# The Real Jesus

[Luke Timothy Johnson, The Real Jesus Chapter 6: "The Real Jesus and the Gospels"]

## **History and Faith**

#### General Theme.

• One can only discover the *real* Jesus by experiencing him personally and in the context of Christian community.

#### Who Is Jesus?

- The core question of the Christian faith.
- This is not a question that can be answered through historical critical methodology alone.
- Just as "head knowledge" about Jesus does not equal "heart knowledge," Christian faith is not based so much on history as personal experience.
- Luke Timothy Johnson: "The most destructive effect of the Jesus Seminar and recent Historical Jesus books has been the perpetuation of the notion that history somehow determines faith."
  - ► The limits of New Testament historicity.
  - Historical criticism cannot tell us the most important thing about Jesus the *meaning* of his life.
- History-dependent faith is unsatisfactory:
  - Historical reconstructions are subject to constant revision.
  - Historical reconstructions cannot sustain the commitment of the human heart.
  - Christian faith has never been based on purely historical reconstructions of Jesus.
- Christian faith is directed to a living person.
  - Luke Timothy Johnson: The "real Jesus" for Christian faith is the resurrected Jesus... not merely a figure of the past but above all a present reality.

#### C.S. Lewis' "Shocking Alternative."

- Throughout history God has sought to reconcile humanity to himself.
  - First: God endowed us with a moral conscience.
  - Second: God has provided "good dreams" those "queer stories" scattered all through the folklore and primitive religions that tell of a god who dies and comes back to life again, and, by his death, has somehow given new life to mankind.
  - Third: God chose one particular group of people and spent several centuries instilling in them the kind of God he was – that he alone was the one true God and that he cared about right conduct. Those
    - people are the Jews, and the Old Testament is the account of God's dealings with them.
- Lewis' "Lord, Liar, or Lunatic" argument.
- A fourth option: Jesus as a Legend.

## The Real Jesus

#### The Unified Christ of History and Myth.

- Jesus as a mythical figure.
  - Myth v. legend. The mythical (not legendary) Jesus.
  - Myth: A traditional story (real or fictional) that conveys a transcendent truth.
- What is unique about the "Christian myth"?
  - (1) Jesus of Nazareth was the historical incarnation of God.
  - (2) Jesus lived a sinless and perfect life.
  - (3) Jesus' moral and ethical teachings were authoritative.
  - (4) Jesus' miracles of healing and exorcism signified his divinity and messianic mission.
  - (5) Jesus' sacrificial death was an atonement for the sins of mankind.
  - (6) Jesus' physical bodily resurrection actually happened.
- The historical Jesus.
  - Bede Griffiths: The Christian revelation happened "not in mythical time, but in historic time among a historic people, at a historic time and place.... The death and resurrection of Christ is a unique event. In one sense it is a mythological event, an event of supreme symbolism. It is a sign of God's salvation. But it is a sign which is rooted in history.... So myth and history meet.... Here history has assumed universal meaning. The whole of creation and the whole of humanity find an ultimate meaning, an ultimate purpose, in that death, resurrection, ascension and final glorification."



- The "real Jesus" is the Jesus of the New Testament.
  - William Lane Craig: "If the historical Jesus is not identical to the Christ of faith, then to continue to worship and pray to the Christ of faith is either idolatry (worshiping and praying to a dead man) or self-delusion (worshiping and praying to a figment of one's imagination)."
  - Luke Timothy Johnson: "In *The Five Gospels* the Jesus Seminar warns against looking for 'a comfortable Jesus.' That is sound advice. But the truly uncomfortable Jesus, the genuinely 'countercultural' Jesus, is not the one reconstructed according to the [preferences] of contemporary academics... but the one described in the canonical Gospels. The Jesus who truly challenges this age, as every age, is the one who suffers in obedience to God and calls others to such suffering service in behalf of humanity. This is the Jesus that classical Christianity has always proclaimed....

"Does the church act triumphalistically, or treat its people arrogantly? Is it an agent for the suppression of human needs and aspirations? Does it foster intolerance and small-mindedness? Does the church proclaim a gospel of [prosperity] and success...? Does it encourage an ethos of prosperity to the neglect of the earth's good, or an individualistic spirituality to the neglect of the world's needy? Are its leaders corrupt and coercive? Such distortions of Christianity can find no harsher critic, no more radical rejecter, than the Jesus found in the pages of the New Testament."

#### The Living Word and the Existential Reality.

- The value of studying Jesus historically.
  - Luke Timothy Johnson: "The more we know the historical circumstances of the First Century Mediterranean world, and in particular, the circumstances of Jews in Palestine during an uneasy period of Roman rule, the better readers we can be of the Gospel narratives.... The greater one's historical knowledge, the greater is one's capacity to read the Gospels responsibly."
- However... Christian faith has never been based on purely historical reconstructions of Jesus.
- Christian faith is rooted in the presence and power of Jesus.
  - Knowing *about* Jesus versus *experiencing the reality* of Jesus in our hearts.
  - ► The "real" Jesus is the Living Word of God not merely a historical figure of the past.
  - The resurrection power of Jesus is the basis for our faith.
- The key to understanding "the real Jesus" is to experience him personally (existentially).
  - N.T. Wright: "It isn't enough to know that Jesus is the Savior; I must know that he is the Savior *for me*. History cannot tell me that. But it can reconstruct the framework within which it makes sense."

- Scot McKnight: "As a historian I think I can prove that Jesus died and that he thought his death was atoning. I think I cna establish that the tomb was empty and that the resurrection is the best explanation for the empty tomb. But one thing the historical method cannot prove is that Jesus died *for our sins* and was raised *for our justification*."
- The proof is in the living, and the reality of Jesus can only be validated existentially.
  - Luke Timothy Johnson: "For those living in a community where 'signs and wonders' done in the name of Jesus are a regular occurrence, reading about such deeds attributed to Jesus in the Gospels is no surprise or scandal.

"People who experience the life-changing power of Christ in their own lives do not have to be convinced that miracles happen – they are present realities – they are *existentially true*."

