

The Case for Christ: From Atheism to Christianity

By Nollie Malabuyo, Pastor, Big Springs Community Church

In *The Case for Christ*, a DVD movie released recently, former award-winning *Chicago Tribune* journalist Lee Strobel tells of how he turned away from atheism to Christian faith through his research to debunk the resurrection of Christ. His colleague at the *Tribune* told him that the resurrection is Christianity's central doctrine. If he can prove that the resurrection is a myth, "the whole house of cards falls."

What happened to him in his investigation is the work of God himself. Here are five of the most popular theories that were destroyed by his own investigation:

1. The "wrong tomb" theory: The women who found the tomb empty were at the wrong tomb. There were four women. If the ladies made a mistake about the tomb, then so did the angels, for they were in the tomb.

2. The "swoon" theory or Jesus was faking it: Jesus only "swooned" on the cross and was not really dead when he was placed in the tomb. This is the most ludicrous theory of all. Is it medically possible that Jesus, after having been beaten to a pulp and crucified with a horrible wound in his side, could have survived for 36 hours in a cold, damp tomb with no food, water, or medical care? A doctor proved to him that a man crucified for six hours would have died of asphyxiation. Then he showed Strobel an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that concluded that Jesus surely died on the cross. And even if he was alive, would he have had enough strength to wiggle out of a mummy-like burial wrapping and remove the huge rock covering of the grave?

3. The "stolen body" theory: Jesus' disciples took the body of Jesus away. How did they get past the guards? Would the disciples later preach a lie? Would they be willing to be beaten, jailed and martyred for what they knew to be a fairy-tale?

4. The mass hysteria theory: A bunch of people, namely his disciples, were hallucinating at the tomb and other places where the supposedly risen Jesus appeared. To claim that over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6) shared the same exact hallucination at the same time, and recalled everything in the same way, is very unconvincing. Strobel was unhappy when he was told by a psychology professor, "that would have been a greater miracle than the Resurrection."

5. The Qur'an theory: The Muslim Qur'an says the disciples imagined Jesus rose from the dead. It claims that "they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but so it was made to appear to him ... Rather, Allah raised him up toward Himself" (Sura 4:157-158). The main concern with trusting this source as credible evidence is that the Qur'an was written about 600 years after all other sources were written that describe the events of the first century.

As far as the reliability of the New Testament, here are a few facts that skeptics and doubters ignore when it is compared with ancient literature:

1. There are over 5,800 existing Greek New Testament manuscripts, not including thousands more in other languages. Compare this with Homer: about 1,800; Plato: 49; and Aristotle: 7.

2. The variants in the New Testament manuscripts amount to only ½ of 1 percent (mostly insignificant spelling variants), while Homer's manuscripts have 5 percent variances.

3. The earliest New Testament manuscripts are dated about 10-50 years after they were written. Compare this with 500 years for Homer and over 1,000 years for other ancient writings.

Therefore, for those who doubt the historicity of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, *The Case for Christ* would be worth watching and considering.