

# The case for christ

[Religion](#), [Jesus](#)



BOOK SUMMARY The Case for Christ Lee Strobel. Pub. Zondervan Publishing House About the Author Lee Strobel, Master of Studies in Law from Yale Law School. Award-winning journalist & investigative reporter for 13 yrs. at the Chicago Tribune. Pg. 303. His life changes when his wife becomes a Christian. He fears he will lose the fun-loving companion and friend he has known for years, but instead he is surprised by subtle changes in her character. This not only intrigues him but prompts him to learn more about Jesus by using the same logical and factual approach he follows while working as an investigative crime reporter.

He starts his learning quest as an unconvinced skeptic. His underlying question is, “ Can a case for Christ be made beyond a reasonable doubt”? To answer this, he sets out on a fact-finding mission. For nearly two years, he interviews numerous subject matter experts and biblical scholars to answer his questions with facts and evidence. His skills in investigative reporting help uncover the truth regarding the reliability of the gospels. Introduction: Who is Jesus? This comes down to two answers: This man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. Part 1: Examining the Record

Timeframe Skeptics: “ Some scholars say the gospels were written so far after the events that legend developed and distorted what was finally written down, turning Jesus from merely a wiseteacher into the mythological Son of God. ” Pg. 32 Answers: “ The standard scholarly dating is that Acts was written by Luke in A. D. 61-63, because Paul was still living and under house arrest in Rome. Since Acts is the 2nd of a two-part work, we know the 1st part - the gospel of Luke - must have been written earlier than that. And

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since Luke incorporates parts of the gospel of Mark, that means Mark is even earlier.

So if you allow one year for each writing, you end up with Mark written no later than about A. D. 60, a maximum gap of 30 yrs. after Jesus' death. Pg. 34 That's still within the lifetimes of various eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus, including hostile eyewitnesses who would have served as a corrective if false teachings about Jesus were going around. " Pg. 33. Eyewitness testimony is the key here. The two earliest biographies of Alexander the Great were written by Arrian and Plutarch more than 400 years after Alexander's death in 323 B. C. , yet historians consider them to be trustworthy.

So whether the gospels were written 60 yrs. or 30 yrs. after the life of Jesus, the mount of time is negligible by comparison. Pg. 33. Character Test " The gospel writers had nothing to gain except criticism, ostracism, and martyrdom. They certainly had nothing to win financially. If anything this would have provided pressure to keep quiet, to deny Jesus, to downplay him, even to forget they ever met him—yet, because of their integrity, they proclaimed what they saw. Pg. 48. Eleven apostles were put to grisly deaths, which show deep conviction for what they believed and were preaching regarding Jesus. Pg. 45 Consistency " The gospels are extremely consistent with each other by ancient standards, which are the only standards by which it's fair to judge them". Pg. 45 " If the gospels were identical or too consistent, this would have raised awareness that the authors had conspired among themselves to coordinate their stories in advance, and that would have cast doubt on them". Pg. 45 The Adverse Witness Test " Many people

had reasons for wanting to discredit this movement and would have done so if they could have simply told history better. Pg. 51. Yet, look what his opponents did say.

In later Jewish writings Jesus is called a sorcerer who led Israel astray—which acknowledges that he really did work marvelous wonders, although the writers dispute the source of his power. They never say he did not work the written miracles. If critics could have attacked the movement on the basis that it was full of falsehoods or distortions, they would have. But, that’s exactly what we don’t see”. Pg. 51 Corroborating evidence outside the Bible Josephus, Jewish historian, A. D. 37-100 • Wrote about Jewish wars that have corroborated by other historians and archaeological excavations.

Pg. 81 • Writes about James, brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ. Stoned to death in A. D. 62. Pg. 78 • Wrote about Jesus the tribe of his Christian followers that had still to this day not disappeared. Pg. 79 Tacitus, a senator and a historian of the Roman Empire, A. D. 56 –117 • Writes about Christ suffering extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of Pontius Pilatus. Refers to an immense multitude of Christ followers willing to die for their beliefs. Pg. 82 Pliny the Younger, Roman citizen, and provincial governor, A.

D. 23-79 • Refers to rapid spread of Christianity among all classes of people, as well as Roman citizens that are sent to Rome for trial. “ They have high ethical standards and if they repeatedly admit they honor Christ as God they are executed”. Thallus, a Greek historian, wrote in A. D. 52 a history of the Mediterranean world since the Trojan War. • Referenced the total darkness

at the time of the crucifixion. Pg. 84 Phlegon, a Greek author in A. D. 137 • Reported about the greatest eclipse of the sun when it became night at noon in A. D. 33. Pg. 85

The Mishnah, the 1st part of the Talmud, an important Jewish work compiled in A. D. 200 regarding Judaism's Oral Law • Refers to Jesus as a false messiah who practiced magic and was justly condemned to death. Pg. 86

Key Findings So if we didn't have any New Testament or other Christian writings, we could conclude from non-Christian historical writings that: 1. Jesus was a Jewish teacher 2. Many believed he performed healings and exorcisms 3. Some believed he was the Messiah 4. He was rejected by Jewish leaders 5. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius 6.