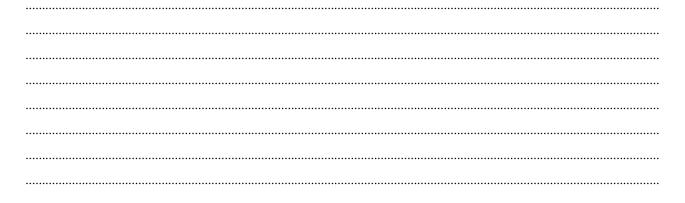
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge: "Christianity is not a theory or speculation, but a lifestyle; not a philosophy of life, but a living presence."
- Mahatma Gandhi: "It would be poor comfort to the world if it had to depend upon a historical God who died 2,000 years ago. Do not then preach the God of history, but show him as he lives today through you."
- Luke Timothy Johnson: "The more the church has sought to ground itself in something other than the transforming work of the Spirit, the more it has sought to buttress its claims by philosophy or history, the more it has sought to defend itself against its critics by means of sophisticated apology, the more also it has missed the point of its existence, which is not to take a place within worldly wisdom but to bear witness to the reality of God who transforms suffering and death with the power of new life....

"The 'real Jesus... is not a figure of the past but of the present, not an object of scholarly research but the subject of obedient faith. Critical to this position is the conviction that faith itself is a mode of cognition that makes contact with what is real even if empirically unverifiable."

- This is true Christianity.
  - LTJ: "[I]t is difficult to understand why the name Christian should continue to be claimed by anyone who did not confess Jesus as exalted Lord present in the Spirit."

#### How do we experience Jesus personally?

- (1) Through a spiritual "New Birth."
- (2) Through study and reflection.
- (3) By communing with God.
- (4) In relationship with others.



# — 7 — The Case for the Gospels

[Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Introduction]

## The Author and the Book

#### Lee Strobel.

- A former journalist and atheist turned evangelical Christian.
- Author of *The Case For Christ, The Case for Faith, The Case for a Creator*, and *The Case for the Historical Jesus*.

#### Preface.

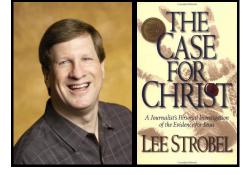
- Five Theological Orientations (ref. page 14).
- The issue of biases and presuppositions.
- The credibility of sources.

#### A Personal Testimony.

- An adamant atheist.
  - LS: "I had read just enough philosophy and history to find support for my skepticism."
- Views on Jesus.
- Psychological motives.
- A wife's witness.
- A search for truth.

#### Purpose of the Book.

- LS: "In effect, I'm going to retrace and expand upon the spiritual journey I took for nearly two years. I'll take you along as I interview thirteen leading scholars and authorities who have impeccable academic credentials."
- A preponderance of evidence not proof.
  - Probabilities and beliefs.



[Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Chapter 1: "The Eyewitness Evidence"]

### The Witness of the Gospels

#### Literary Genre.

- Rudolf Bultmann: The Gospels as "cult legends."
- What are the Gospels?
  - Justin Martyr: "The memoirs of the apostles."
  - Bruce Metzger: "What each evangelist preserved... is not a photographic reproduction of the words and deeds of Jesus, but an *interpretive portrait* delineated in accord with the special needs of the early church."
  - Craig Blomberg: Ancient biographers sought to preserve "the essence" of their subject.
  - F. F. Bruce: "...the primitive Christian message was not concerned with the biographical interest of Jesus' life, but with certain outstanding events through which the salvation of God was made available...."

#### The Primary Purpose.

• An emphasis on the *purpose* and *meaning* of Jesus' life and ministry.

#### Who Wrote the Gospels?

- Anonymous authorship.
- Papias (c 110).
- Irenaeus (c. 180).
- The written and oral tradition.
- Apostles or associates of the apostles.
- The issue of literacy.

#### Why Were the Gospels Written?

- Luke1:1-4 "An orderly account... so that you may know the certainty of the things that have been taught."
- John 20:30-31 "These [accounts] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

#### What About Q?

- Synoptic Gospels.
- The "triple tradition."
- The "double tradition."
- The Q hypothesis.

#### The Respective Agendas of the Gospels.

- The Matthew tradition.
  - ► Papias: Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience in the "Hebrew" language.
- The Mark tradition.
  - Papias: Mark's Gospel was based on the collections of Peter.
- The Luke tradition.
  - Written to a non-Jewish, Hellensitic audience.
- The John tradition.
  - ► Papias.
  - The docetic heresy.
  - Clement of Alexandria: John wrote a "spiritual" Gospel.

#### The Four-Gospel Tradition.

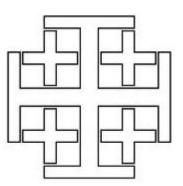
- Tatian's Diatessaron (c. 170).
- The testimony of Irenaeus (c. 180).
- The testimony of Tertullian (c. 190).
- The advantages of the fourfold tradition.

#### The Bias Issue.

- All writers have their biases, presuppositions, priorities and agendas.
- The real issue.

#### Dating the Gospels.

- A general rule: The shorter the gap between an event and when it was recorded, the more likely that it has been recorded accurately.
- The standard scholarly dating of the Gospels.
- Why liberal scholars doubt that the Gospels were written before 70 A.D.
- The Acts of the Apostles is the key.
- Dating the Synoptic Gospels.
  - ► Luke.
  - Matthew.
  - ► Mark.
  - ► J.A.T. Robinson's conclusion.
- The issue of general acceptance.



## [Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Chapter 2: "Testing the Eyewitness Evidence"]

## The Reliability of the Gospels: Eight Tests

#### 1. The Intention Test.

- Were the Gospel writers concerned with factual accuracy?
  - ► Luke 1:1-4.
  - ► John 20:30-31.
  - Peter's comments in II Peter 1:16-18.
  - Paul's comments in Galatians 2:1-10.
  - Louis Markos: "If the New Testament were not the New Testament, it would be hailed by all critics, liberal and orthodox alike, as the most reliable text of the ancient world."
- Couldn't there have been a conspiracy to manufacture the story of Jesus?
  - The rapid spread of the Gospel.
  - A scattered and persecuted movement.
  - The testimony of eyewitnesses.
- Can the Jesus story be explained as historical fiction?
  - An implausible thesis.
  - The persecution issue.
  - The testimony of non-Christian writers.
  - C. S. Lewis: The Gospels are not legendary tales but true history.
- Did the Gospel writers attribute certain things to Jesus after-the-fact?
  - The issue of controversies in the early church.
  - Craig Blomberg: "These issues could have been conveniently resolved if the early Christians had simply read back into the gospels what Jesus had told them from the world beyond. But this never happened."
  - The "hard sayings" of Jesus.

#### 2. The Ability Test: The Issue of Oral History.

- Was the material about Jesus' life preserved accurately for 30 or more years before it was finally written down?
- The testimony of eyewitnesses.
  - ► John 1:24.
  - ► Luke 1:1-4.
  - II Peter 1:16-18.

