

## A BOOK REPORT

### “PERSON OF INTEREST/WHY JESUS STILL MATTERS IN A WORLD THAT REJECTS THE BIBLE”

**AUTHOR:** J. Warner Wallace, who is referred to as “America’s Foremost Cold- Case Detective”, Who is/was a “Cold -Case Detective”, and a popular national speaker and bestselling author, with over two decades of investigative experience.

**PUBLISHER AND DATE OF PUBLICATION:** Zondervan Reflective, 2021

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I, your Reviewer, find this book to be an absolutely, fascinating book. Somewhat like the popular author, Lee Strobel, has done in his popular books, including *A Case for Christ*, our author, here, J. Warner Wallace, uses what one might call “an Evidentiary Search” to lead him (as it did with Lee Strobel) from a total atheistic world view to becoming a devout believer in and servant of Christ. However, the Evidentiary Approach used by our Author, Mr. Wallace, in this book differs substantially from the approaches used by Mr. Strobel and other authors and investigators to justify a belief in Christ. Mr. Strobel’s investigation, and the investigations or apologetic arguments of most other authors, theologians and Christian Apologists rely, heavily, on the New Testament and the historicity of the New Testament, and particularly the New Testament’s historic accounts of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of the events and explosion of the Faith which followed those events. Here, our Author, Mr. Wallace, who, when he conducted his investigations about the truth or falsity of the claims about Jesus was not a trained theologian or academician, and was not even a Christian believer, but rather was educated as an architect and was trained and experienced as a detective and was a complete skeptic or atheist, did not rely on the New Testament, but rather relied on parts of the Old Testament and many books of Ancient History, and other non-Biblical sources and his learned techniques as a “Cold-Case Detective” in order to form a solid, what we might call “a totally objective” belief that Jesus was, in fact, both man and God, and was what He claimed to be. The Author’s Cold-Case Investigation of the claims about Jesus led him to a conversion to Christianity, and to becoming a solid, devout believer, and to attending seminary and becoming a Youth Pastor and a Lead Pastor, and to acknowledging Jesus as being “responsible for everything I (he) valued”, and to an acknowledgment of the fact that Jesus Christ has had, and continues to have an unparalleled impact on mankind. In fact, as you go through this book you cannot help but be convinced that no one, no person, has had and continues to have a greater, more lasting and continuing effect on mankind and on the endeavors of mankind, including those in education, the sciences, the arts, literature and even almost all of mankind’s many religions than has Jesus Christ. Even people who totally reject the Bible, God and Christ have been impacted by Jesus, and his teachings. Our Author makes a solid, highly persuasive and convincing case that, had Jesus never come to this world, our lives would be very much different than they are, a fact which non-believers might bitterly deny, but a fact which is undeniably true.

I, your Reviewer, like you the Reader, have read many books on Christian Apologetics, the Christian Faith, and Christian Theology. But this book is different. Its approach to Christian Apologetics is unique. The Author’s use of his learned tools, skills and techniques of a Cold-Case Detective to conduct an investigation of Jesus and to determine the truth or falsity of the claims about Jesus is unique. If one is investigating the Christian Faith, and has unresolved doubts about the truth or falsity of the claims and beliefs of the Christian Faith, but is willing to approach, read and study this book with an open mind, then I think that he or she will come away from such a reading and study with a firm belief that the claims of Christianity are true, and that Jesus Christ was both man and God, and that He has and continues to have an unparalleled impact on mankind and its various cultures, endeavors and religions (not just

Christianity). In my view, the view of your Reviewer, this book would be a highly valuable addition to the assigned readings for any course on Christian Apologetics.

One final point should be made. While the Author, Mr. Wallace, was/is not one with extensive academic or scholarly education or credentials, he performed extensive, well researched and sourced scholarly investigations in his pursuit of determining the truth or falsity of the claims about Jesus. While this book is clearly written, in a non-academic, non-scholarly manner, and while it is easy to read, it is, nevertheless, just as well documented and sourced as it would be if it were some academic or scholarly treatise. So don't be fooled by its appearance, or by the Author's use of easy-to-read writing techniques, or his use of easy to understand and very explanatory diagrams and charts. This book is accompanied by extensive "Case Notes", wherein the Author cites his many sources, documentary and otherwise. These Case Notes, and the Author's citations to various sources which appear in the text, would put any scholarly article to shame. While a non-scholarly work on its face, this book really is a masterpiece of scholarly investigation.