His followers spread beyond Palestine to there were multitudes of them in Rome by A. D. 64 7. All types of people worshiped him as God. Pg. 87. The Scientific Evidence Archaeology found an inscription from the time of Tiberius, from A. D. 14-37 which names Lysanias as tetrarch in Abila near Damascus—just as Luke had written. Pg. 97 John mentions the Pool of Bethesda and details the pool had five porticoes. When archaeologists excavated in this location 40 feet below the ground, they found the pool site and 5 porticoes (walk ways) exactly as John had described.

A fragment copy of John 18 was found in Egypt that papyrologists have dated to about A. D. 125. Pg. 99 Part 2: Analyzing Jesus The Identity Evidence of Gospel Writings The cross: Pontius Pilate inscribed INRI, an acronym for "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. Pg. 135 The Psychological Evidence Gary Collins, Dr. in clinical psychology. " People suffering form psychosis

display inappropriate emotions such as anxiety, depression or even anger. Jesus did not display any such emotions nor did he exhibit the misperceptions that plague people suffering from psychosis. Jesus did not show any symptoms of mental illness.

Jesus supported what he said by his actions—healing, raising people from the dead and the casting out of demons. Pg. 153 Prophecy Fulfillment Louis Lapidès, Jewish convert to Christianity. Grew up thinking Jesus was more derogatory than anything else. After returning from Vietnam War, he experimented with various religions and drugs. Was challenged about his disbelief in Jesus which led him to read the Old Testament prophecies. Was amazed of all the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled: " Isaiah revealed the manner of the Messiah's birth (of a virgin); Micah pinpointed the place of his birth (Bethlehem);

Genesis and Jeremiah specified his ancestry (a descendent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from the tribe of Judah, the house of David); The Psalms foretold his betrayal, his accusation by false witnesses, his manner of death (pierced in the hands and feet, although crucifixion hadn't been invented yet), and his resurrection (he would not decay but would ascent on high); and on and on" (p. 179). Lapidès goes on to earn a bachelor's degree in theology and a master of divinity of theology. Pg. 173 Part 3: Researching the Resurrection

To establish that Jesus rose from the dead, one must first establish that he died on the cross. The Medical Evidence The gospels tell us that Jesus sweat blood. " And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was

like drops of blood falling to the ground. " Luke 22: 44 Dr. Metherell, M. D. & PH. D. in Engineering. Pg. 193 " In severe cases of anxiety, the body releases chemicals that break down the capillaries in the sweat glands. As a result, there's a small amount of bleeding into these glands, and the sweat comes out tinged with a very small amount of blood". Pg. 195

According to the Dr. , when Jesus was nailed to the cross, his arms would have immediately been stretched about 6 inches in length, and both shoulders would have become dislocated. This fulfilled the Old Testament prophesy in Psalm 22, which foretold the Crucifixion hundreds of years before it took place and says, " My bones are out of joint. " When Jesus suffocated on the cross, a Roman soldier confirmed it by thrusting a spear into his side, which likely went through his lung and into the heart. When the spear was pulled out, clear fluid and a large volume of blood would have come out.

Clear fluid from the lung and large amounts of blood from the heart. This was confirmed in John 19: 34 when John reported he saw blood and water come out Jesus' side when the spear was removed. Pg. 199. The Dr. testified there would be no question that Jesus was dead at this point. Pg. 200. To speed up death, Romans would use a steel shaft to shatter the victim's lower leg bones. This would prevent the victim from pushing up with his legs to breathe. Jesus' legs were not broken, because the soldiers already determined that he was dead, and they just used the spear to confirm it.

John 19: 32-36 This fulfilled another Old Testament prophesy about the Messiah, which is that his bones would remain unbroken. Ps 34: 20. Pg. 200

Roman soldiers had every incentive to ensure crucified prisoners were dead when removed from the cross, because they would be put to death if a prisoner escaped. Pg. 201. “ Last of all, if Jesus did not die, and he somehow walked away from the tomb, he would have been in such poor condition and looked so pitiful that his followers would have felt sorry for him and try to nurse him back to health.

