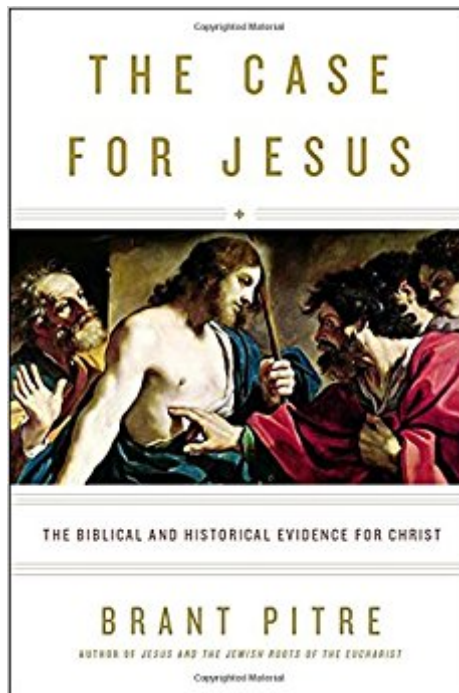




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# **The Case For Jesus: The Biblical And Historical Evidence For Christ**



## Synopsis

“This book will prove to be a most effective weapon | against the debunking and skeptical attitudes toward the Gospels that are so prevalent, not only in academe, but also on the street, among young people who, sadly, are leaving the Churches in droves.” — Robert Barron, author of *Catholicism*

For well over a hundred years now, many scholars have questioned the historical truth of the Gospels, claiming that they were originally anonymous. Others have even argued that Jesus of Nazareth did not think he was God and never claimed to be divine. In *The Case for Jesus*, Dr. Brant Pitre, the bestselling author of *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, goes back to the sources—the biblical and historical evidence for Christ—in order to answer several key questions, including:

- Were the four Gospels really anonymous?
- Are the Gospels folklore? Or are they biographies?
- Were the four Gospels written too late to be reliable?
- What about the so-called “Lost Gospels,” such as “Q” and the Gospel of Thomas?
- Did Jesus claim to be God?
- Is Jesus divine in all four Gospels? Or only in John?
- Did Jesus fulfill the Jewish prophecies of the Messiah?
- Why was Jesus crucified?
- What is the evidence for the Resurrection?

As *The Case for Jesus* will show, recent discoveries in New Testament scholarship, as well as neglected evidence from ancient manuscripts and the early church fathers, together have the potential to pull the rug out from under a century of skepticism toward the traditional Gospels. Above all, Pitre shows how the divine claims of Jesus of Nazareth can only be understood by putting them in their ancient Jewish context.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"I've lost count how many times I've heard critics say the Gospels are late, anonymous, and untrustworthy sources that don't prove Jesus was divine. At last there is a book that meticulously refutes these claims with an engaging discussion of the real Jesus that will benefit both scholars and laymen who read it." -- Trent Horn, author of *Answering Atheism* "Thanks to Dr. Pitre's magnificent book, you will now be equipped to make the case for Jesus and the veracity of the Gospels to even the most ardent skeptics. Perhaps more importantly, you will find your own faith reawakened." -- Jennifer Fulwiler, radio host and author of *Something Other Than God*

• In *The Case for Jesus*, Pitre breaks his research down, in typically accessible prose, to bring us a readable and fascinating account of how questioning one accepted academic idea put him on a path of discovery that served to strengthen, not sever, his faith. Readers who loved *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* will come away from this book with a similar sense of gratitude for such a faith-affirming presentation, and also a bit of awestruck wonder at how faith and reason can complement each other so well, when allowed to. I loved this book! • -- Elizabeth Scalia, Author of *Strange Gods: Unmasking the Idols in Everyday Life* and *Little Sins Mean a Lot*

• Brant Pitre, who has already demonstrated his brilliant scholarship in earlier works, explains here in remarkably easy-to-understand ways why we can trust the Gospels. Behind his effective communication, however, is wide-ranging research and careful rethinking. In fact, this book has given me a number of important new matters to consider myself. • -- Craig S. Keener, Asbury Theological Seminary

• *The Case for Jesus* topples the naïve skepticism that too often dominates the study of the Gospels by showing that the evidence for the truth of the Gospels is far stronger than is often assumed. Pitre has a unique talent for putting scholarly work of the highest caliber into an accessible and engaging form. This book should be on the shelf of every homilist, catechist, and Bible study leader. • -- Mary Healy, Sacred Heart Major Seminary

• "Brant Pitre does a stellar job setting forth a robust and rock solid case for Jesus. The sensationalistic claims of super-sceptics are exposed as a sham as Pitre provides a meticulous presentation of the evidence about the reliability of the Gospels, who Jesus thought he was, and what he means today. A balanced, sensible, and measured book that counters the spate of hyped-up conspiracy theories that do the rounds. An informative and enjoyable read. -- Michael F. Bird, Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia.