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- An oral culture.
  - The issue of repetition.
  - ► Poetic teaching.
- Within a few months of Jesus' death, a consistent oral account of his life and ministry was circulating among his followers.
  - Ref: I Corinthians 15:3-7.
- The communal nature of the oral tradition.

#### 3. The Character Test.

- The issue of honesty.
- Was there anything to gain from manufacturing a legendary account of Jesus' life?

#### 4. The Consistency Test.

- The issue of contradictions.
- What the Gospels agree on.
  - Craig Blomberg: Once we allow for paraphrase, abridgment, explanatory comments, selectivity, and omission, "the gospels are extremely consistent by ancient standards – which are the only standards by which it's fair to judge them....
    - "Fabricated accounts tend to be fully consistent and harmonized."
- Problematic issues.
  - Variations on Jesus' teachings.
  - Chronological variations in Jesus' ministry.
  - The genealogies in Matthew and Luke.
  - Jesus' lamentation over Jerusalem.
- Inconsistencies in the Gospel narratives and the issue of collusion.

#### 5. The Bias Test.

• Since all the NT writers believed in Jesus, can we trust what they wrote?

#### 6. The Cover-Up Test.

- Did the Gospel writers try to sanitize the story of Jesus?
- The "criterion of embarrassment" argument.
  - (1) Mark 6:5 Jesus' inability to perform miracles in Nazareth due to people's unbelief.
  - (2) Mark 13:32 Jesus' admission that he didn't know the time of his return.
  - (3) Jesus' baptism.
  - (4) Jesus' on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
  - (5) The disciples misunderstanding of Jesus' words and message.

- (6) Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene.
- Ben Witherington: "It wouldn't make any sense to create a story about a crucified and risen man being the savior of the word unless you really believe it is historically true."

#### 7. The Corroboration Test.

• Historical and archaeological verification of numerous references to people, places, and events.

#### 8. The Adverse Witness Test.

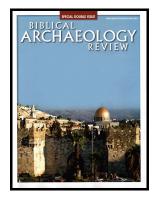
- The response of the Jewish religious leaders and other opponents of the Gospel.
- Craig Blomberg: "If critics could have attacked [the account of Jesus' life] on the basis that it was full of falsehoods and distortions, they would have."
  - Note: Jesus' religious opponents never challenged that fact that he did miracles they
    merely argued that he did them by the power of Satan and that he broke the Jewish law
    by healing on the Sabbath.

## [Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Chapter 5: "The Scientific Evidence"]

## Archaeology and the Gospels

#### The Limits of Archaeology.

- History, archaeology and science...
  - *can* confirm names, dates, locations, and events in the Bible;
  - *cannot* prove the existence of God or the truth of the Bible;
  - *cannot* prove that Jesus said or did something recorded in the Bible;
  - *cannot* prove what is most important about Jesus i.e., the *meaning* of his life.
- EX: Heinrich Schliemann and the discovery of Troy.
- A matter of credibility.



► John McRay: "In trying to determine if a witness is being truthful, journalists and lawyers will test all the elements of the testimony that can be tested. If this investigation reveals that the person was wrong in those details, this casts considerable doubt on the veracity of his or her entire story. However, if the minutiae check out, this is... some evidence that maybe the witness is being reliable in his or her overall account."

- Archeology and the confirmation of the Bible.
  - Nelson Glueck: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference...."
  - NY Times review of Werner Keller's The Bible As History: "No archaeological discovery has ever been made that contradicts or controverts historical statements in Scripture."
  - John McRay: "Archaeology has not produced anything that is unequivocally a contradiction in the Bible."

#### Archaeology and Luke.

- Meticulous accuracy.
- Sir William Ramsay: "Luke is a historian of the first rank... [and] should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."
- E. M. Blaiklock: "Luke is a consummate historian, to be ranked in his own right with the great writers of the Greeks."
- A.N. Sherwin-White: "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming.... Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted."

#### Archaeology and John.

- John 5:1-15 The Pool of Bethesda's five porticoes.
- John 9:7 The Pool of Siloam.
- John 4:12 Jacob's Well.
- John 9:13 The Gabbatha.
- The governorship of Pontius Pilate.

#### The Birth of Jesus.

- The census decree of Caesar Augustus.
- Quirinius, governor of Syria.

#### Nazareth.

• The historical record.

#### Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents.

• A reasonable explanation.

## Postscript: The "Ancient Biography" Thesis

#### The Traditional Theory.

- The primary purpose of the Gospels was not to write a detailed biography of Jesus' life but to emphasize the *purpose* and *meaning* of his life and ministry.
- The Gospels as a unique (sui generis) literary genre.
  - Lee Martin McDonald: "The canonical Gospels... have no parallels elsewhere in antiquity."
- C. S. Lewis on the genre of the Gospels.
  - Surprised by T. D. ("Harry") Weldon.
  - Lewis: The Gospels should be read as straight historical narratives.
  - What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?:" "As a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that whatever else the Gospels are they are not legends."
  - Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism": "I have been reading poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know that not one of them is like this [i.e., the Gospel of John]."
- The issue of differences in the Gospel accounts surfaced early in history.
  - Origen (c. 185-254).
  - ► John Chrysostom (c. 347-407).
  - Augustine (c. 354-430).

#### An Emerging Alternative Theory.

- The Gospels as ancient (Greco-Roman) biographies (bioi).
- Charles Talbert, What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels (1977).
- Richard Burridge, What Are the Gospels: A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography (1992).
  - Burridge: "[T]he ancients were more interested in the moral worth and philosophical value of statements than their logical status, in truth more than facts.
- Michael Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?: What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography* (2017).
  - The Gospels were essentially Christianized versions of ancient biography (as in the tradition of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, c. 100 AD).
  - ► The evangelists used the conventional "compositional devices" of Greco-Roman biographers and historians.
  - "The genre of Greco-Roman biography "permitted a degree of elasticity in how stories were reported.... During the age when the Gospels were written, the finest historians and biographers did not practice writing with the same commitment to precision as us

moderns. They wanted to tell a story in a manner that entertained, provided moral guidance, emphasized points they regarded as important, and paint a portrait of important people. If they had to adapt some details on occasion, it was permissible. Such adapting was not intended to distort the truth but to communicate it more effectively."

