus... And here's where my nomenclature is more precise in the book. He is given a proper burial, not an honorable burial.

So Joseph of Arimathea offers his family tomb. No one's been buried there before-

Annie: But no one's been buried there before, right?

Jeremiah: So it's proper. It's not honorable, but it is proper. So the idea that his early... You'll remember from the book is like maybe they got the wrong tomb.

Annie: Yeah, maybe the women went to the wrong tomb. I was like, "Get out of here."

Jeremiah: There's some chauvinism and bias even in that from modern scholars. Because that comes out of Germany higher criticism, which I don't even use that term. It's a pejorative thing to say. "Maybe they got it wrong." No, that would never happen in Judaism. Do you know how many bodies there are right now buried on the Mount of Olives?

Annie: Oh, so many from my view.

Jeremiah: 150,000 is the best estimate. I wish people could see me right now. In Judaism on the Mount of Olives, people are buried facing the Eastern Gate. Jews are buried that

way, literally so they don't even need to turn around in the resurrection. They just come right up and they literally just have to go straight.

So, again, burial was a sacred honor for Jewish families, even if your family member was a crucified criminal. We actually have the heel bone of poor, old Yehohanan who had to be buried so quickly in AD 26 during the reign of Pontius Pilate by the way.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jeremiah: He's buried. We have his ossuary. That's how we know his name is Yehohanan. And his heel bone is there and it literally has the crucifixion spike in the heel bone.

Annie: Still in there?

Jeremiah: Oh, yeah.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Jeremiah: And guess what? It has wood washers between it. I have pictures I show when I speak on this. So he had to be buried because you always buried that night. So if you had a son or daughter who might have died that day, they were buried that night. If you died during the night, you would be buried the next night.

So there was not this modern... We have to be so careful. So I love your show. We have to read the Bible with first-century eyes. We don't want to read it with Western eyes. So when we understand that, man, burial was sacred, even Yehohanan had to be buried so quick. They just leave the crucifixion spike in the seal. We can't pull that out, just throw it in there.

Annie: Which makes me think about the time that Jesus resurrects the little girl, she must have died that day.

Jeremiah: Jairus' daughter. Yes. Same with Luke 7, the widow of Nain's son.

Annie: Oh, that he's carrying.

Jeremiah: They are in the burial procession. He had died that day. Jesus stops, touches the bier, said, "He's not dead. He's just sleeping."

Annie: That's why Lazarus is such a wild story.

Jeremiah: Yes. He could not have been more dead in the Jewish concept.

Annie: Wow. Jeremiah!

Jeremiah: Lazarus is a lot of fun because he's dead after four days. Well, there's a Jewish tradition... And again, I want to be careful for the scholars and skeptics. I'm not saying every Jew believed this.

Annie: Sure. Sure.

Jeremiah: There is a tradition in Judaism in the time of Jesus that the spirit of the dead person hovered over the body for three days. But on the fourth day, the face kind of gnarled, and then the spirit left the body. That was evidence. So again, if we knew that in the fourth century, or excuse me, in the first century, Jesus shows up, John 11 and it's the only time I can read that Jesus shouts in the gospels, except for the cry of dereliction. In Greek, he goes, "deuro exo (come out Lazarus)." And he comes out, even says the body stinks.

So again, all of this is wonderfully early eyewitness testimony. And again, where *Body of Proof* helps guide people by the hand is when you look at the history and the traditions of that time, we see that the Gospels get it right.

Annie: Okay, so let me ask you one more question before we go to resurrection.

Jeremiah: Absolutely.

Annie: We just learned this when we read in March in chronological order. The only miracle, besides Holy Week, that's on all four is feeding the 5,000. Why? Why do you think that everybody put that in there?

Jeremiah: You know, I think that, again, food scarcity was such a huge problem in the first century. 25% of the Roman Empire was sick, dying, or in need of immediate medical attention on any given day. In the time of the Gospels, most people only ate two meals a day. So it's kind of again, because of our historical distance, what's the big deal? You know, can't they miss a meal? No, these people were dying by malnutrition, starvation. Remember that show *A 1000 Ways to Die*?

Annie: Yeah. Yeah.

Jeremiah: Literally, we have people that died of a toothache in the first century from the skeletal remains. So when you look at life expectancy was 20 years of age and the time of Jesus in Jerusalem. So when we hear Luke 7:22 that this man, you know, go tell John, the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the dead nekroi egeiro, they literally stand up. He gives them evidence.

I think the feeding of the 5,000... Again, we don't have to get too spiritual to assess this. If you just do a demographic study, most people were already starving, they were fascinated by Jesus, and there probably couldn't have been a bigger miracle, except for someone raising from the dead than someone that can multiply food.

Annie: Are y'all watching *The Chosen*?

Jeremiah: Oh, absolutely.

Annie: Do you think it's good?

Jeremiah: I was an early adopter of *The Chosen*.

Annie: Oh, yeah.

Jeremiah: You can ask our daughter Lily. Like I ugly cry. I'm like, Huhuuuu

Annie: I know. I know.

Jeremiah: It takes my breath away. And I wasn't looking forward to it at first because I just thought another corny, Christian thing. But man, I got locked in.

Annie: The feeding at 5,000, I just had never... I don't know what I thought but I never thought they would pick up the basket and they'd be full. I think I always pictured them tearing bread and just not running out. But the basket were just full.

