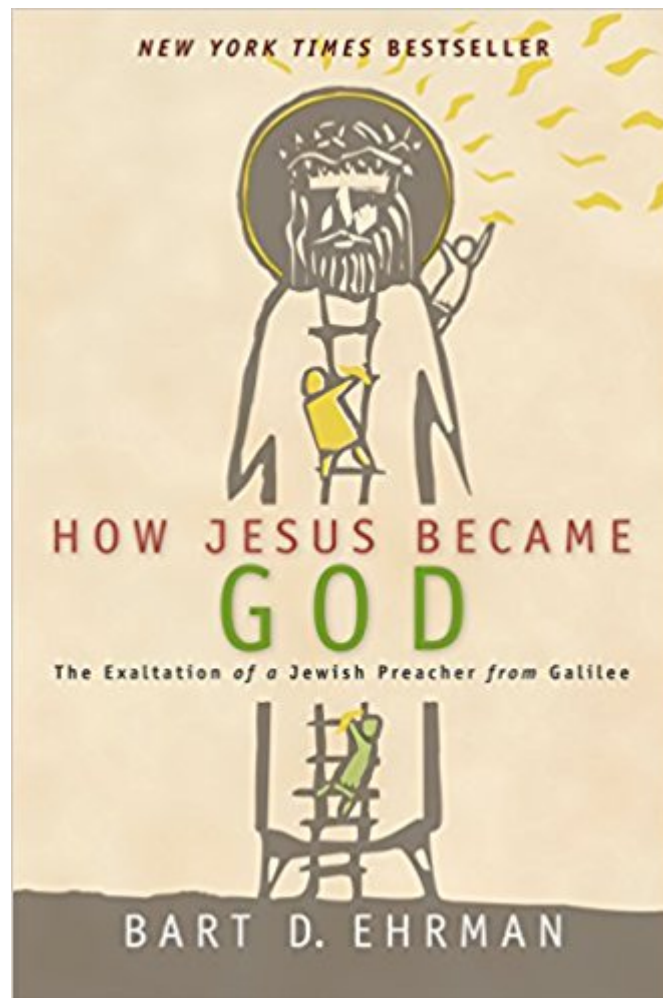




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# How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation Of A Jewish Preacher From Galilee



## Synopsis

New York Times bestselling author and Bible expert Bart Ehrman reveals how Jesus's divinity became dogma in the first few centuries of the early church. The claim at the heart of the Christian faith is that Jesus of Nazareth was, and is, God. But this is not what the original disciples believed during Jesus's lifetime—and it is not what Jesus claimed about himself. *How Jesus Became God* tells the story of an idea that shaped Christianity, and of the evolution of a belief that looked very different in the fourth century than it did in the first. A master explainer of Christian history, texts, and traditions, Ehrman reveals how an apocalyptic prophet from the backwaters of rural Galilee crucified for crimes against the state came to be thought of as equal with the one God Almighty, Creator of all things. But how did he move from being a Jewish prophet to being God? In a book that took eight years to research and write, Ehrman sketches Jesus's transformation from a human prophet to the Son of God exalted to divine status at his resurrection. Only when some of Jesus's followers had visions of him after his death—alive again—did anyone come to think that he, the prophet from Galilee, had become God. And what they meant by that was not at all what people mean today. Written for secular historians of religion and believers alike, *How Jesus Became God* will engage anyone interested in the historical developments that led to the affirmation at the heart of Christianity: Jesus was, and is, God.

## Book Information

Paperback: 416 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; Reprint edition (April 7, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061778192

ISBN-13: 978-0061778193

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 492 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #26,671 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Criticism & Interpretation > New Testament #39 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Christology #83 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > New Testament

## Customer Reviews

Ehrman, who has written prolifically about early Christianity, here takes up one of religious

history's most profound questions: How did a messianic Jewish preacher become identified as God? This is a particularly astonishing phenomenon when one considers how fast it happened and how different the idea of Jesus as God was from Jesus' actual message. Ehrman writes very personally, especially in the beginning, and this approach draws the reader into a subject that is littered with curves and contradictions. Eventually, all writers who tackle this topic must answer the fundamental question: Did Jesus' followers actually see a resurrected Christ? Ehrman sets up his answer well, first considering the various interpretations of divine humanity in ancient times. When it comes to the resurrection, he explains that whether the apostles actually saw Jesus or saw a vision makes no difference. Their belief in a risen Jesus is what shifted and shaped Christianity. A discussion of later Christologies and heresies becomes complicated, but this fascinating discussion will engage and provoke a wide audience. --Ilene Cooper --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

