

## **Book Review – *The Case for the Real Jesus*, Lee Strobel, 2007**

This is the latest of Lee Strobel's 'Case for...' books and is probably the most timely. Strobel, who used to be an atheist and has a strong journalistic background, uses his sharp investigative skills again and asks the tough questions that any skeptic would ask.

The reason this is such a timely book is because it challenges head-on some of the charges made against the Christian faith in the seeming plethora of publications and documentaries in recent years. Author John Dickson said recently that Jesus has become very popular in recent times. The question to ask though is, which Jesus are we talking about? Strobel takes the main arguments that have been put forth and, through interviews with respected and learned biblical scholars, presents the case for the real Jesus and leaves the reader to make up their own mind.

Some of the topics that Strobel takes on include the idea that the church suppressed ancient non-biblical documents that give a more accurate picture of Jesus than that which we have in the four gospels; the claim that the church distorted the truth about Jesus by tampering (sometimes deliberately) with early New Testament texts; that new insights and discoveries have disproved the resurrection; and that Christianity actually stole its core ideas from earlier pagan mythologies.

You may recognise some of the claims being made here, claims that have been made by such people as Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*, James Cameron in *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*, Bart Ehrman, a leading New Testament textual critic, as well as some of the claims made by the Jesus Seminar a few years ago.

If you have a keen interest in topics such as these, you may also know of such scholars as Daniel Wallace, Michael Licona, Edwin Yamauchi, Michael Brown, and Paul Copan. These are the people who Strobel interviews in this book, and each of them certainly provided me with a satisfactory answer to any questions that I had about some of the issues that have been raised in recent years.

One of the main criticisms of Strobel's work has been that he does not present the other side of the argument – he only looks at the case for. My response to this is that, firstly, the titles of his books clearly indicate that they are looking at the case for in order to build up the reader's faith, and secondly, Strobel actually does present both sides by asking the hard questions. Having been a convinced atheist who actually tried to discredit Christianity, couldn't do it, and ended up coming to faith, he knows how a skeptic thinks, and in my mind he certainly asks the right questions and does not allow the interviewee to get off lightly.

If you have been troubled by some of the issues that have been raised in recent years about the identity of Jesus, this is one book that I would highly recommend. It is easy to read and does not skirt around the issues but tackles them head on, like good truth-seeking should.

*by Nils von Kalm*  
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