Jeremiah: When you said the focus on truth, the focus on you know, not focusing on your feelings, there's some great... The greatest miracle Jesus said is truth. I love the focus on truth in *The Chosen*. So yeah, as a gospel scholar, I'm sitting... Dallas is a buddy of mine, full disclosure. I'm just loving it.

Annie: I hope so. I hope y'all know each other.

Jeremiah: Yeah, absolutely.

Annie: Because I think you should-

Jeremiah: Actually I know his dad Jerry even better.

Annie: Yeah, there you go. As we get closer to the season where Jesus gets crucified and resurrected, I hope that they will bring you in.

Jeremiah: Yes.

Annie: When we narrow down your expertise, which I don't want to because we can do this, oh, if you knew how lucky you are that we have something else today. So we're not doing a five-hour podcast.

Jeremiah: I don't mind. I love it.

Annie: So what you're proving here is the seven reasons to believe that the resurrection of Jesus really happened.

Jeremiah: Absolutely.

Annie: I mean, you don't have to go through all seven but talk about how it's just lasted, how it changed things then. It changed Paul. Like you're talking about a change in Paul's life. And it's lasted. How did you determine that was the first one you wanted to say?

Jeremiah: Jesus isn't the only guy who shows up in the first century and said, "Hey, everybody, I'm waving the flag, I'm the Messiah."

Annie: I love that chart you put in here of all the different messiahs.

Jeremiah: And by the way, that's a truncated version of the would-be Messiah. I mean, there's actually many more. There's at least 10, maybe a dozen in the time of Jesus, first-century world that literally said, "Hey, I'm the Messiah," and they had much larger movements.

In fact, Annie, in the book of Acts, we hear about two different Messiah-like movements. One that followed the Egyptian, 4,000. And they came to not, they came to nothing.

Annie: Right.

Jeremiah: My point is these would-be messiahs claimed to be someone special, when they died, their movement made no impact on culture. What do we see with the Jesus movement? Nobody expects Him to die by Roman crucifixion, we'll get to that in a minute. No one expected a resurrecting figure at all.

Annie: Oh, sure.

Jeremiah: So for the Christian today that tries to read Isaiah 53 into the Gospels, you can't do that. Because when we study Qumran, and when we study, again, the time of Jesus,

people weren't interpreting Isaiah 53 expecting their Messiah to die. And that's hard for some Christians to hear.

Annie: Interesting.

Jeremiah: That was not an interpretation that was... Remember I studied the interpretation of resurrection. That interpretation was had not taken hold in the time of Jesus.

Annie: That's modern day.

Jeremiah: Very much so. And I'm not saying I disagree with that. I'm just saying as a historian. So when you look at the Dead Sea Scrolls community, they were expecting a Messiah who would kill the Roman emperor, vanquish a corrupt priesthood, purify all Israel, get rid of these pagan occupiers. That was the kind of Messiah they were expecting.

Annie: Which is why the disciples said, "Can I sit on your right? Can I sit on your left?" What source do we need?"

Jeremiah: It's why Peter occasionally spoke for Satan. "Jesus, you can't go to the cross." He doesn't realize he's speaking for Satan. And Jesus says, "Get behind me Satan. Don't get in the way of my messianic movements."

So when we study the profound... First off, that's where I love guiding people by the end. They need to understand and this was not expected. No one was gonna believe this. And the gospels tell us in Luke 24 that Cleopas, they're on the road to Emmaus-

Annie: Who do you think it is? Cleopas and Peter?

Jeremiah: I don't know. I can't speculate.

Annie: Man, if you say, "I don't know," I'm gonna quit making guesses.

Jeremiah: It's fun to speculate. I just don't know. But Jesus shows them... Luke 24:21 says, "We had hoped he was the Messiah." They've given up. That's a seven-mile walk. I guess we'll go to the next messianic contender. So my point is kind of a long answer, but no one expected it.

When they did believe it, when they came together in that upper room, within 30 years that movement transforms the world. Christianity's closest competitor in the first century is the cult of Mithra, which is a male-only cult. Like if you were in Ephesus, there'd be first church of the cult in Mithra, only men are allowed, and

then there'd be this Christian movement where women are there, men are there. Jesus empowers women unlike any other figure from history.

Annie: Wow.

Jeremiah: Luke 8 does something so cool in the Gospels. Luke 8:1-3 gives us the names of the women who supported Jesus' ministry. You mean God didn't just FedEx money down to Son Jesus for...? No.

Annie: Right. No.

Jeremiah: And guess what Luke does? Those are the same women in Luke 24 who see the resurrected Christ. They're the first witnesses.

Annie: Wow.

Jeremiah: In Luke 1 [inaudible 00:36:28], he uses the word we get autopsy from, Annie.

Annie: Oh.

Jeremiah: He said, *autoptai*. He said, "We are eyewitnesses," *Autoptai* in Greek. It's the same word we get autopsy. We saw him so we can have a certainty to our faith. So that message then-

Annie: We autopsy this story.

Jeremiah: Literally. That's what it... Again, long answer. That belief that was not expected, these people were not giving into some kind of confirmation bias or cognitive dissonance. No one was going to claim that Jesus rose again. They weren't looking for that kind of Messiah.

By the way, this is another footnote. It's why I think Judas fell out of the boat. He still didn't get the Jesus program. That's why we have the words of institution. Disciples just didn't get it until after the resurrection. Do this in remembrance of me."

Annie: Judas is heartbreaking.