They would never have been prompted to start a worldwide movement based on the hope that someday they too would have a resurrected body like his”. Pg. 202 The Evidence of the Missing Body Joseph of Arimathea takes to body of Jesus, puts it in a tomb, the tomb is visited by a small group of women followers of Jesus early on the Sunday morning following his crucifixion, and they find that the tomb is empty. They see a vision of angels saying that “ Jesus has risen" (p. 215). Recorded in Acts 13: 29-31 and prophesied in Ps. 16: 10. Pg. 219.

In the earliest Jewish writings, there was nobody claiming the tomb still contained Jesus' body. The question always was, “ What happened to the body? ” The Jews proposed the guards of the tomb fell asleep, while the Christians proclaimed the guards were paid off to keep quiet. Pg. 221 “ The site of Jesus' tomb was known to Christian and Jew alike. If it were not empty, it would have been impossible for a movement founded on belief in the Resurrection to have come into existence in the same city where this man had been publicly executed and buried”. Pg. 20. The Evidence of Appearances Paul 5 B. C. – 67 A. D. • Wrote in both 1 Cor. 9: 1 and in 1 Cor. 15: 8 where he personally encountered the resurrected Christ. Pg. 228. •

Persecuted Christians until his conversion sometime in A. D. 33. • Refers to the fact that Jesus was a descendant of David, that he was the Messiah, that he was betrayed, that he was tried, crucified for our sins, and buried, and that he rose again on the third day and was seen by many people—including James, the brother of Jesus who hadn't believed in him prior to his crucifixion. Pg. 8 • “ 1 Corinthians 15: 8 is part of an early church creed. In this portion of Scripture, the post-resurrection Jesus is said to have appeared to Peter, the twelve, plus more than five hundred people some of whom were still alive at the writing of this epistle”. • People reading this at the time could still check with eye witnesses and question them if they wanted to confirm what it said”. Pg. 229. • “ This creed can be traced back to about A. D. 32 to 38 which means it lends it credence as primitive, unembellished testimony about Jesus appearing to skeptics like Paul and James” Pg. 30. Then they go on to cover the numerous sightings by other eye-witnesses mentioned in the gospels and the book of Acts”. Pg. 234. Were the appearances hallucinations? Dr. Gary Habermas, PH. D. , considered expert on the resurrection. He refutes the theory that the appearances were hallucinations because a hallucination is an individual experience that happens to one person at a time. Pg. 238 The Circumstantial Evidence J. P. Moreland, PH. D. Professor and author. “ 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. The Jesus movement was all but stopped in its tracks. ” Pg. 246 “ 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 of God who died on a cross, returned to life, and was seen alive by them. Pg. 247 " And 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" Pg. 247. The Conversion of Skeptics " The gospels tell us Jesus' family, including James, was embarrassed by what he was claiming to be. " " Later the historian Josephus tells us that James was stoned to death because of his belief in his brother. Why did James's life change?

Paul tells us: the resurrected Jesus appeared to him. There's no other explanation. " Pg. 248 Saul executed Christians when he had the chance. " Suddenly, he doesn't just ease off Christians but joins their movement. He writes that he saw the risen Christ and heard Christ appoint him to be one of his followers. " Pg. 249 Revolutionizing Jewish Life for followers of Jesus Immediately after Jesus' death, 10, 000 Jews were willing to give up five key practices that had served them sociologically and theologically for many centuries: 1.

Jewish people no longer offered sacrifices they had been doing since the time of Abraham and Moses 2. You don't become an upcoming Jewish member simply by keeping Moses' laws. 3. Worshipped on Sunday (when Jesus rose) instead of Saturday, a 1500 year tradition. 4. Began to worship Jesus as God (trinity) 5. The Messiah was someone who suffered and died for the sins of

the world, whereas Jews had been trained to believe that the Messiah was going to be a political leader who would destroy the Roman armies. ” Pg. 251

Conclusion:

So let’s revisit the underlying question of this book, “ Who is Jesus”? Lee Strobel concluded the evidence of history and his own experiences was too strong to ignore. He made a personal decision to receive Christ. Later, his five-year-old daughter went up to his wife and said, “ Mommy, I want God to do for me what he’s done for Daddy. ” This book has helped strengthen my faith in Christ, by highlighting many intriguing historical facts and evidence that corroborates what is written in the Old and New Testament concerning Jesus.

I will end with the book’s last paragraph which cites a quote from C. S. Lewis, an atheist and skeptical Cambridge University professor who was eventually won over by evidence for Jesus. C. S. Lewis is most notably known for his best-selling book series The Chronicles of Narnia. “ I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “ I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God. ” That is the one thing we must not say. A man ho was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic...or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His

being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. Pg. 271.