

BECOMING GOD

DEIFICATION FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

LECTURE 5: JESUS OF NAZARETH

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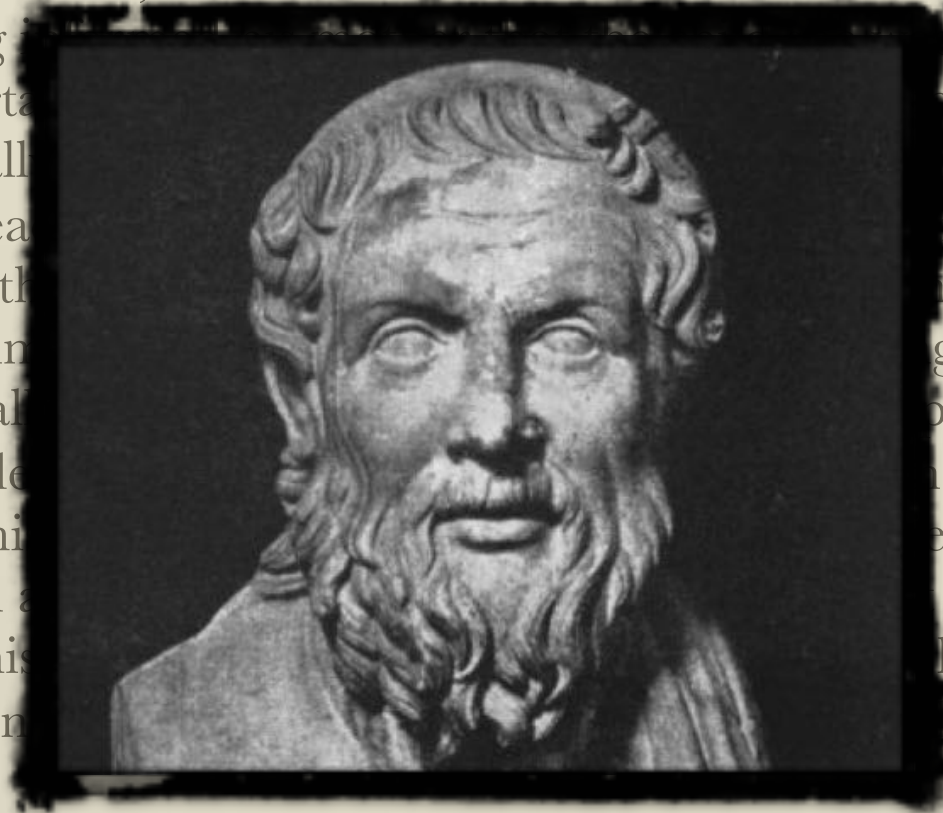


JESUS OF NAZARETH



A Miraculous Life

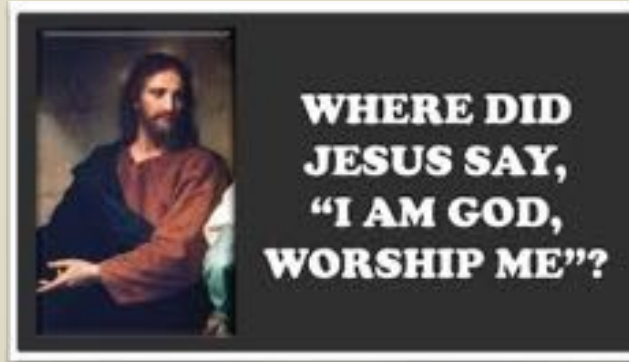
Even before he was born, it was known that he would be someone special. A supernatural being would not be a mere mortal. He became an unusually powerful man on an itinerant preaching mission, not for the material things of this world. He gathered disciples around him who were inspired, in no small part by his doing many miracles. But at the end of his life, he was turned over to the Roman authorities and returned to meet his fate. He was dead but lived on in the minds of his followers about him.



to conceive would miraculously, and he left home and went not for the material things of this world. He gathered a number of disciples around him who were divinely inspired. He proved it to them by his miracles and raising the dead. He "delivered him up to the authorities." After this world, he was not really dead but lived on in the minds of his followers who wrote books about him.

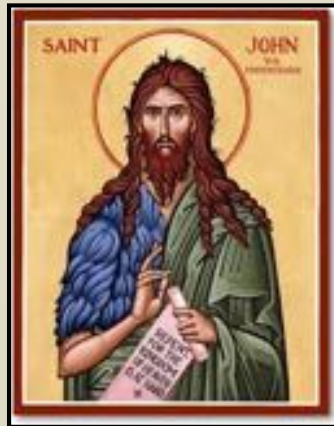
B. D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*, 208-209

Core Question: Self-Deification or Deification *Externus*



- Source Problems
- Apocalypticism
- Gospels
- Messiah // God // Son of Man // Son of God
- After the Gospels

Apocalypticism



- Jewish movement
- *Apocalypse* = revealing, unveiling
- God's intervention (S: Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls)
- John the Baptist
- Daniel
- 1 Enoch

Apocalyptic Worldview

- **Dualism**
- **Pessimism**
- **Judgment**
- **Imminence**



Jesus the Apocalyptic

And in those days, after that affliction, the sun will grow dark and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the sky will be shaken; and then they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send forth his angels and he will gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of earth to the end of heaven ... Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place.