Jeremiah: It is.

Annie: I blame *The Chosen* a little bit more because he look like such a nice guy.

Jeremiah: Those eyes.

Annie: Yeah, his eyes. But also when you read that he had started stealing money, I just was like, "Man, where did you miss it? How did you start stealing money?"

Jeremiah: Exactly. And think no one would know.

Annie: Right. And Jesus... Dude, your guy is Jesus. He fed 5,000 people. You think He doesn't know you're taking money?

Jeremiah: Here's the cool thing. When I see the impact that Jesus made on children and women, that this proclamation that He had been risen from the dead it brought equality to women. There's a letter in the first century, same time of Jesus. I'm gonna quote it. P Oxy 744. It just means Papyrus. That's a piece of paper found in the City of Oxford Linkous. It's number 744. That's all that means.

Love Letter from a guy named Hilarion, believe it or not, to his wife Alice. This is the time of Jesus. This will show you how this message of the resurrection changed the world. He's writing to his wife beautiful love letter and he said, "I'm going to be at work when you... I won't be home yet when you have our baby. [Greek 00:38:22] in Greek. He says, "If it's a boy, keep it, if it's a girl, throw it away." And then he goes on to carry on the love letter.

What do we see in this person of Jesus? Let the children come to me. We see the first social justice missions taking shape. We see charity. We see love. We see hospitality. We see mercy. We see even those of Herod's household according to Paul are believing.

We just don't understand how Christianity changed the world because of our historical distance. And it all comes back to where we began. That centerpiece of the worldview was guess what Jesus is resurrected that changed the world, it's changed my life and that message is going to change the cosmos someday.

Annie: That's so good. I'm not going to cry.

[00:39:07] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Thrive Causemetics](#). Guys, the ads on the internet get me so good with this one, but they did not do me wrong. I'm like that jumper I just purchased last week that is not working out.

Thrive Causemetics products are certified 100% vegan and cruelty-free beauty products made with clean skin-loving ingredients that are always gonna fit you

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Dr. Jeremiah.

[00:42:25] <music>

Annie: Talks about how his death forgives us of our sin.

Jeremiah: Absolutely. This is so important. Jesus' death by Roman crucifixion is the best-established fact of the ancient world Bar None. We have more support evidentially that this guy named Jesus died on the Roman cross than we do any other fact from late antiquity. So let's just start there. The fact that Jesus died is a fact of history. In fact, we can date it. The date of the crucifixion, we have two options.

Annie: Oh, I love this.

Jeremiah: Our audience will know it's usually either AD 30 or AD 33. But we can actually get the date-

Annie: Because of Passover, right?

Jeremiah: Yeah, Passover. There's three different things: the removal of the Jewish high priest, the regnal year, and I get into that in *Body of Proof*. But we know that Jesus was crucified either April 3rd AD 33 or April 5th AD 30. I mean, that's how we can pinpoint with the evidence.

Annie: Which do you think?

Jeremiah: I always go with AD 33 because my wife's birthday is April 5th. I want her birthday to be on the resurrection. It's a real scholarly reason.

Annie: That's a great reason.

Jeremiah: You can go with either on the evidence, but the evidence is just that good. So Jesus in the Gospel... remember, the Gospel was not a word that Christianity invented.

This was a word that the Roman emperors would say when they had a great message.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jeremiah: So when Paul-

Annie: And what's the word in Greek?

Jeremiah: Euangelion.

Annie: Euangelion. That's it.

Jeremiah: Good news. Just good news. I mean, that's all it means. I've got good news. I've got the gospel. This is great news. Glad tidings we hear about it in the canticles of the gospel. When Mark again... we don't understand what a bad dude Mark is for writing this. This guy, when he says, "I'm going to give you the gospel of the Son of God, Savior of the world," Most people think, "Wait a minute, you're not talking about Augustus right now?"

Annie: Oh, okay.

Jeremiah: Those are fighting words because Augustus the Roman Emperor is heralded as the son of God. Okay. I mean, that was there was a gospel of Augustus. And the fact that Mark comes along, earliest gospel, and said, "No, I'm gonna give you the real gospel, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Savior of the world," those were fighting words, Annie. Wow, those were words that were ready to step up to people.

So again, we just think it's this pretty kind of gospel. Oh, you know, that's great. That's a tickly term. No, this was a gospel that Christianity hijacks and says, "No, we have the real gospel."

Annie: Wow. Okay. So how is "forgive us of our sins"?

Jeremiah: So atonement, hugely important. The Gospel, unlike any other religion, it does for us what God's grace can only do—it forgives us. Jesus paid for our sin on the cross in full and rose again. Sin has to be paid for. If you talk to anyone on the street, they're gonna admit they sin, they're gonna admit they do wrong. Even the relativist who thinks that you have your truth and I have my truth, they're still not gonna admit to perfection. And the fact that the gospel allows us to be forgiven and did have peace with God.

I love Romans 5:1. "Therefore having been justified by faith..." So not by my works, not by being a good Christian or raised in a Christian home. "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have shalom, we have peace with God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And that is a peace with God, Annie, that happens once and it lasts forever.

Always condition 200 times in the New Testament to this faith in Christ. It's not the strength of our faith that saves us, it's the object of our faith. Our faith can feel like it's on all kinds of thin ice at times. But again, the object of our faith is the fact of Jesus' death and resurrection. When you study it, that is the facts of the gospel. It's so simple a child understands it.

