

# 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.

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# The Case for the Gospels

[Lee Strobel, “The Case for Christ”  
Introduction]

## The Author and the Book

### Lee Strobel.

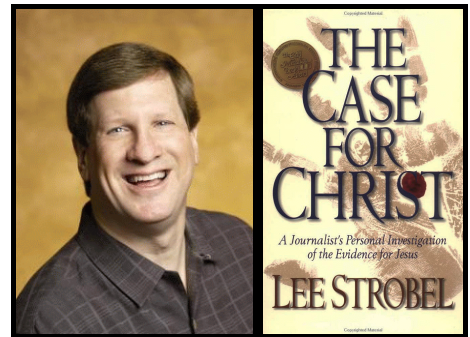
- A former journalist and atheist turned evangelical Christian.
- Author of *The Case For Christ*, *The Case for Faith*, *The Case for a Creator*, and *The Case for the Historical Jesus*.

### 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.

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[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?**

- Luke 1:1-4 – “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.

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## 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 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.

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- 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

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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.

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# 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.

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The Garden Tomb in Jerusalem























**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 forger 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.”

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# Conclusions

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

## The Divinity of Jesus Christ

### Is the Doctrine of the Trinity Rational?

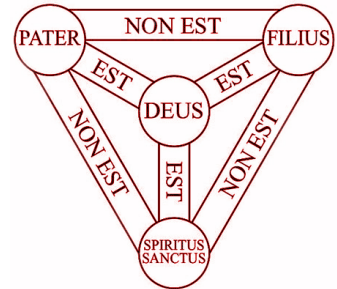
- The Christian doctrine of the Trinity:
  - God is one in essence and three in personhood.
- The (original) **Nicene Creed**:

*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.

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## CHRISTIAN TRINITARIANISM

### Judeo-Christian Monotheism

- 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.”

### Jesus Christ is co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father

- 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.”
- John 14:8-14 – “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”
- 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 in 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]e wait 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... through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being....”
- II Peter 1:1-2 – “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”
- I John 5:20 – “We are in... Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

### The Holy Spirit is co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father

- 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.’”
- 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.”
- 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.”
- 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.”
- Acts 2:1-4 – “When the day of Pentecost came, [Jesus’ followers] were all together in one place. 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 them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit....”
- 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.’”
- Rom. 8:9 – “You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.”
- I Cor. 2:16 – “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God.”
- II 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.”