- "For many [conservative Christians], this will require a paradigm shift."
- The "minimal facts" approach to apologetics.
- "The Gospels, like other ancient biographies, do not require forensic accuracy."
- Ben Witherington: "We have documents that conform to ancient standards of truth telling, historical reporting, and biographical writing."

#### A Critique of the Ancient Biography Theory.

- This theory does not account for the unique involvement of the supernatural including the miracle of divine revelation.
- Some assessments:
  - (1) Traditionally, Christians have believed that the Bible is historically reliable, and doctrinally and morally authoritative.
  - (2) The chronological rearrangement of narrative accounts is not a problem per se.
  - (3) The inclusion of manufactured and imaginary quotes and dialogues into the text is problematic as is the insertion of unhistorical events for the purpose of dramatic effect.
  - (4) Is the "ancient biography" thesis based on superior research?
  - (5) Since the Gospel accounts claim to be supernaturally-inspired, isn't it reasonable to expect that they would be more historically accurate than most other ancient biographies and histories?
  - (6) At a certain point, don't historical inaccuracies chip away at historical reliability?At what point does "true enough" become simply "untrue"?
  - At what point does in the control of the souther simple
- J. P. Moreland's commentary on the controversy.

## — 8 — The Crucifixion

[Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Chapter 11: "The Medical Evidence"]

## Did Jesus Die on the Cross?

#### The Early Consensus.

- Josephus: "...And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross...."
- Babylonian Talmud: Jesus was "hanged" on Passover after a trial determined that he should be executed...."
- Tacitus: "Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor...."
- Lucian of Samosata: "[Peregrinus] learned the wonderful doctrine of the Christians by conversing with their priests and scribes near Palestine... they spoke of [Christ] as a god, and took him for a lawgiver, and honored him with the title of master... They still worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine, because he introduced into the world this new cult."
- The Letter of Mara Bar-Serapion: "What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as judgment for their crime.... What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished...."
- Lucian: "Look in your annals; there you will find that in the time of Pilate, when Christ suffered, the sun was obscured, and the light of the day was interrupted with darkness."

#### Swoon Theories and Other Fantasies.

- The Qu'ran:
  - Jesus ascended into heaven prior to the crucifixion, and Judas Iscariot, disguised as Jesus, was crucified in his place. [4:157-158]
  - The Ahmadiya sect: Jesus fled to India, where a shrine marks his grave in Srinagar, Kashmir.

- The "swoon theory."
  - D. H. Lawrence's Love Among the Haystacks and Other Stories (1929).
  - Hugh Schonfield's *The Passover Plot* (1965).
  - ▶ Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln's Holy Blood, Holy Grail (1982).
  - ▶ Barbara Thiering's Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1992).

## The Ordeal of Crucifixion

#### **Prelude: The Emotional Trauma.**

- Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane Luke 22:44.
  - ► Hematidrosis.
- A brutal beating.

#### The Scourging.

- The *flagrum*.
  - Eusebius: "The sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, ligaments and tendons, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure."
- Hypovolemic shock.
- A crown of thorns.
- Bearing the *patibulum* to the execution site at Golgotha.

#### The Crucifixion.

- Nailed to the cross.
  - Severing the median nerves.
- Dislocation of the shoulders. [Psalm 22:14]
- An excruciating death.
  - Cicero: Crucifixion was "the most cruel and hideous of punishments."
  - Thomas Cahill: "Crucifixion was the ultimate form of Roman humiliation; and to understand it properly, we have to imagine a grove of poles set up in a [public place], where any day as we pass by we may see fellow citizens pinned to the poles with great iron nails, pierced through their joints, ripped open and left to be drained of blood as if they were animal carcasses. Every day freshly crucified victims appear on the poles as the old victims expire and are carted off for burial. The crucified men, twisted, bloody



torsos stripped naked for all to see, writhe and grimace mostly horribly in their pain. Delicate citizens pass by quickly and avert their eyes, while those who are more cruel... taunt the nailed men, in the same way that some people today stand outside prisons to scream at criminals on their way to the electric chair – the way people have always gathered eagerly to witness public executions. They spit on the pierced men and mock them, and tell them how they richly deserve it, and that they hope their suffering lasts as long as possible.

"The public, physical humiliation – beginning with the flogging of Jesus by Roman centurions, the mock crowning with thorns, and all that followed – this was a trauma... to his soul as well as his body."

- The psychological torment.
  - "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [Psalm 22]
- Death by multiple factors.
  - (1) Hypovolemic shock.
  - (2) Dehydration.
  - (3) Exhaustion asphyxia.
    - Respiratory acidosis.
  - (4) Acute heart failure.
- The *coup de grace*.
  - A pericardial effusion and a pleural effusion.

#### Post-script.

• The witness of the Shroud of Turin.

# The Resurrection

## [Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Chapter 12: "The Evidence of the Missing Body"]

## The Empty Tomb

## The Seminal Creed.

- The cornerstone of the Christian faith.
  - Jaroslav Pelikan: If Christ *has not* been raised from the dead, then nothing else matters.
     If Christ *has* been raised from the dead, then nothing else matters.
- Paul's declaration in I Cor. 15: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."
- N. T. Wright: "Without the resurrection, there is a gaping hole in the middle of first century history that nothing else can plug."

## **A Metaphorical Resurrection?**

- Could Jesus' resurrection have been merely figurative (or metaphorical) resurrection?
- Carl Jung's thesis.
- The Jewish concept of resurrection.
  - William Lane Craig: "It would have been a contradiction of terms for an early Jew to say that someone was raised from the dead but his body still was left in the tomb."
- A metaphorical resurrection would not have generated the kind of dynamic life-changing energy and passion that launched the Jesus movement.
  - Would the followers of Jesus have suffered and died for an imaginary resurrection?

## Joseph of Arimathea.

- The improbability of a fictional account.
- No alternative burial stories.