I've been asked, you know, because we can dive deep on its own theology, someone asked, how much of this do you have to believe to be a Christian? Precious little actually. Jesus loves you. He died for you. He rose again. He wants you. Say yes to that Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible, your sins are wiped away, forgiven as if you'd never sinned.

And then this beautiful word that I've given my life to study: shalom. Jesus makes us whole. He makes us to lack nothing, to be made whole, to have tranquility even as we face the adversities in life.

Annie: That's beautiful. A question I think about a lot is, Jesus says, "I'm going to destroy the temple and raise it in three days." So it's always three days. Jesus died on Friday and resurrection Sunday morning is not three days.

Jeremiah: This is a great question. I want to just calm people down about it. Let's all just chill.

Annie: You're like, "Starting with Annie, we're all gonna breathe."

Jeremiah: The Jewish day starts at 6 p.m. So Jesus spent 39 hours in the tomb parts of three days. The gospels make all kinds of approximations. And I can tell you're kind of a perfectionist like when I read the gospel. Was it three 24-hour periods? No.

And guess what? In the Jewish mindset, because I'm reading the Bible as if I was in first-century Judaica, Jesus goes to the tomb probably around a little after 3 p.m. So that's Friday, the Jewish day then would start at 6pm So Shabbat starts Friday at 6pm

Annie: Which is why they were rushing to bury Him, because I didn't want to work on that day.

Jeremiah: Yeah, got this. I'm gonna sit here and listen.

Annie: No, no, no, that's what we do. I just want to pull people's brain that's that why-

Jeremiah: I love it. This is how cool it is to have this conversation. You're getting it. So then He spends all day Saturday, then probably about 6 a.m. Sunday. That's 39 hours about approximately. Again, the Gospels speak in approximations all the time.

If the gospel... Is it 4,000, or 5,000? Was it one angel or two? Did they all agree like some skeptics want them to agree? That would not smack of authenticity to me. Some scholarly skeptics get caught up and will say, one angel or two? I don't know. There were angels there. All I know is there were angels. One person saw one, one person saw two. Take your pick. It could be both. I don't know.

We can't get caught up in some of these... Is that a contradiction? No, it's a difference. And you would expect that with any kind of eyewitness testimony. So the Gospels have differences in them, right? That doesn't mean they're contradictions. That's marks of authenticity to me. Again, there's not a conspiracy here to get the Gospels right in every single point. Make sure people hear me.

The truth that we hold on to is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that Paul gets right. Paul goes, and he does what the Galatians called, it's actually the Greek word *historeo*. He does history. He does research. He goes and gets his PhD from the three pillars of the church: James, John, and Peter. And he says in Galatians, "I just want to make sure I have the gospel right."

Annie: Wow.

Jeremiah: Remember he said, "They added nothing to me."

Annie: Huh? So why did he... after he learned from them?

Jeremiah: Literally he wanted to make sure he gets the gospel right. We can forget the power of the gospel. I always wondered 1 Corinthians 15, why does Paul begin the most important... This is a mountain peak. I mean, this is Everest of the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8-

Annie: I never thought that till I read it.

Jeremiah: And it's a passage that even skeptical scholars accept is authentically Paul line. Definitely, Paul wrote it. When Paul comes along, and he says, "Now, I want to remind you of the gospel that I preached to you." Why do we need to be reminded of the gospel? Because it's so easy to forget. We forget it every day. We don't

preach the gospel to ourselves every day like we should. That's why I love your focus on the Gospels.

For too many Christians, the Gospels just something that happened once. But the gospel in a resurrection-centric life should empower us every day. What I love about what Paul does, he goes, and again, there wasn't chapter diversification, there wasn't not versification. In the New Testament... you're gonna be so fired up in this podcast. I'm gonna go run a marathon.

Paul goes, he gives the whole gospel, he gives the evidence, he talks about bodily resurrection, he gets to 15:58, "Therefore, be strong, be unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain." The very next verse again, there wasn't a chapter change, okay, the resurrection powers or ethics, we have people suffering, we need to take an offering.

Annie: Wow.

Jeremiah: So there is the key. And this is where in *Body Proof* my wife has helped me so much. She is a busy mom of five kids. Jeremiah, that's cool you know that. But how does that help me be a better mom today? How does that help me with teenagers? How does that help me with crazy boys in my home?

What I try to do in *Body of Proof* is always draw a practical pastoral application to all the evidence of why it actually matters today. So resurrection-centric living, Paul shows us, it's the key to our ethics, Annie. It's the key to our generosity. Of course, it's the key to our joy. We know that. 1 Thessalonians 4, we grieve, but we don't grieve without hope.

Annie: That's right.

Jeremiah: So the resurrection is the one doctrine that unlocks all the other Bible doctrines.

Annie: Wow. Right. Because everyone dies.

Jeremiah: Right.

Annie: Not everyone resurrects.

Jeremiah: Exactly. Yeah, exactly.

Annie: That is a wild thought.

Jeremiah: Except there were some people in the gospels who died twice. I love that.

Annie: I guess everyone who... So let's talk about this for a second.

Jeremiah: Yeah, this is fun.

Annie: When Jesus dies it says that people resurrected in Jerusalem and walked around. So all those people died twice.

Jeremiah: Absolutely. And as did good old Lazarus, he has two different burial spots.

Annie: Oh my gosh, he has two different burial spots.