### **WHAT IS THE AUTHOR DOING WITH WHAT THE AUTHOR IS SAYING**

We note, again, that the Author, J. Warner Wallace, is not trained scholar, academician or theologian. Rather, he was/is trained and experienced in the field of "Cold-Case Detective Work". Cold Cases are Criminal Cases, primarily murder cases, where the crime occurred at an extensive time in the past, and the detective or police investigations that were performed at times in relatively close proximity to the time when the crime was committed produced no resolution of the question as to who committed the crime. By and large Cold Cases are murder cases, as, in most U.S. jurisdictions, there is no Statute of Limitations on the Crime of Murder. That is to say that unlike many or most crimes, a murder suspect can be charged and prosecuted for the crime of murder, no matter how long in the past the purported murder occurred. In most crimes, other than murder, Statutory Law bars the charging and prosecution of a criminal suspect after a certain number of years, the period of the Statute of Limitations applicable to the given type of crime, has expired. There is no such limitation on the crime of murder.

Here, in this book, our Author uses as an example of, or model for the type of investigation which he performed as to Jesus, an ongoing Cold Case Investigation performed by him and his detective partner of a "possible murder" which had occurred long in the past, and as to which the initial investigations had produced no conclusive result or suspect, and for which the success of any investigation was considered, not just by our Author and his partner, but even their superior, to be something that was highly improbable. As in many Cold Cases, there was no crime scene, and there was no body and there were no actual eye witnesses to the crime and there was no immediately available forensic evidence of the type we are accustomed to seeing on TV. There were even reasons to doubt that the purported victim, Tammy, had even been killed or was even dead; the possibility being that she had simply absented herself to places unknown.

So, our Author, a committed atheist, describes how he and his detective partner investigated the Cold Case of Tammy's possible murder, using his learned techniques, methods and skills of a Cold-Case Detective, while at the same time thoroughly describing his essentially contemporaneous use of such techniques, methods and skills to investigate Jesus and the claims made by Christianity about Jesus, in order to achieve the successful location, charging and prosecution of Tammy's murderer, her husband, Steve, and his personal conversion to Christianity, and his conclusions that all of Christianity's claims about Jesus Christ are true, and that he could no longer ignore Christ as being the source of everything he, the Author, values. As a result of his Cold-Case Investigations of Jesus and Christianity's claims about Jesus, our Author committed his life to Christ, attended seminary and became a youth and lead pastor.

So, let's briefly, and in outline form explore the Cold-Case Detective techniques used by our author in his investigations of Jesus. Such an outline must, of necessity, be brief and truncated, but the hope is that it will lead you, The Reader, to personally explore this book and to determine whether it can be (as I believe it can be) of great use in any apologetic pursuits which you are called upon to perform by your ministry roles. Our outline is as follows:

- 1) **MOTIVATION FOR UNDERTAKING THE INVESTIGATION:** As noted above, our Author started his investigations of Christ as an atheist, or at least a hardened skeptic. Nevertheless, his wife drug him to church one Sunday morning. There the preaching Pastor made two statements which had an impact on our Author, those being: first that "Jesus was the smartest man who ever lived", and second that "The teaching of Jesus transformed the world because Jesus is God incarnate". So, the Pastor made two statements which rest at the very heart of Christian beliefs, those being that Jesus was both man and God, and that he was the most intelligent man who ever lived, and whose teachings transformed the world. Our skeptical Author decided to investigate these bold claims, which he could not believe were true.
- 2) **FUSE, EVENT AND FALLOUT:** As a detective our Author had formed a belief that any crime, particular the crime of murder (and very particularly premeditated murder) and any man-made or man-caused historic event, would present several components. In his Model, which he diagramed by way of a diagram (one of many) which appears in his book, he used a Bomb as a symbol for the crime or event, and an arrow which he called a "fuse" leading to the bomb or the event, with the bomb (the event) being in the center of concentric circles which look much like a target or bullseye. In the Author's detective experience any momentous event (which would include a murder, or in his investigation of Jesus and the claims about Jesus, the coming of Christ to the world and His teaching, death and resurrection) has the components of: 1) a chain of events or circumstances (the "fuse") leading up to the event and virtually dictating both the occurrence of and timing for the event), and 2) the event itself (the "bomb"), and 3) the "fallout" or results caused by the event or naturally following from the event (i.e. the concentric circles on his diagram). So, our Author used this diagram as his Model for his investigation which he hoped would lead him to conclude whether the claims made about Jesus are True or False. At the same time, he used a comparable diagram for the investigations being performed by him and his detective partner of the disappearance, and possible murder of Tammy.
- 3) **THE FUSE AND THE FALLOUT:** The Author noted that any significant crime (such as a premeditated murder) or event will generally be preceded by a "long fuse", meaning a longer chain of events or circumstances leading up to the crime or the event. It was also his experience that any significant crime or event will have following results or consequences (i.e. "Fallout") which are generated by the crime or the event. Furthermore, in the Author's experience the felon or "person of interest or suspect" will be identified by the Fuse and the Fallout. It is, quite simply, fascinating to read and see how the Author used his diagrams, and his "fuse" and "bomb" and "fallout" metaphors to solve the case of Tammy's murder and to lead him to the conclusions that Christianity's claims about Jesus are True, and that the Fallout of the birth, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus have had and continue to have impacts on the world, mankind, most of mankind's endeavors, and even most of the religions of mankind (not just Christianity) which, quite simply, cannot be denied by any reasonable person, Christian, non-Christian or even Christian hater.
- 4) **THE FUSE FOR JESUS:**
  - a. **WHY DID JESUS APPEAR WHEN HE APPEARED AND NOT EARLIER:** The Author performed extensive, scholarly investigations of ancient history in order to try to