#### On Guards.

• Sealing the tomb. [Matt. 27:62-66]

#### Variations on the Resurrection.

- Who went to the tomb?
  - Mark: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome.
  - Matthew: Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary."
  - ► Luke: Mary Magdalene, "the other Mary," Joanna, and "others."
  - John: Mary Magdalene.
- When did they go to the tomb?
  - ► Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John: Very early, at dawn, just after sunrise.
- What happened at the tomb?
  - Mark: The stone had been rolled away.
    - ► The women entered the tomb and saw "a young man (a single "man") in a white robe" sitting inside.
  - Matthew: A rock sealed the tomb.
    - A violent earthquake occurred, and an angel came and rolled back the stone.
    - The guards were frightened and fainted "like dead men."
    - The angel (one angel) was sitting on the rock when the women approached.
  - Luke: The stone had been rolled away.
    - The women entered the tomb, and "suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning" stood beside them.
  - John: The stone had been rolled away.
    - John doesn't relate that Mary Magdalene saw an angel.
- What happened afterward?
  - Mark: The women fled and "said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."
    - Later manuscripts add that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, and that she went and told his followers.
  - Matthew: The two Marys rushed from the tomb, "afraid yet filled with joy," and ran to tell the disciples.
    - As they were fleeing, they met Jesus on the way.
  - ► Luke: The women "came back from the tomb" and "told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others."
    - Peter ran to the tomb and went inside, "wondering what had happened."

- ► John: Mary ran and told Peter and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John).
  - Peter and John ran to the tomb, then "went back to their homes."
  - Mary stood outside the tomb crying, and as she bent over to look into the tomb, she saw two angels seated where Jesus body had been.
  - Jesus came up behind her, whom she mistook for but the gardener.
  - After encountering Jesus, Mary told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"
- What about the variations in the resurrection accounts?
  - William Lane Craig: This is a *historical* issue, not a *philosophical* one.
  - The inconsistencies are in the secondary details.
    - The core of the story is consistent.
  - Michael Grant: "True, the discovery of the empty tomb is differently described by the various gospels, but if we apply the same sort of criteria that we would apply to any other ancient literary sources, then the evidence is firm and plausible enough to necessitate the conclusion that the tomb was, indeed, found empty."
- How many angels were at the tomb?
- Were there "angels" or "young men" at the tomb?
- Why don't all four Gospels agree on the details?
  - Semi-independent sources.
  - Cause for suspicion.
  - The issue of **multiple independent attestation**.
  - No evidence of collusion.

#### Did Jesus Rise on the Third Day?

- Jesus: "For as **Jonah** was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" Matt. 12:40.
- The Jewish calendar.

#### A Case for the Empty Tomb.

- (1) Paul's creedal statement in 1 Cor. 15.
- (2) The site of Jesus' tomb was well-known to Christians and Jews alike.
- (3) Mark may have gotten his passion narrative from an earlier source that was written only a few years after Jesus' resurrection.
- (4) Mark's account is unembellished.
- (5) The discovery by women.
- (6) Jesus' opponents never contested the fact that his body was missing from the tomb.

#### Some Residual Issues.

- Might the women have gone to the wrong tomb?
- Could the Jewish authorities have stolen the body?
- Was the empty tomb a later legend?
  - Paul's testimony in I Corinthians 15.

#### The Appeal of Alternative Theories.

- The problem of a naturalistic worldview.
  - William Lane Craig: "At this point the matter is no longer a historical issue; instead, it's a philosophical question about whether miracles are possible....

"The hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead is not at all improbable [given the nature and power of God]. In fact, based on the evidence, it's the best explanation of what happened. What *is* improbable is the hypothesis that Jesus rose *naturally* from the dead....

"The hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead doesn't contradict science or any known facts of experience. All it requires is the hypothesis that God exists....

"As long as the existence of God is even possible, it's possible that God acted in history by raising Jesus from the dead."

#### **Limited Options**

#### **Indisputable Facts.**

- Jesus' died.
- Jesus was buried.
- Three days later, the tomb was empty.

#### Three Key Concepts.

- (1) Skeptics must provide evidence not just criticisms and alternative theories.
- (2) All reputable scholars accept the historicity of the Crucifixion yet the same body of evidence for the crucifixion also supports the Resurrection.
- (3) The Resurrection is the only plausible explanation for what happened to Jesus.

#### Six Options for the Empty Tomb.

- (1) Jesus didn't actually die, but swooned on the cross.
- (2) Jewish religious leaders secretly stole Jesus' body.
- (3) Roman soldiers secretly stole Jesus' body.
- (4) The disciples stole Jesus' body and claimed that he had risen.

- (5) The resurrection was a legend that developed many years after Jesus' death.
- (6) Jesus actually rose from the dead by the power of God.

#### Three Evidences for the Resurrection.

- (1) Jesus died and was buried.
- (2) The tomb was empty on Sunday morning.
- (3) The disciples were transformed.
- The best explanation.

#### Post-script.

• Bart Ehrman: "It seems likely that, at least with the traditions involving the empty tomb, we are dealing with something actually rooted in history."

## [Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Chapter 13: "The Evidence of Appearances"]

## **The Central Proclamation**

#### The Post-Resurrection Appearances.

- Paul: "For many days Jesus was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses...." Acts 13:31.
  - Gary Habermas: "The earliest Christians didn't just endorse Jesus' teachings; they were convinced they had seen him alive after his crucifixion. *That's* what changed their lives and started the church."
- The first written testimony: I Cor. 15:3-8, circa 55-57 AD.

#### The Post-Resurrection Appearances.

- 1(A). Mary Magdalene John 20:10-18; Mark 16:9.
- 1(B). Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" Matt. 28:8-10.
- 2. Peter (apparently on Resurrection Sunday) I Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34.
- 3. Clopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus Luke 24:13-32; Mark 16:12.
- 4. Eleven disciples and "their companions" Luke 24:33-49.
- 5. Ten disciples (all but Thomas) in Jerusalem John 20:19-23.
- 6. Thomas and the other disciples in Jerusalem John 20:26-30.
- 7. Seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberius John 21:1-23.
- 8. Eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee Matt. 28:16-20.
- 9. "The Twelve"(?) I Cor. 15:5.
- 10. More than 500 brothers and sisters "at the same time" I Cor. 15:6.

- 11. James I Cor. 15:7.
- 12. "All the apostles" (perhaps the same incident as #4, 9, and 8) I Cor. 15:7.
- 13. The disciples on the Mount of Olives when Jesus ascended Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:1-9.
- 14. Paul, on the road to Damascus Acts 9:3-6; I Cor. 9:1; 15:8.

#### Some Issues to Consider.

- Apparent discrepancies.
- What about Paul's reference to Jesus appearing to five hundred people?
  - Gary Habermas: "Even though it's only reported in one source, it happens to be the earliest and best-authenticated passage of all!"
  - Note: According to Paul, most of those who saw Jesus at this time were still alive 25 or so years later.
- Why does Paul write in I Corinthians that Jesus appeared first to Peter?
- The abrupt end to the Gospel of Mark.

## **Searching for Alternatives**

#### The Legend Theory.

- An embellished myth?
- Paul's testimony in I Corinthians 15.