Jeremiah: Let that sink in for a minute. You can go to Bethany, the first spot. He must have retired to the island of Cyprus because there's a second burial spot. He must have thought, you know, this death thing is not that big of it.

Annie: Right. Done it once.

Jeremiah: I'm not worried about it. I'm gonna go play golf on the island of Cyprus. That's his second burial spot.

Annie: That is wild.

Jeremiah: Jesus is the first, though. And I think I coined this. His body is undieable. It's deathlessness. Jesus resurrects with this new body that will never see decay, it will never need upgrading. And Jesus right now is physical. He's bodily in heaven. So when we think about His new body, that's why Paul calls Him the first fruits of resurrection.

I use this fun word in the book. Jesus uses Adambration. He Adambrates His resurrection by... You know, there's eight resurrections in the Bible. Jesus performed three of them. Peter does one, Paul does one. There's three in the Old Testament as well. Jesus foreshadowed his power over death by performing acts that I call resuscitations because those individuals would die a second time. Jesus is the first to never die again.

Annie: Right. The resuscitation is because it brings them back to life but not in new body.

Jeremiah: Exactly.

Annie: Not in a resurrecting body.

Jeremiah: Not everlasting one.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Jeremiah: But He's just showing. In Mark 8:31, Mark 9:31, Mark 10:33, and 34, Jesus predicts His violent death and resurrection. They're just not getting it with Him. They want Him to be this conquering Messiah. And yet He says, "I'm going to show you a power over death." So as you already mentioned, "Jairus' daughter, widow of Nain son, Lazarus. God knows what He's doing.

Annie: I just want our friends to know you do not have a Bible in front of you. This is all in your brain. You have nothing in front of you. I have two copies of your book.

Jeremiah: I stayed at a Holiday Inn Express last night.

Annie: It is just amazing. For our Jewish friends who are still waiting on a Messiah... Even when I was in Israel in October, there's posters of a dead guy who has been dead, from New York, since the 80s or something that they think could still be the Messiah. What are they missing? What has Jesus not done? What part of His death and resurrection hasn't connected with our Jewish friends?

Jeremiah: This is such an important question because I have a lot of Jewish friends who are archaeologists. And just to take the question a step further, if you go to the land of Israel today, there's about 300 archeological digs that happen twice a year.

Annie: Do you love going?

Jeremiah: Oh my gosh.

Annie: Yeah.

Jeremiah: But you know what? A lot of Bible scholars have never been to the land of Israel. There's a little bias there too. They don't even go visit. Yeah, it's like I'm an expert in a place I've never been.

Annie: That I can go to.

Jeremiah: Exactly. It's not bad.

Annie: It's not Mars.

Jeremiah: And you'd be surprised how few Bible scholars have actually been to the land of-

Annie: It's bothersome.

Jeremiah: It is.

Annie: That feels like a new filter I care about.

Jeremiah: I call it the Bible Land, not just the land of Israel.

Annie: Yeah, you do call it that in the book.

Jeremiah: You need to go to Rome. You need to study all... you know, Turkey.

Annie: Jordan.

Jeremiah: Jordan. Absolutely.

Annie: I haven't done any of that. I've only done Israel.

Jeremiah: So one time Audrey and I literally did 3,500 kilometers and traced the whole book of Acts in Turkey.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Jeremiah: And that was amazing.

Annie: Did you lead a trip or did y'all let just the two of you do it?

Jeremiah: No, I was there to learn. I literally was just checking it out myself.

Annie: That's so cool.

Jeremiah: If you can get through some of the food and some of those places in Turkey, you'll be okay. I digress. So, in the land of Israel with Jewish friends, they're atheists/agnostics, do you know what six sources they use in their archaeology to make sure they're...?

Annie: No.

Jeremiah: And these are very expensive because you have to recruit volunteers. This is why college kids come. They come during the summer and Christmas time. They need to make sure they're digging in the right spot. And they need to make sure where they're digging exhibits verisimilitude with the first-century world that they're studying, if they're studying the first century. They have six books: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, book of Acts, and this guy named Josephus.

Annie: I want to read Josephus. I need to do it.

Jeremiah: 28 times longer than any gospel just so you know, if you compare it. You've got to read Josephus because... Josephus is how I date Acts early before AD 62. Josephus tells us that James, the Lord's brother, is killed by stoning. So we have to ask ourselves, you know... I don't have any brothers. But for our audience, if you had a brother, what would it take for you to think your brother was the Messiah Son of God? People always laugh.

Annie: But not while He's alive. I mean that's the important part.

Jeremiah: Yes. Very interestingly, Mark 3, Mark 6, John 7 all point out that Jesus' family thought He was nuts. They tried to do an intervention on Him.

Annie: Multiple times, yes.

Jeremiah: I mean, again, this is where the Gospels they show they're... they open themselves up to embarrassment. I mean, even Jesus' family didn't believe in Him. And James, I'm getting back to Josephus, Josephus tells us he dies believing that Jesus's brother as the Savior. What changed in James' life?

Well, after His crucifixion, I can just see James working in His construction business, and all of a sudden, brother, Jesus, shows up and is like, "Bro, check out my side dude. Check out my hands."

Annie: "It's me."

Jeremiah: And he goes from a skeptic who's hostile to becoming a pillar of the church. It was the evidence of the resurrection. We could go on for Paul. So Josephus, the Jews, they use the Gospels, they value the Gospels. But here's the point of why this conversation... They're no different from the audience right now. I can point to the robust evidence for the Gospels but I can't make you make a decision for Christ. That's the job of the Holy Spirit. Faith is faith in evidence, though. It's not a rejoicing in the absence of evidence.