(Mark 13:24–27, 30)

For just as the flashing lightning lights up the earth from one part of the sky to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. . . . And just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving away in marriage, until the day that Noah went into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. . . . So too will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:24, 26–27, 30; see Matt. 24:27, 37–39)”

The Son of Man in Apocalypticism

And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats, [and the strong from their thrones] and shall loosen the reins of the strong, and break the teeth of the sinners (*1 Enoch* 46.4)

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (*Daniel* 7)

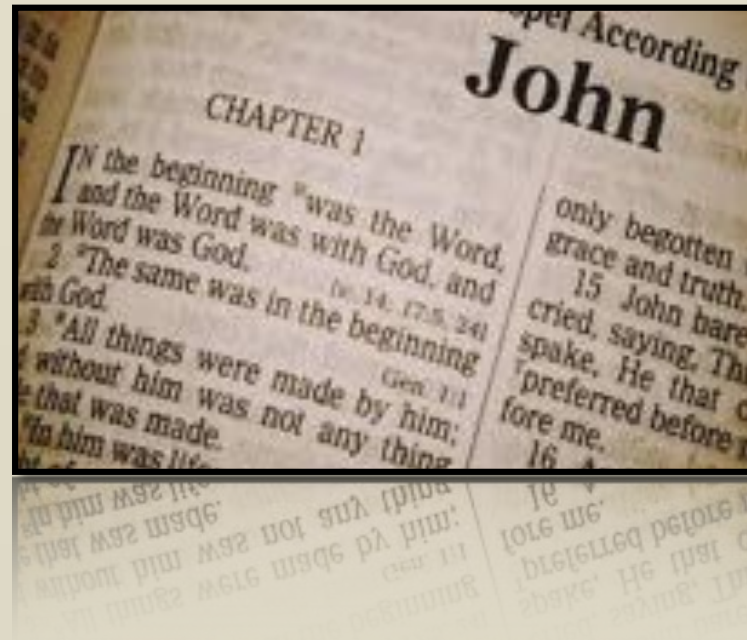
Was Jesus the Son of Man? Key: Christ

Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of that one will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38)

Christ

- **Messiah** in Hebrew = one who is anointed, i.e. chosen and specially honored by God
- **Angelic being** (1 Enoch)
- **Human priest** (Dead Sea Scrolls) = anointed by God, authoritative interpreter of scripture, rule the people by explaining God's laws and enforcing them
- **King of Israel** = understood as God's "anointed one", Davidic king, a mighty warrior and skilled politician

Did Jesus claim he was Divine/a God?



Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am (8:58)

I and the Father are one (10:30)

The one who has seen me has seen the Father (14:9)

What can we (most likely) know?

- Jesus' public ministry and proclamation were about God.
- The kingdom that God was going to bring
- The Son of Man who was soon to bring judgment upon the earth
- The wicked would be destroyed and the righteous would be brought into the kingdom
- No more pain, misery, or suffering
- He believed and taught that he was the future king of the coming kingdom of God, the messiah of God yet to be revealed
- It was only afterward, once the disciples believed that their crucified master had been raised from the dead, that they began to think that he must, in some sense, be God.

Believing Jesus to be God: The Resurrection Narrative

“But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’” “Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies” (1 Cor. 15:35–36)... “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body” (ibid. 15:42–44)... “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (ibid. 15:50).

“While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and afraid, and thought that they were seeing a spirit [also: ghost]” (Luke 24:36-37) ... “Look at my hands and my feet, to see it is I. Handle me and see—for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (ibid. 24:39).

Aftermath: Christology (or, when did Jesus become divine?)

Book of Acts: “We preach the good news to you, that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled for us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’” (Acts 13:32-33).

At Birth: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the Power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the one who is born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35)

At the Baptism: “Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:10-11)

Before: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the unique one before the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14)

After the Aftermath: Who was Jesus?

Ebionites: “assert that our Lord Himself was a man in a like sense with all (the rest of the human family)” (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 22)

Docetists: “[Christ] was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted at the time of Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died” (Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Trallians* 9)

Gnosticism, Marcion, Arius... and ... and ...



Orthodoxy

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end...

The Nicene Creed, 325 CE

Jesus' Deification

- Does it matter when Jesus was considered God?
- Is his opinion important?
- Internal vs. External Deification
- Self-Deification vs. Imposed Deification
- Why did the followers deemed Jesus a God?
- What was at stake?
- What does his deification mean?
- To whom and why?

From Human to Son of God to God



An Eternal God

- Graeco-Roman World
- Jewish World
- Pre-existence and Post-existence
- Contradiction of terms
- Enemies
- Logic

The function of deification

- What was accomplished?
- For whom?
- What's the benefit?
- What happens if proved wrong?
- The role of orality

From Jesus to Jesus Christ

- Whose Jesus?
- Why Jesus matters?
- The body of Jesus
- The power of Jesus
- The myth/story of Jesus



Next: The Roman Emperor