#### The Hallucination Theory.

- The problem of the mass hallucination theory.
  - Gary Collins: "Hallucinations are individual occurrences... They certainly aren't something which can be seen by a group of people. Neither is it possible that one person could somehow induce an hallucination in somebody else."



## [Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" Chapter 14: "The Circumstantial Evidence"]

## The Circumstantial Case

#### Introduction.

- Is there circumstantial evidence that would bolster the case for Christ?
  - Lee Strobel: "Circumstantial evidence is composed of indirect facts from which inferences can be rationally drawn. Its cumulative effect can be every bit as strong... as eyewitness accounts."

#### 1. The Disciples Died for Their Beliefs.

- Experiencing the Resurrection dramatically changed their attitudes, beliefs, and behavior.
  - Darrell Bock: "History cannot verify the resurrection, but it can verify that the earliest believers embraced such a belief in contrast to all of their previous expectations about what a resurrection involved. Something caused a shift from a Jewish hope in the raising of all people at the end of history to the bringing back to life of an individual in the midst of it. What caused this new belief?"
  - ► J. P. Moreland: "When Jesus was crucified, his followers were discouraged and depressed. They no longer had confidence that Jesus had been sent by God, because they believed anyone crucified was accursed by God. They also had been taught that God would not let his Messiah suffer death. So they dispersed....

"Then, after a short period of time, we see them abandoning their occupations, regathering, and committing themselves to spreading a very specific message – that Jesus Christ was the Messiah who died on the cross, returned to life, and was seen alive by them.

"And they were willing to spend the rest of their lives proclaiming this, without any payoff from a human point of view... They faced a life of hardship... They were ridiculed, beaten, imprisoned. And finally, most of them were executed in torturous ways. For what? For good intentions? No, because they were convinced... that they had seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead."

- Objection: Many people are willing to die for a lie, including Muslims.
  - Muslims might be willing to die for their belief that Allah revealed himself to Muhammad, but they didn't witness it personally.
  - The apostles were willing to die for something they had experienced personally.

► J. P. Moreland: "When you've got eleven credible people with no ulterior motives, with nothing to gain and a lot to lose, who all agree they observed something with their own eyes – now you've got some difficulty explaining that away....

"People will die for their religious beliefs if they sincerely believe they're true, but people won't die for their beliefs if they know their beliefs are false."

#### 2. The Conversion of Skeptics.

- The case of James Mark 3:21, John 7:3-5, and I Cor. 15:7.
- The case of Paul Acts 7:57-8:1, 9:1-32.

#### 3. Changes To Key Social Structures.

- (1) Abandonment of the sacrificial system.
- (2) A new understanding of salvation.
- (3) Abandonment of Sabbatarian worship.
- (4) A new concept of God as a Trinity.
- (5) A new concept of the Messiah.
  - Note: Jews held traditional beliefs and practices to be sacred.

#### 4. Communion and Baptism.

- Communion as a celebration of the atonement.
- A new understanding of baptism
- Q: Were communion and baptism adapted from the pagan mystery religions?
  - The historical record.

#### 5. The Emergence of the Church.

- The survival and growth of the Christian movement.
- The growth of Christianity and Islam: the basic difference.

#### The Clincher:

• A. N. Sherwin-White on legendary accretions.

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## [Luke Timothy Johnson, The Real Jesus Chapter 5: "What's Historical About Jesus?"]

## **History and the Resurrection**

#### An Empowered Movement.

- Fundamentally, Christianity is based on the history and power of the Resurrection.
- Following his crucifixion and burial, Jesus entered into the spiritual life of God, which he shares with all those who receive it.

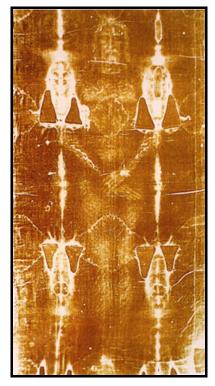
#### What is Resurrection?

- A literal bodily resurrection, not a "spiritual" or metaphorical resurrection.
  - Ben Witherington: "The early Jews meant by 'resurrection' something that happens to a human body after death, not something that happens to witnesses who encounter the raised person later."
- Resurrection is *not* simply a resuscitation.
  - Luke Timothy Johnson: "A resuscitation is excellent news for the patient and family. But it is not 'good news' that affects everyone else. It does not begin a religion. It does not transform the lives of others across the ages. It is not what is being claimed by the early Christians."
- After his Resurrection, Jesus "entered into an entirely new form of existence, one in which he shared the power of God."
  - Paul: "For as by a man came death, by a man also has come resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.... The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" – I Cor. 15:21-22; 45.
- The dynamic energy of the Jesus movement.
  - LTJ: "The matter is one of simple logic: for an effect, we need a necessary and sufficient cause."
- The Resurrection as an *ahistorical* event.
- The limits of historical evidence.

#### **Evidence and Experience.**

- Lee Strobel: "If the evidence points strongly [in the direction of Jesus], it's only rational and logical to follow it into the experiential realm."
- J. P. Moreland: "[Experience] is the final confirmation of the evidence."

## Postscript: The Shroud of Turin



#### A Silent Witness to the Resurrection?

- Jesus was buried in a *sindone*, a linen burial cloth.
- The Shroud of Turin is an ancient piece of faded linen that bears the image of a crucified man.
- A sepia-colored linen cloth 14' long and 43" wide.

#### The Controversy.

- Can a 2,000-year-old piece of cloth survive?
- A medieval forgery?
- No explanation for how the image of a crucified man could have been reproduced by a medieval artist on the surface fibers of this linen cloth.
- Rust-colored stains on the cloth are human bloodstains.
- The image on the Shroud is 3-dimensional.
- A testimonial to the Resurrection?
  - Russ Breault: "The Shroud is either the greatest hoax in history or the greatest Christian artifact in history."
  - Dr. Cheryl White : The Shroud is the greatest mystery in the world and the most studied art object in the world.

#### Early History of the Shroud.

- The history of the Shroud from the time of Christ until 1357 is uncertain.
- The Mandylion.
  - Eusebius (c. 325): The legend of Thaddaeus and King Abgar V of Edessa.
- The Antioch connection.
- The Edessa connection.
  - Gervase of Tilbury (c. 1211): "The story is passed down from archives of ancient authority that the Lord prostrated himself with his entire body on whitest linen, and so by divine power there was impressed on the linen a most beautiful imprint of not only the face, but the entire body of the Lord."
- Constantinople (944-1203?).
  - From 944 to the Fourth Crusade in 1203, the Mandylion was displayed annually. [NOTE: The Greek Orthodox Church celebrates August 16 as the "Feast of the Holy the Holy Face."]
  - The *Mandylion* was listed among the relics in the royal archives.