Annie: Hey, say that.

Jeremiah: I am a believer in Jesus Christ because Jesus, physically, bodily rose from the grave. I'm compelled to believe that. I have faith in that fact of history. That's why I'm a Christian. So there are things, there are gray areas, there are things that we won't understand this side of heaven. I am a Christian because of that fact.

Now, faith is an element. Faith is trusting God through the uncertainty. Faith is not certainty. You know what I mean? And I think this is where people miss. This is why we need to invite people into these kinds of... we can have fun and study the truth and the evidence of the gospel. And we need to invite people.

So the same with the Jewish population, they are blinded as many people are, who are listening to us right now who are not Jews. You're hearing first-rate evidence for the resurrection. There are at least nine reasons and I don't even touch Gary Habermas' minimal facts, which is a whole nother layer of reasons to believe in the resurrection. The evidence is so good, but we can't believe for you. You can believe. My favorite passage in the Gospel. Can we get to that? Because I just thought of it.

Annie: Go! Yeah.

Jeremiah: Mark 9:20, the dad who says, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

Annie: It's one of the sweetest... I love that. Mark wrote that down for us.

Jeremiah: Yes.

Annie: It's beautiful.

Jeremiah: That is my favorite passage in the Gospel. So for someone right now who's like, "Is that enough faith? Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief," it was enough to activate Jesus in Mark 9.

Annie: And Jesus loved it, didn't He?

Jeremiah: Yeah.

Annie: I know. Oh, I love that. As I was reading your book, I told you this... We'll kind of end on this. But I do not want to. Just to be clear, I do not want to.

Jeremiah: This is awesome. It's so fun.

Annie: As I was reading *Body of Proof*, all I kept wanting to know is what you think about The Garden Tomb versus the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and where Jesus' actual tomb is, and where the crucifixion happened. And thank the Lord, thank you, Jeremiah, you wrote a whole chapter on it, like the second to last chapter. But we talked about that for a minute?

Jeremiah: Absolutely.

Annie: Because our friends have heard us talk about on the show. So there's two options that people when they go to Jerusalem, there's two places that people claim or say, "Jesus died here. He was buried here. This was it." One is beautiful and outside and flowery. It's lovely. You sing songs and you take communion. They give you a little cup. It's beautiful. I love it.

The other is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that is dark, and lots of gold and black... Oh, I also want to ask you about the Holy Fire but we don't have time for it. But I think the Holy Fire is fascinating.

Jeremiah: Yes, it is.

Annie: So talk to me about those two spots.

Jeremiah: Absolutely. If you go to the land of Israel, you absolutely have to stop at The Garden Tomb. It's actually called Gordon's Tomb. General Gordon discovered it. And I just have to be completely transparent with you on your podcast. There was a Protestant response because there are six denominations, the Catholics being one of them that control the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And Protestants kind of needed a competitor to be real honest with you. I mean, we have to be truthful.

And they found this amazing tomb. The problem is it's about 250 years earlier than the time of Jesus. So historically and evidentially, archaeologically speaking, it's not the place. Now, I say that passed orally because I have a Jewish lacquer painting that cost a good amount of money that hangs in my office to this day. I mean, I will take my children, Lord willing, if I'm ever able to take them to The Garden Tomb. But the evidence is so robust and so ancient for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. That is the spot.

So I give a short 2,600-word overview for every one of the latest. Because keep in mind the edicule—what does that mean? It's like a little house inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—was just opened. It took like 50 years to negotiate between the six denominations.

Annie: Like the ladder that's still there.

Jeremiah: Nobody can agree on it. 50-year disagreement over a ladder. This is true, friends. Listen, sometimes truth is stranger than fiction.

Annie: Pastor Kevin said it yesterday at church. He talked about the ladder yesterday.

Jeremiah: Yeah, exactly. So in the edicule, they actually opened it up 2017. So this is an early data point. And they got right down to the marble slab that Jesus' body is proposed to have been laid on and it's all first century.

Annie: Wow.

Jeremiah: You can read about that. Not at a Christian source, through National Geographic. It's only open for a weekend about 60 hours. The evidence is robust. You know, the mother of archaeology is Queen Helena, Constantine's mom. I call her the mother of modern archaeology. She goes to these holy land sites.

There was such an anti-Jewish bias after the Jewish revolt that, you know, Rome saw Christianity is just a Jewish offshoot. And so they decimated these holy sites in Christianity, which they thought was Judaism and they-

Annie: I thought that was so interesting. I've never heard of that.

Jeremiah: They built literally temples over the spots. Well, guess what they did? They kind of preserved them for us, which is awesome to think about. The archaeology goes back... You know, village memory, we could get into that, social memory was so good. People didn't move around. They weren't as transient as they are now, obviously. So, oh, yeah, that's the spot. That's the spot.

Could it be that the resurrection... Because they're only about 150 feet apart, the crucifixion side and then the burial site. Yes. Oddly enough, yes. Jesus is buried outside the city. He's crucified outside the city. So we update you on that in the book. It's really fun for those that have been and those that are going to check out some of the differences and to understand the history of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It's just fascinating.

Annie: The first time I went was 2016.

Jeremiah: Awesome.

Annie: So to know that they've opened it up and seen it since I saw it is wild.

