

I. THE ACCUSATION: "JESUS NEVER CLAIMED TO BE GOD"

- Many scholars and skeptics claim that **Jesus never explicitly called himself God**.
- Key claims from Bart Ehrman and others: Jesus never says, "I am God" in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

"You do find Jesus calling himself God in the Gospel of John, or the last Gospel. Jesus says things like, "Before Abraham was, I am." And, "I and the Father are one," and, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." These are all statements you find only in the Gospel of John, and that's striking because we have earlier gospels and we have the writings of Paul, and in none of them is there any indication that Jesus said such things. ...I think it's completely implausible that Matthew, Mark and Luke would not mention that Jesus called himself God if that's what he was declaring about himself. That would be a rather important point to make. This is not an unusual view amongst scholars; it's simply the view that the Gospel of John is providing a theological understanding of Jesus that is not what was historically accurate." [<https://www.npr.org/2014/04/07/300246095/if-jesus-never-called-himself-god-how-did-he-become-one>]

- Skeptics like Ehrman claim idea of Jesus' divinity was an **early Christian development, not his own teaching**. The name of Ehrman's book: *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*. Ehrman sees Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who did not see himself as divine.
- Skeptics also use the claim, "Oh, that's a religious conclusion, I'm a historian."
 - Yet they make plenty of arguments that are supposedly based on history that have fully religious conclusions.
 - If claiming Jesus **was God** is religious, then claiming he **wasn't** is equally religious.
- If Christians say the Bible is divinely inspired, skeptics cry "religious bias." Yet when skeptics say the Bible is a **human document with errors**, they want it treated as neutral scholarship.

II. THE ONLY LOGICAL CONCLUSION FROM THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS (MARK AS THE PRIMARY TEXT)

- **If we take Ehrman's challenge seriously and examine only the Synoptic Gospels, what do we find?**

A. JESUS FORGAVE SINS – A DIVINE PREROGATIVE (MARK 2:1-12)

- Jesus forgives a paralyzed man's sins.

- The scribes react: "**Who can forgive sins but God only?**" (Mark 2:7).
- Jesus does not correct them but instead **demonstrates his authority** by healing the man.
- **Implication: Jesus acts with God's authority because he is God.**

B. JESUS CLAIMED AUTHORITY OVER THE LAW (MARK 2:23-28)

- Jesus' disciples pluck grain on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees accuse them.
- Jesus responds: "**The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.**" (Mark 2:28).
- Who instituted the Sabbath? **God**.
- Who alone has the authority to redefine it? **Only God**.

C. JESUS CALMS THE STORM – AUTHORITY OVER NATURE (MARK 4:35-41)

- Jesus rebukes the wind and waves: "**Peace, be still.**"
- The disciples are terrified: "**What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?**" (Mark 4:41).
- The **OT parallel**: In Psalm 107:28-29, **God alone stills the storm**.
- Jesus acts **not as a prophet praying to God, but as the God who commands nature**.

D. JESUS ACCEPTS WORSHIP – SOMETHING ONLY GOD CAN RECEIVE (MATTHEW 14:33, MARK 5:6, LUKE 24:52)

- **Mark 5:6** – The demon-possessed man "ran and worshipped him."
- **Matthew 14:33** – After walking on water, the disciples "worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."
- **Luke 24:52** – After the ascension, the disciples "worshipped him."
- **Contrast**: When people tried to worship Peter (Acts 10:25-26) or an angel (Revelation 19:10), they were rebuked.
- **Jesus never rebukes worship. He accepts it because he is God.**

III. CONCLUSION: THE ONLY HONEST READING OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS IS THAT JESUS IS GOD IN THE FLESH

- Ehrman and others demand **explicit wording** ("I am God"), but Jesus **demonstrates his divinity** in ways that leave no doubt.
- **Either Jesus was a blasphemer or he was God**. There is no neutral ground.
- If Jesus never claimed to be God, why was he crucified for **blasphemy (Mark 14:61-64)**.