- Robert de Clari (1203): "There was another church, My Lady of St. Mary at Blachernae, where there was the Shroud in which our Lord had been wrapped, which every Friday was raised upright so that one could see the figure of our Lord on it."
- Disappearance of the *Mandylion*.
  - The Crusader sack of Constantinople in 1203.
  - Robert de Clari: "And no one, either Greek or French, ever knew what became of this cloth after the city was taken."
  - ▶ Pope Innocent III (r. 1198-1216): The looting of sacred relics from Constantinople.

#### Later History of the Shroud.

- Sir Geoffrey de Charny (c. 1300-56) and the reappearance of the Shroud in 1357.
- 1453: The Shroud became the property of the House of Savoy.
  - ► 1532: A fire nearly destroyed the artifact.
- 1578: Removal of the Shroud to the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin.
- 1898: The Shroud was displayed to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Italian kingdom.
  Secondo Pia took the first photographs of the cloth.
- 1983: Pope John Paul II convinced King Umberto II of Italy to transfer ownership of the Shroud to the Vatican.

#### The Sudarium.

- The face cloth of Jesus?
- A well-traveled cloth:
  - The *Sudarium* might have been kept in Jerusalem until 614, when it was moved to prevent its capture by an advancing Persian army.
  - It was moved repeatedly as Islam continued to spread westward.
- Since the late 1400s it has resided in the Cathedral of St. John in Oviedo, Spain.
- Remarkable similarities between the Shroud and the *Sudarium*.
  - Blood stains on both garments are AB+.
- A 1999 investigation of the cloth by a team of scholars authenticated the relic.

#### The Man of the Shroud.

- The body on the Shroud measures about 5'11" in height and weighed about 175 pounds.
- A spike was driven through the man's wrists (not the palms).
- The man's legs were not broken.
- The body reveals nearly 120 wounds on the back, arms, shoulders, and top of the head.
- An oval-shaped wound on the right side produced the greatest amount of blood flow.
- The body shows signs of rigor mortis, but no signs of decomposition.

#### Scientific Examinations.

- From 1978-81, the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP) conducted the most extensive tests ever performed on an historical artifact.
- Findings:
  - The image on the Shroud was not produced by paint or scorch marks.
  - The reddish-brown marks on the cloth are human blood type AB+.
  - The VP-8 Image Analyzer reveals a 3-dimensional image.
- The Carbon 14 tests in 1988 that dated the cloth to between 1260 and 1390 were flawed.
  - ► The fire that damaged the Shroud in 1532 would have produced carbon, which could distort the tests and result in a more recent date.
  - The piece of cloth cut from the Shroud came from a patch on the outer edge of the garment.
- The bioplastic factor.
- Pollen and dirt evidence.
  - In 1999 Israeli scientists announced they had discovered conclusive botanical evidence that the Shroud originated in ancient Israel.

#### Significance of the Shroud: Three Possibilities.

- (1) The Shroud is a hoax.
  - It was produced by a medieval forgerer who produced a life-like representation of a crucified man on a cloth that contains human blood, microscopic grains of pollen from species of plants indigenous only to Israel, and a nearly invisible amount of limestone dirt from the Jerusalem area.
- (2) The Shroud is legitimate, but the man of the Shroud is not Jesus.
  - ► The man died in a manner identical to Jesus, and his image was produced onto the cloth in a way that cannot be duplicated by modern science.
- (3) The Shroud is legitimate, and the image on it is that of Jesus of Nazareth.
  - His image was produced by a radiation phenomenon associated with the resurrection.
- A confirmation of the Biblical account?
  - Grant Jeffrey: "If the Shroud of Turin is genuine, then its physical evidence confirms the authenticity of many details of the Gospel accounts as genuine history... The Shroud provides a powerful confirmation of the Gospel record of the scourging and crucifixion of Jesus. In contradiction to the theory of many liberal scholars that the early Church simply invented the tradition of the empty tomb, the evidence from the Shroud indicates that the body of the crucified man did not remain covered by the burial cloth for long [and] that the crucified man did not remain in the tomb to decompose....

"If the Shroud ultimately proves to be the true image of the body of Jesus, it would certainly constitute the most powerful evidence of the existence of the historical Jesus and especially of his resurrection from the tomb."

## — 10 — Conclusions

[Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" "Conclusion: The Verdict of History"]

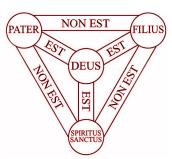
## The Divinity of Jesus Christ

#### Is the Doctrine of the Trinity Rational?

- The Christian doctrine of the Trinity:
  - God is one in essence and three in personhood.
- The (original) Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the almighty Father, maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light... begotten not made, of one being [substance or essence: homoousios] with the Father, through whom all things came into existence....



And in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say, 'There was a time when [the Son] was not,' and 'Before He was begotten He did not exist'... or those who maintain that the Son of God is 'of another substance or essence,' or 'created,' or 'capable of change,' or 'subject to alteration' – those the holy catholic and apostolic Church pronounces accursed."

#### The Skeptic's Argument.

- The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; but
- The Father is not the Son, the Father is not the Holy Spirit, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit;
- Therefore, each person of the Godhead is simultaneously God and not God which violates the law of non-contradiction.

#### Refuting the Skeptic's Argument.

- The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, but it is *not* illogical and irrational.
- The law of non-contradiction:
  - ► Two contradictory statements cannot both be true at the same time and in the same respect or the same relation. ('A' cannot equal 'A' and also 'non-A').
- Trinitarianism distinguishes between God's essence (nature or being) and God's subsistence (or personhood).
  - The members of the Trinity all share the divine nature, and are therefore one God.
  - The relational (personal) distinctions in the Godhead do not detract from each individual member's possession of the divine nature.
  - Therefore:
    - The way in which God is one (in essence or being), he is not three; and
    - The way in which God is three (in subsistence or personhood), he is not one.
- Conclusion: The doctrine of the Trinity is <u>not</u> a formal logical contradiction.
  - Therefore: It could be true!

#### Augustine's On the Trinity.

- Only a God who has plurality within unity can be an eternally relational being.
- Only a God who has plurality within unity can be both loving and knowing.