• "In this important book, one of America's most brilliant young scholars wrestles with issues of profound importance concerning Jesus and his identity. Pitre, in a lively and

direct manner informed by up-to-date scholarship, presents a case for Jesus as the divine Son of God, fully human and fully God. Along the way he bursts some scholarly bubbles and sets a much needed cat amongst the proverbial pigeons. A delight to read!" -- Chris Tilling, King's College, London

Like a room full of stale air, the popular-level conversation about Christian origins could use an open window or two. Thankfully, we now have one in Brant Pitre's Case for Jesus. Personable, accessible, engaging -- all supported by top-notch scholarship. Read it.

Nicholas Perrin, Dean of the Wheaton Graduate School

BRANT PITRE (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame) is Professor of Sacred Scripture at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. He is the author of the bestselling book *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* and *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*. Dr. Pitre is a highly sought after speaker and has produced dozens of Bible studies on CD, DVD, and MP3 in which he explores the biblical and historical roots of Christianity. He currently lives in Louisiana with his wife Elizabeth and their five children. More information about his work can be found at [www.BrantPitre.com](http://www.BrantPitre.com).

This is a very meticulously reasoned argument attempting to show that Jesus had a Divine self-conception. That is, Jesus believed, and claimed, that he was God. Pitre begins by posing C.S. Lewis's famous trilemma to the reader. If Jesus claimed to be God, we have three ways to respond -- he was either a Liar, Lunatic, or Lord. Pitre's work in this book strives to bring us back, face to face, with this trilemma. To accomplish this, Pitre needs to defeat another popular notion in the modern mind -- that Jesus, or at least much of the Gospel material about him, was a Legend. If Pitre can show that Jesus did, in fact, historically claim Divinity, we will be forced to respond to his claim and answer Jesus's own question for ourselves -- "Who do you say that I am?" To accomplish this Pitre first attempts to show that the Gospels are historically reliable. He believes that, contrary to modern scholarly opinion, the Gospels were indeed written by the authors they have been attributed to (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), that they were intended to portray historically accurate biographical pictures of Jesus, and that they were written much more closely to the time of Jesus than liberal scholars assume (Pitre tentatively dates the synoptic Gospels all before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70). These three pieces of evidence -- authorship, intent, and dating -- all lead Pitre to the conclusion that the Gospels give us historically accurate information about Jesus. After setting the stage by arguing for the accuracy of our sources, Pitre delves into the

synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and tries to show that although it is not always explicit (i.e. Jesus doesn't say "I am God, worship Me.") even the synoptics portray Jesus as claiming Divinity. Using evidence such as Jesus' use of the titles "Son of Man" and "I am," prophecy from the book of Daniel, Jesus' calming of the storm, the transfiguration, the pronouncement of the forgiveness of the paralytic's sins, the riddle about the Son of David being David's Lord, the crucifixion, and the resurrection, Pitre makes his case. In the end, he believes that not only do the Gospel authors portray Jesus as Divine, but that these claims came from Jesus himself. Thus we are led, full circle, back to the trilemma. We can call Jesus Liar, Lunatic, or Lord, but not, according to Pitre, a Legend. This was a really interesting read from a conservative scholar. His exegesis of many Gospel passages illuminate how the Hebrew Scriptures provide a much needed backdrop for understanding each story. The Gospels are much more nuanced than we might first think and oftentimes one saying or image may evoke whole passages or concepts from the Old Testament that would have been apparent to early Jewish readers. As Pitre argues, understanding the Jewish context of the synoptic authors helps in understanding their Christology. In the end, I agree with Pitre that the Gospels are generally more historically accurate than "mainstream" scholars give them credit for. I think it's plausible that the Gospel titles reveal their true authors and that they were written fairly early after Jesus' death (before the fall of Jerusalem). I also agree that the Synoptics may implicitly ascribe Divinity to Jesus "although I don't think that is an open and shut case. If there were more explicit cases in the synoptic Gospels where Jesus claimed Divinity, it would help his case. It still seems to me the only explicit sayings we have come from the Gospel of John, which even Pitre doesn't seem to argue is historically reliable (at least he doesn't focus on this in the book). It's probably outside the scope of this book, but I would have loved to see Pitre address the idea of Jesus as Apocalyptic Prophet. He interacts with several scholars who accept this notion (EP Sanders, Dale Allison, Bart Ehrman, John Meier) and it's a viable option in the world of Historical Jesus scholarship. I think it's a relevant topic in all discussions surrounding a Historical Jesus and can be a large factor in how one answers the question of Jesus' identity. This study is worth reading regardless of your theological persuasion, and Pitre's arguments deserve serious consideration.

Love this book - (I also love that the only person to give this a negative review falls short on intelligent criticism). It is well organized and thought out. It is systematic in addressing "the early

church didn't think Jesus was Christ" approaches. I highly recommend it.