Jeremiah: You can check that out. National Geographic did pictures on it.

Annie: That's so cool.

Jeremiah: Again, I want to point something out about the Christian movement. Archaeology is Christianity's closest cousin I say. Unlike any other religion or belief system in the world, Christianity says, Hey, you can test us against history. You can test us

against history. It actually puts itself to a historical test. So for all the thinkers that listen to this program, there is such robust evidence for Jesus of Nazareth. We can build 65 facts about the birth, the death, the life, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus before we even open the Bible.

Annie: Wow.

Jeremiah: Just using sources within 100 years of His life.

Annie: Wow, dude. Okay, talk for just a second about the Holy Fire for people who don't know. It's a Greek Orthodox?

Jeremiah: Yes. And again-

Annie: It's bizarre.

Jeremiah: It is.

Annie: It's miraculous.

Jeremiah: It's bizarre. It's miraculous. But we believe in a God who works miracles, don't we?

Annie: Yeah, I'm way into it.

Jeremiah: I mean, listen, these are the kinds of delicious details you get when you go to the Holy Land. When you see it up front, it changes the way you read the gospels, it changes the way you read the Bible.

Annie: I'd say it went from black and white to Technicolor for me.

Jeremiah: Oh, without a doubt.

Annie: It changed everything.

Jeremiah: Oh, without a doubt. It's three days. I just want to encourage people, go there if you can.

Annie: I know. We're thinking about it. We're thinking about it, everybody.

Jeremiah: Seriously, it will change your re... and you'll see miraculous things.

Annie: Will you come with us, too?

Jeremiah: I would love.

Annie: Okay, great.

Jeremiah: As long as we stay somewhere nice.

Annie: Oh, listen, you know me.

Jeremiah: I've done the bad Israel trips and I've done the good ones.

Annie: No, no, we're doing a good one. We're eating right and we're staying in right.

Jeremiah: I love that. Friends, go there, see it for yourself. Let the Bible become 3D to you because it will literally change and it will show you, "I'm a Christian based on the evidence, not in spite of the evidence." And Annie, I so appreciate you setting the example. I feel like I'm talking to a professor right now. You are so well-read.

And here's why I want to compliment you. The resurrection is under-studied and under-preached today and yet it's the focal point of our faith. If you go to Amazon right now, there's actually not that many books just on the resurrection.

Annie: No. No.

Jeremiah: We need to change that as a church body.

Annie: There's a lot more about the crucifixion.

Jeremiah: Yeah, way more. There's a lot of cross piety and there's a lot of stuff that goes into it. But listen, there is no good news, there's euangelion without Jesus coming back from the dead.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. Oh, man. Okay, what did we not say that we need to say?

Jeremiah: We're barely scratched.

Annie: I know.

Jeremiah: I think we went through one or two proofs. This is so fun.

Annie: I mean, people are gonna love reading it. And just for everyone's brains, I'll tell you, it's 160 pages of content.

Jeremiah: Yeah, short. Shortest book I've ever written.

Annie: Yeah. How many more do you have? What?

Jeremiah: This book 13 for me, but-

Annie: Oh, I'm embarrassed.

Jeremiah: ..this is the shortest one that I've ever written. No, please don't be. Some of my academic works are written for dozens, Annie.

Annie: I'm about to get in that dozens though. I'm about to get in that dozens.

Jeremiah: This sits on 150,000 published words academically, peer-reviewed on the resurrection of Jesus. But again, my wife has helped me. You can give this book to anyone and about three and a half hours of reading, you're up to date.

Annie: Yeah, I read it in a day.

Jeremiah: And it's by design.

Annie: Awesome.

Jeremiah: So thank you.

Annie: Awesome. Oh, I cannot wait for people to read this. I mean, it is such a fun read as well.

Jeremiah: Thank you. I never thought I'd be in Vanity Fair when I went into Bible scholar.

Annie: That's how you got in?

Jeremiah: There was no class on-

Annie: Tell the story. You write about it. Tell the story.

Jeremiah: Literally I was contacted by... This is fun for our audience.

Annie: I love that you put this in there.

Jeremiah: "Is there enough evidence to write an obituary of Jesus?" A New York Times reporter. And I just "Yes, there is. Here's what it could have read." Little did I know he would publish it in Vanity Fair.

Annie: I know.

Jeremiah: And he gave me permission. I wrote him. Sam Roberts. I mean he writes obituaries for relatable individuals still in times. Said, "Use it. Use it with a very free hand." So then we got permission from Condé Nast as well, which is Vanity Fair. Because the book starts with this obituary of Jesus. And you think, wow. But then when I pause, and I put my critical mind on, the fact that we can write an obituary of Jesus just again speaks to the evidential bedrock.

Annie: And the obituary is beautiful. It is.

Jeremiah: Yeah, it's fun.

Annie: I love how you ended it. "After He was declared dead on Friday night, He was buried nearby in a cave. On Sunday, His disciples reported that the body was missing."

Jeremiah: Yeah, cliff hanger.

Annie: That's the end. That's the end

Jeremiah: That's the obituary. There's the Gospel for you.

Annie: I loved it. Well, you please come back?

Jeremiah: I would love to, Annie. I love your show. Thank you for being a Christian thinker.

Annie: Well, I'm having the best time. I can't tell you how much my mind has expanded just from reading the Gospels.

Jeremiah: Amen.

Jeremiah: Me too.