#### Dorothy Sayers' The Mind of the Maker (1941).

- EX: The sun is a triune reality:
  - (1) The sun consists of the sun itself (the source);
  - (2) The light from the sun (which is the only part of the sun that we see); and
  - (3) The heat from the sun (which brings life and warmth to our planet and ourselves).
- Likewise...
  - (1) God the Father is the source of the Godhead;
  - (2) God the Son is the Light who reveals the Father to us; and
  - (3) God the Holy Spirit is the power of God that sustains the entire universe.
- EX: Every work of creative art consists simultaneously of Idea, Energy, and Power.
  - The Idea is the invisible concept of the book that resides in the mind of the author.
  - The Energy takes the invisible Idea and embodies it in book form.
  - The Power is the effect the book has on its reader.
  - Sayers: The triune nature of human creativity is a direct reflection of the triune God in whose image we are made.

	CHRISTIAN TRINITARIANISM
•	<b>o-Christian Monotheism</b> Gen. 1:1 – "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Deut. 6:4 – The Shema: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one." Deut. 32:39 – "There is no god besides me." Psalm 96:5 – "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens."
Jesu:	<b>s Christ is co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father</b> John 1:1-14 – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Through him all things were made In him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 8:58 – "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I AM!" John 10:30-33 – "I and the Father are One." Romans 9:8 – "[F]rom [the Jews] is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all" Romans 10:9-13 – "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved For all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Col. 1:15-20 – "[Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and n him all things hold together For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things." Col. 2:9 – "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." Phil. 2:5-11 – "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus; Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Ref. Isaiah 45:3] Titus 2:13 – "[W] ewait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Hebrews 1:1-3 – "In the past In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son
·     ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·	<ul> <li>Holy Spirit is co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father</li> <li>Luke 1:35 – "The angel said [to Mary], 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."</li> <li>Mark 1:8 – John the Baptist: "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit appears at Jesus' baptism: Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34. John 16:5-16 – "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."</li> <li>The Great Commission: Matt. 28:19-20 – "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."</li> <li>Acts 1:7-8 – Jesus: "[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."</li> <li>Acts 2:1-4 – "When the day of Pentecost came, [Jesus' followers] were all together in one place.</li> <li>Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that came to rest on each of hem. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit"</li> <li>Acts 2:38 – "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."</li> <li>Rom. 8:9 – "You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God ives in you."</li> <li>Cor. 2:16 – "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God. I Pet. 1:21 – "Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."</li> </ul>

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## The Origins of Unbelief

#### 1. Intellectual.

- A misunderstanding of what Christianity is and what Christianity teaches.
- A misunderstanding of the rational and factual foundations of the Christian faith.
- The dark side of Christian history.

#### 2. Emotional.

• Bad interactions and experiences.

#### 3. Volitional.

- A matter of the heart.
- C. S. Lewis: Human beings are "rebels against God."
- Col. 1:21 "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior."

#### Why Won't They Believe?

- The strengths and weaknesses of apologetics.
  - Blaise Pascal: "People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive."
- Moral and intellectual laziness.
  - Blaise Pascal: "I ought to spend every day of my life seeking to know my fate. I might perhaps be able to find a solution to my doubts; but I cannot be bothered to do so, nor will I take one step towards its discovery."
  - Benjamin Franklin: "I... think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the Truth with less trouble."
- A matter of will.
  - Blaise Pascal: God has revealed evidence of himself that is sufficiently clear to those with open hearts and minds, but which is sufficiently vague so as not to force those whose hearts and minds are closed.
  - ► C. S. Lewis: "There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, '*Thy* will be done.'"
- Some candid admissions:
  - Lee Strobel: "I had wanted to believe that the deification of Jesus was the result of legendary development in which well-meaning but misguided people slowly turned a wise sage into the mythological Son of God. That seemed safe and reassuring; after all, a roving apocalyptic preacher from the first century could make no demands on me."

 Friedrich Nietzsche: "If one were to prove this God of the Christians to us, we should be even less able to believe in him."

"It is our preference that decides against Christianity, not arguments."

- Thomas Nagel: "I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that."
- Sir Julian Huxley: "The sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a supernatural being is enormous."
- Aldous Huxley: "I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning, consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... For myself [as for most of my contemporaries], the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we sought was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom."
- Czeslaw Milosz: "A true opium of the people is a belief in nothingness after death the huge solace of thinking that for our betrayals, greed, cowardice, murders, we are not going to be judged."
- Dinesh D'Souza: "If God does not exist, the seven deadly sins are not terrors to be overcome but temptations to be enjoyed....

"My conclusion is that contrary to popular belief, atheism is not primarily an intellectual revolt, it is a moral revolt. Atheists don't find God invisible so much as objectionable.... The atheist seeks to get rid of moral judgment by getting rid of the judge."

## The Origins of Belief

#### If Christianity Is True... Some Implications:

- Jesus' teachings are not just the good ideas of a wise teacher they are divine mandates.
- Jesus' moral teachings are the foundation for living a life pleasing to God.
- Jesus is still alive today, and I can have a personal relationship with him.
- Jesus has the supernatural power to transform our lives and guide them.
- Jesus conquered death and can open the door to eternal life for us, too.
- Jesus has experienced all the pain and suffering that I have, and he can comfort and encourage me in the midst of any trials that I might endure.

- Jesus loves me which means that I have nothing to lose and everything to gain by committing my life to him.
- Jesus is my God, and he deserves all my allegiance, obedience, and worship.

#### How Does One Become a Christian?

• One must believe what the Bible says about our own spiritual condition is true and what it says about Jesus is true, and wholeheartedly choose to follow him.

(1) Believe.

- John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
- ► John 11:25 "Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.""
- ► Rom. 10:9 "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

(2) Receive.

- Acts 2:38 "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will received the gift of the Holy Spirit."
- ► John 1:12 "To all who received him... he gave the right to become children of God."
- ► John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness."

(3) Become.

- ► II Cor. 5:17 "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old ways have gone, and the new has come."
- Rom. 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the ways of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern what God's will is – his good and perfect will."
- I Peter 1:13 "Therefore, prepare your mind for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you.... As obedient children, do no conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance."

#### A Transformed Life.

- Lee Strobel's testimony.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The fact that Jesus Christ died is more important than the fact that I shall die, and the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead is the sole ground of my hope that I, too, shall be raised on the Last Day. Our salvation is 'external to us.' I find no salvation in my life history, but only in the history of Jesus Christ."