Judging by the unintelligent and unfounded negative responses to this book i thought another positive review couldn't hurt the case for the Jesus. Up until now i have also heard the same arguments for the unreliability of the Gospels. Brant Pitre's work is nothing short of brilliant. As is typical with all of his writings, this book is very well researched (with plenty of reliable references) and extremely well written and superbly presented. It is a very easy read and Dr. Pitre states the case for Jesus so plainly and simply, you would have to be an serious non believer who won't give an inch to the truth to at least not consider the many valid points he makes. Personally i have never questioned the authority of the Gospels but i am very happy i have read this book. It will be a great reference for proving the authenticity of Christ subtle claims to be God, the case for Resurrection and proving the Gospels were written by the men who claim to have written them and not some accepted nonsense that they are just folklore. A fascinating and interesting read. Please open your mind for at least a moment and consider that this author has to say. At the very least it will give you some hard questions to chew on and some plain facts that are difficult to refute.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Brant Pitre's "The Case for Jesus: The New Testament scholar's contribution to Catholic popular literature on the identity of Jesus stands well above much of the plethora of material available to Christian readers today. Pitre (mostly) convincingly builds his case through careful, fact-based argumentation--even if one could draw different conclusions from the same evidence. What case is Pitre trying to make? In effect, he makes several cases leading up to his central point of who Jesus was and is. In the first part of this slim volume, he treats the authorship of the Gospels. In this matter, as in most of the book, his principle foil seems to be Bart Ehrman, a former Fundamentalist Christian-turned-apostate scholar whose popular works attempt to undermine the validity of the Gospels as meaningful historical documents and specifically the claim that Jesus is the Son of God. Contrary to Ehrman, Pitre argues for the traditional authorship of the Gospels. As two significant pieces of evidence, Pitre points out that even the earliest Gospel manuscripts and secondary references to the Gospels include the writers' names by which we know them. The Gospels, then, were never really anonymous. This leads Pitre to challenge the scholarly consensus on the dating of the Gospels, and the more controversial hypothesis that Matthew and Luke were based in part on a hypothetical, now lost (and, as Pitre points out, never referenced) book of Jesus sayings denoted by scholars as the Q source. As for the so-called lost or apocryphal gospels, Pitre

shows that they were never really lost, that most of them were known by early Christian writers, who regarded them as forgeries. In the case of the apocryphal gospels, then, even though the internal evidence suggests that they were written by the apostles to whom they were ascribed, the attributions were never accepted. Ehrman has argued that the apocryphal gospels were not accepted by mainstream or orthodox Christianity, but were embraced by the communities, such as the Gnostics, for whom they were written. In a way, Pitre and Ehrman aren't in contradiction here, but they just interpret the data differently. In other words, if you accept that the Church Fathers are espousing the correct version of Christianity, then Pitre's point stands; if you hold on to the view that the Church Fathers represented one view of Christianity among many, all to be regarded equally, then the criticism of the (orthodox) Church Fathers matters less. Pitre, while not dismissing the validity of literary criticism, argues for the historical value of the Gospels. He wants to treat the Gospels as biographies of Jesus. Their inconsistencies and apparent contradictions stem not, as Ehrman would have it, from a "telephone game"-like process of accretions and alterations over time, or even so much from the requirements of the communities for which they were written, as from the different perspectives and life experiences of their writers. Pitre notes the similarities between the Gospels and ancient Greco-Roman biographies in countering the ideas of Ehrman and before him, Rudolf Bultmann, in thinking of the Gospels as akin to folktales, fairy stories, and myths. Pitre stands for the literal truth of the Gospels as far as they will allow in part because two of the four Gospels tell us that they are true (Lk 1:1-4; Jn 19:35, 21:24-25). There's a bit of circularity in that argument. The main case for Jesus that Pitre wants to make is for His divinity. The Gospels, as Luke Timothy Johnson and other scholars have explained, try to answer, however obliquely, the question Jesus himself poses to Peter: "But who do you say that I am?" (Mk 8:29). Pitre makes the case that the Gospels--even the synoptic Gospels--speak to Jesus being God. Pitre makes a lively, even entertaining, argument, using some passages, e.g., the reference to the sign of Jonah, in ways I certainly hadn't thought of before. Even though as a Catholic I accept Jesus' divinity, I am willing to allow that others may look at Pitre's argument and reasonably come to different conclusions. One train of thinking might be this: Pitre notes that Jesus speaks in parables and riddles, and so His claims to divinity are indirect. Moreover, an outright and indeed blasphemous claim to His divinity might have put an even earlier end to Jesus' three years of ministry. But the Gospel writers should not have been constrained by either Jesus' particular application of rhetoric or his need to be circumspect; why did the Gospel writers not forthrightly declare that Jesus was God? I think the proper response to this is that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wanted the person

encountering the Gospels to answer for themselves who Jesus was and is. In other words, by transmitting the way Jesus conveyed who He was to His disciples perhaps they, too, would draw in and win over later followers of Christ. It's much more efficacious to engage the potential convert that way than simply to assert that Jesus is God. Brad Pitre has written a wonderful and engaging book. Even if you don't agree with all of his conclusions, you will appreciate his logical and engaging discussion. This book is meant for the general reader, although it does have a scholarly apparatus by way of careful notes. An index would have been nice but this is a short book of a couple hundred pages. If you're on a long flight, this book would be the perfect company.

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