HOW JESUS BECAME GOD makes the most astonishing and complex topic in the history of Christianity accessible to every reader, and offers a clear and balanced discussion of how various Christians and non-Christians see Jesus. (Elaine Pagels, professor of religion at Princeton University and author of *The Gnostic Gospels*) In this lively and provocative book, Ehrman gives a nuanced and wide-ranging discussion of early Christian Christology. Tracing the developing understanding of Jesus, Ehrman shows his skills as an interpreter of both biblical and nonbiblical texts. This is an important, accessible work by a scholar of the first rank. • (Michael Coogan, Harvard Divinity School lecturer and editor of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*) Ehrman writes with vigor and clarity, but above all with intellectual honesty. He demystifies a subject on which biblical scholars too often equivocate. Both believers and non-believers can learn much from this book. • (John J. Collins, Holmes Professor of Old Testament at Yale) This careful book starts where the "historical Jesus" accounts end and lays out how this absorbing story continued for centuries. Candid and direct, it unfolds what often seem to be the unnecessarily complicated controversies that divided early Christians in a fair and understandable manner. • (Harvey Cox, Hollis Research Professor of Divinity at Harvard) How did ancient monotheism allow the One God to have a "son"? Bart Ehrman tells this story, introducing the reader to a Jewish world thick with angels, cosmic powers, and numberless semi-divinities. *How Jesus Became God* provides a lively overview of Nicea's prequel. • (Paula Fredriksen, Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and author of *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*) Ehrman writes very personally, especially in the beginning, and this approach draws the

reader into a subject that is littered with curves and contradictions... This fascinating discussion will engage "and provoke" a wide audience. • (Booklist) "Ehrman's book raises questions that should interest us all... [and] represents a genuine conversation among informed scholars." • (Christian Century) "Bart Ehrman has made a career of zeroing in on some of the most difficult questions at the intersection of faith and history." • (Boston Globe)

As a recovering Catholic with a deep respect for the human being Jesus Christ, and one who studied the Theology of the Incarnation at a very fine Catholic university many years ago, it is a delight to read a book that historically and thoroughly develops the creation of the mythology that lies behind the raising of Jesus to a divine position in Christian theology.

When you read this book together with *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*, another title by Bart Ehrman, you'll come to realize how intuitive the real Jesus of Nazareth is there to be distinguished from the legend of the Gospels. This book is one of the most important ever published, I believe it. Bart's thesis is strongly persuasive.

A very convincing analysis that argues that Jesus never claimed to be divine. And that the exaltation of Jesus, who preached that there was soon to come an apocalypse that would usher in a new period of peace and justice in this world (i.e. the freedom of the Jews and the recreation of the Kingdom of Israel) began in response to his persecution and crucifixion. The book shows the political context in which the exaltation of Jesus to divine status was an attempt by his supporters to counter the Roman aim to humiliate, torture, degrade, and murder Jesus Christ. This book is a fascinating account of one of history's great revolutionary leaders, who rose from humble origins to challenge the greatest empire that mankind had ever seen, was defeated and crucified for treason, but rose up even mightier because of the undying devotion of his followers.

It's not for everyone, believe me. Wonderful for those who are open-minded and not threatened by real Christian history- it's not what you learned in Sunday School. If you're insecure and defensive about your faith, don't spend your money. BUT, if you're sincerely interested in how things REALLY went down, this is a fantastic read. Frankly it was a total page-turner for me, but a bit of a slow read because you have to stop and absorb everything you learned in the previous paragraph! You can't call yourself "educated" in the wider Christian faith until you've read it, though - I hope it's required reading in divinity schools and seminaries.

This man is obviously a scholar and his story of transition from fundamentalist to student of original texts is very enlightening.

Bart Ehrman is, in my view, the number one New Testament scholar in the U.S. and among the top 5 in the world today. I used his *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* for many years, in sequential editions, in my courses in biblical studies at St. Andrews University (NC). His knowledge in his discipline is encyclopedic; his skills, his tools are the best; his writing style is clear, comprehensible, lively and engaging, easily accessible for the average prospective reader. His perspective, approach, and methodology are historical and literary, as they should be. All of Bart Ehrman's remarkable abilities are at work, ever so successfully, in *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*--with his characteristic humility and appropriate touches of humor, here and there. In this work, Ehrman explains convincingly, with constant reference to the essential original texts, within multiple historical contexts, the development of belief from the historical, human first century Jewish eschatological-apocalyptic preacher to the 4th-5th century "second Person of the Trinity." No wonder it is widely read and discussed. Carl Walters Ph.D. Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies Emeritus St. Andrews University Laurinburg, North Carolina

Highly interesting and enlightening book. Ehrman goes to great length to describe not just what scholars think, but why and with what certainty. He clearly points out when something is his opinion and when it is the consensus of the biblical scholar community. The main narrative of the book is to lay out chronologically how the belief in Jesus' divinity changed through the first three centuries after his death, from "not divine" to "divine upon death" to "divine upon baptism" to "divine upon birth" to "divine since forever". Ehrman goes into great detail early in the book about what "divine" meant in various religious traditions of the time. He discusses the controversy about whether Jesus was fully-man, part-man/part-divine, or fully-divine. He surveys the differing interpretations held by different communities, describes the reasoning behind them, and discusses why they eventually became canon or heresy. A must-read for those interested in critical interpretation of the early Christian church.

After reading a few books on modern scholarship about Jesus I found this one the one I liked the most. It is very informative and should be appreciated by anyone who wants a mature outlook on

Christianity which goes beyond a blind faith.

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