answer his question (and one of his Christian wife) about why Jesus appeared when He appeared and not earlier. The results of this investigation are both fascinating and compelling. The Author concludes that the “fullness of time” for Jesus to appear was fulfilled by, among other things: 1) the human developments of alphabets, which permit the transmission of information, 2) the Roman Empire and its colonization of much of the known world, 3) the postal system and road systems developed by the Romans, which allowed for the wider and more readily achieved transmission and spread of information, which could not have previously occurred, 4) the general tolerance of most religions by most (not all) Roman emperors and authorities, 5) so called “*PAX ROMANA*” or general social order provided by the Romans in the Roman empire, which subdued much of the periodic warring which had previously occurred and the general lawlessness which made travel highly dangerous, 6) some transportation developments which made the transfers of goods and information something that could be more readily accomplished.

- b. **WAS JESUS JUST A COPYCAT SAVIOR/THE JESUS MYTH:** Our Author next explored the various claims that Jesus was merely a copycat of other purported gods, divine personages and saviors which had populated much of the legends, myths and mythology of the Ancient Near East and of the ancient Greece and of the large parts of the Greco-Roman world. The Author lists all of the characteristics of these various mythological figures, and produces a lengthy, complete list of all of the characteristics which a true “Savior” would have to possess or exhibit in order for that Savior to be, in fact, the one True Savior which people of the Ancient Near East, Judaism, Greece and the Greco-Roman world had come to expect. As shown by the Author Jesus and only Jesus fulfilled this requirement. He was not like any of the other mythological gods, divine personages or saviors. None of them could measure up to Jesus. This fact notwithstanding, it was clear that “a spiritual fuse had been lit and was burning throughout the then known world of Jesus, and that peoples, everywhere, possessed a “God Instinct”, which was causing them to search for a coming Savior.
- c. **A PROFILE:** The Author looked the Old Testament, and noted the characteristics which the Old Testament Authors, primarily the Prophets, had stated that the Messiah would possess, and he then noted that if you combine these broad Old Testament expectations for a Messiah, with the broad expectations of non-Jewish mythologies, we can create a profile of those attributes which a “person of interest”, a possible or probable savior or messiah would possess. Jesus fulfilled every requirement of that profile.
- d. **THE PROPHETS/BOTH CLEAR EVIDENCE AND CLOAKED EVIDENCE:** Our Author then reviewed all of the Prophecies which are claimed to point to Jesus, noting that some of them (primarily those of Isaiah and Daniel) provide what the Author referred to as “Clear Evidence” (meaning “Evidence Which Points Forward to The Person of Interest or Suspect) for the identification of Christ as the expected Savior or Messiah, and with many of them or most of them providing “Cloaked Evidence” (meaning evidence which points backwards to the identification of a Person of Interest or Suspect) for the identification of Jesus as the expected Messiah or Savior. The Author also identified those Old Testament Biblical Prophets and Figures which he felt could be most viewed as “reliable witnesses or ‘informants’” in his investigative pursuits, again resting most of his, the Author’s, reliance on Isaiah and Daniel, who, in the Author’s conclusions, provided not just the best identification of Jesus but also the best evidenced of the “Timing” for the initial event, the coming of Jesus.