Annie: You're right. What you said at the beginning, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength.

Jeremiah: We gotta love God with our mind.

Annie: It is so fun to love Him with our mind.

Jeremiah: It is.

Annie: So Dr. Johnston-

Jeremiah: Jeremiah, please.

Annie: ...because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What do y'all do for fun with all those kids?

Jeremiah: Listen, I go hard when I go fun.

Annie: ...We like off-road sports. I became an expert on YouTube in chainsaws during the pandemic. So I fight my battles against the tree. I hope it's okay to say that.

Annie: Of course.

Jeremiah: My boys, literally we get our hatchets out, our saws.

Annie: How many of the five are boys?

Jeremiah: Four out of the five are boys.

Annie: There's one girl.

Jeremiah: Lily is the CEO and she's CEO material already. And then there's Justin who's 10. He's amazing. He's called to ministry. And then Abel, Ryder and Jax and they have a sin nature in every way. Literally, they go fisticuffs every day but they've got each other.

Annie: Oh my gosh. So y'all just cut things down?

Jeremiah: We cut things down. We go out to our friend, Uncle Mike's house, and we literally buzz down his trees, we burn them, and that's literal. And then we get on our go-karts and my Ranger. We just love to be outside.

Annie: Oh, that's awesome.

Jeremiah: That's what we do for fun. Sounds weird, but I fight my battles in the tree. I love it.

Annie: That's great. Thank you again for doing this.

Jeremiah: Thank you, Annie.

Annie: What a dream!

[01:08:58] <music>

Annie: Oh, you guys, isn't he brilliant? Oh my gosh. I mean a doctorate and like resurrection? Are you kidding? His book is so good, y'all have got to get a copy of it. Again. It is called *Body of Proof*. You guys, get that book, you're gonna love it. It is so fun. Add it to your Let's Read the Gospel shelf on your bookshelf. And you are just going to love reading it.

Be sure to follow him on social media, thank him so much for being on the show today. And if you found this helpful, or know someone you think would enjoy it, your people who love talking about the Bible or have a lot of questions about the resurrection, this is a great one to put on social media and say, "Hey, do you have questions about Jesus' resurrection? Here are some answers." And let your friends go listen if they want to.

It means the world when you invite your friends into these conversations too, and conversations like this open doors for us that may be hard to open in any other way. So you guys share this one, talk to your people about it. I loved it. I love it so much. I love having these experts on around the Gospels while we are reading Let's Read the Gospels this year.

And listen, if you haven't started Let's Read the Gospels yet, join in with us. It is never too late. You don't have to be in the Gospels every day to be changed. But every day you are in the gospels will change you. So make sure you subscribe to that show. We will start a new round on May 1, but come on, jump in with us today. You can start listening today.

And listen, we heard what sounds fun to Jeremiah, and now we get to hear it sounds fun to one of our friends who's listening, just like you.

Haley, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Hailey: Hi, I'm Hailey. I'm from Williamstown, West Virginia. And honestly, what sounds fun to me is a weekend probably with my kids... without my kids. And probably going to... So my parents live in Lexington, Kentucky. So I would just drop them with my parents and they'd have a nice little weekend with their grandparents. And my husband and I would probably just spend the day like shopping and going out to eat. I'm a big food person. So the whole day would probably be centered around food.

Annie: Yes, I support that. When you're going to Lexington, do you have a spot that you're like, we always do a meal here?

Hailey: Oh my gosh. So I would say probably my favorite place is this place called Carson's. It's really good. It's in like downtown. But I mean true, the best Lexington food is from this place called Ramsey's. And it is like Southern cooking. It is-

Annie: Like a meat and three?

Hailey: Mm-hmm. Oh, yes, absolutely. All the sides.

Annie: Oh, all the sides.

Hailey: The pie. The pie, yeah, it's delicious.

Annie: You're making me want to get in my car and drive to Lexington. Carson's is what you're saying to me.

Hailey: Oh, yes. No, I'm sorry. Ramsey's. Yes, Carson's is delicious too. Absolutely.

Annie: I'm sorry. I heard you. You said it correctly, I heard you wrongly. Carson's is a great other... So if we get more than one meal a day, we love Carson's.

Hailey: Carson's a little fancier.

Annie: So we're gonna do lunch at Ramsey's, though, because that's when the fried chicken is fresh out.

Hailey: Absolutely. Yes.

Annie: Yeah, girl. You got me. You got me. I'm interested. Best answer. Well done.

Hailey: It's only a few hours away from Nashville so it's perfect.

Annie: Yeah, it's breezy. That's what I'm saying to you.

Hailey: Absolutely. I'll come down to Nashville too. It'll be great.

Annie: Okay, great. Great. Great. Great. Oh, I love it.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me. And don't forget, you can find the That Sounds Fun Podcast on Instagram now at, you're right, it's @thatsoundsfunpodcast. Well done. And Let's Read the Gospels is also on Instagram @Letsreadthegospels.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. I'll do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is sleeping in because today I'm getting my Sabbath for the week because I traveled on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. So I am wrestling today.

So y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with Dr. Nijay K Gupta. Y'all, this book that he wrote, this conversation we're about to have about women leading in the church, you aren't ready. You aren't ready. Go ahead and order the book today. It's called *Tell Her Story*. You can read it tomorrow, we're gonna talk about it Thursday. Y'all are ready. It's gonna be so good. Okay, can't wait. Y'all have a great week. We'll see you Thursday.