- e. THE FULLNESS OF TIME/WHEN JESUS HAD TO COME AND WHEN HE CAME: I cannot do justice to the Author's investigations in these respects, but, suffice it to say that he came to the conclusion that the Messiah or Savior had to possess certain characteristics, and had to come within a given window of time, and that Jesus, and only Jesus fulfilled these requirements, and was, therefore, properly identified as the Author's "Person of Interest". (Note that, while the Author is describing his investigations of Jesus, he is also describing how he and his partner used precisely the same techniques, methods, models and diagrams to reach conclusions about just when the event as to Tammy had have occurred (meaning within what window of time did it have to happen.)
- 5) THE FALLOUT: While this book is very easy to read, it is difficult to describe the Author's investigations and the results of these investigations in any summary or outline format. That said, suffice it to say that the Author's analysis of the "Fuse" leading to the Events of the Coming and Life, Teachings and Death and Resurrection of Jesus, and the characteristics that only Jesus could be found to exhibit, identified Jesus as being the person who was, in fact, the person who Jesus was claimed to be by the Pastor in the sermon which motivated our Author's investigations, as described in paragraph 1 above. The Author then determined that, using his investigative techniques described above (i.e. the "Fuse", the "Bomb"/Event, and the "Fallout"), history should demonstrate that there had been a huge "fallout" from the Events of the coming of, teachings of, and death and resurrection of Jesus. Pages 102-244 of this book describe the impacts (i.e. the Fallouts) which Jesus has had, and His followers have had and are today having on essentially every important area of human endeavor, including literature (both sacred and secular), art (both sacred and secular), music (both sacred and secular), science, education (both basic education and higher education as most colleges and universities were founded by followers of Jesus), architecture, law, medicine, etc. In fact, as shown by the Author, even the world's non-Christian religions (e.g. Islaam) have been impacted by Jesus and His life and teachings. I cannot do justice here to the Author's research about the Fallout of Jesus, but if you, the Reader, or anyone you are working with have any doubts about the past and continuing impacts of Jesus Christ on our lives and cultures and human endeavors, then I strongly suggest that you review this book. The Author's lists of prominent individuals, who were and are devout followers of Jesus and who made huge contributions in virtually every field of human endeavor, and his lists of their accomplishments demonstrate that, had there never been a Jesus this world would be far more fouled up than it is, and would be far worse off than it is. It is remarkable how large segments of our society now seek to claim that Christianity and Christians and Christian beliefs are somehow detrimental to society. If they would just acknowledge the absolute truth of the facts of the impacts of Jesus and His followers and believers on human endeavors which are shown to be the case by our Author, in plain, beyond dispute conclusions, then thee is no way that they can, with any degree of fairness and reason, make such claims about Christianity and Christians.
- 6) CONCLUSIONS: The Author, using his Cold-Case Detective techniques and methods, as briefly and inadequately described above, arrived at a conclusion that he could no longer ignore the TRUTH of the Chistian Claims about Jesus, or the fact that Jesus is the source of everything which the Author values. An Atheist was, therefore by criminal investigative methods, converted to Christianity and became a devour follower and servant of Christ.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

I am going to conclude this Review with a quote from our Author: *"Jesus was born in a tiny, irrelevant town in the Roman Empire and raised in another small village. He had to walk from one place to the next, and as an adult he never travelled more than two hundred miles from the town where he was born. He had none of the resources people use today to make an impact: no social media platform, no podcast audience, no clever videos, and no website. He didn't even have the resources people used in the first century to make an impact: he never held a political office, never ruled a nation, never led an army, and never authored a book. His family was insignificant. The locals suspected he was an illegitimate son, his mother was a poor peasant woman, and his father could not afford much. Jesus didn't receive an expensive education, never married, never had children, never owned a home of his own, and didn't possess much more than the clothes on his back. As an adult, his own brother was suspicious of his ministry, a work that ended after just three short years. Public opinion turned against him, most of his followers abandoned him, one disciple betrayed him, and another denied him. He was rejected by the religious, hunted by the powerful, mocked and unjustly persecuted by his enemies. He suffered an unfair trial, was publicly humiliated, brutally beaten, and unduly executed in the most horrific way. Even then his followers had to borrow a grave to bury him. Yet this man changed history, inaugurated the Common Era, and forever transformed the most important and revered aspects of human culture. How is it possible that a single man—a man like Jesus—could have this impact?"*

The Author answered this question, his own question: Jesus was not just a man, He Was God Incarnate. There is quite simply no other way to explain His Impact.

#### **HOW TO READ THIS BOOK**

I, your Reviewer, have been known to urge my readers that they need to read an entire book in order to use it. I don't need to make that recommendation here. Most of you Readers are already totally convinced, devout followers of Christ, and you don't need some additional outline of some apologetic methodology of which you were not previously aware to support your already strong convictions. However, it will help you to skim this book in order to know what is in it. If you do that, and if you keep this book available, and if you or those you are working with have later questions of an apologetic nature, then you can use this book as a valuable resource that will help you in resolving these questions. In particular, if you are teaching a class on Christian Apologetics, then you can and should use this book as a resource for that class. If you are working with someone who has persistent doubts about Jesus, or about the Truth of the claims made by Christianity about Jesus, then you should recommend to them that they read and study this book. Some, if not many individuals are not going to just accept, out of hand, claims that Jesus was God Incarnate. They might want some "objective evidence", beyond the Biblical accounts that such is the case. This book can provide that evidence.

#### **IS THIS BOOK APPROPRIATE FOR INCLUSION IN THE TEI LIBRARY OR FOR USE IN ANY TEI OR ECLI CLASS?**

For the reasons set forth in the immediately above Section of this Review, the answers to these questions are YES.

Thank you Dear Reader for Reading this extensive Review.

