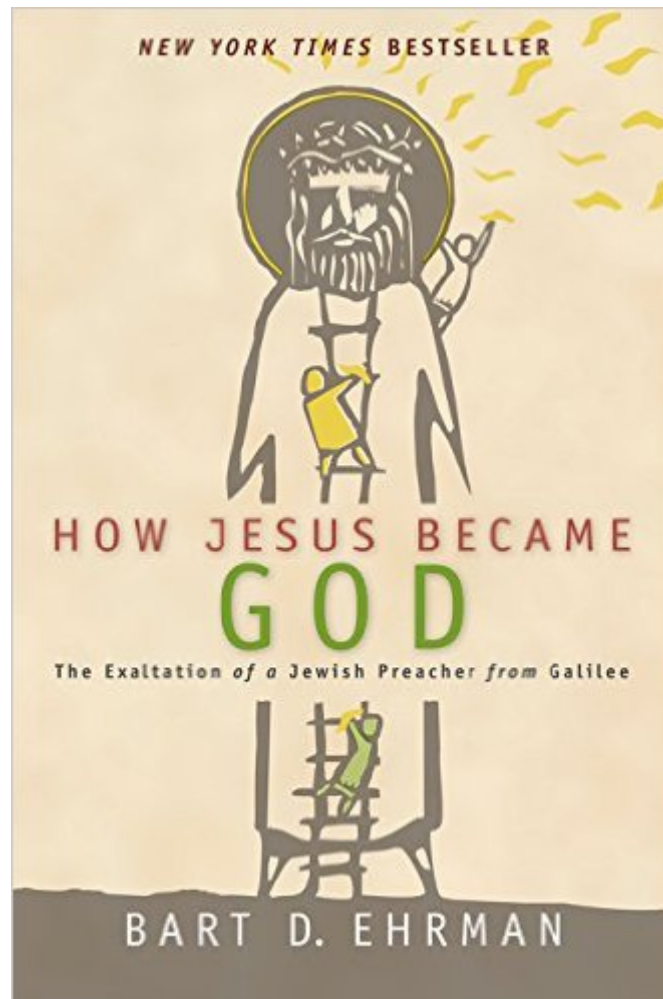


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# How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation Of A Jewish Preacher From Galilee



## 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

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## Customer Reviews

In this book Bart Ehrman attempts to provide the theological road-map whereby Jesus started out

as a Jewish apocalyptic prophet and ended up having the high Christology of the historic Nicaea Creed (solidified by the Council of Constantinople in 381). As a historian he does not believe Jesus was God in any sense, or that he arose from the dead. He's merely being a historian telling us what he thinks is more probable than not. In Ehrman's previous works he has argued that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who predicted the end of the known world and the coming of the Son of Man in his generation who would subsequently rule over the re-created world. Most scholars seem to agree with Ehrman, but others disagree with this view of Jesus, most notably Geza Vermes, Burton Mack, Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Stephen Patterson, Bruce Chilton, John P. Meier, Gerd Thiessen, Elisabeth Fiorenza, S. G. F. Brandon, Morton Smith, Reza Aslan, along with mythicist scholars Richard Carrier and Robert M. Price. Some of these different views of Jesus would require a different road-map to get to the high Christology of the fourth century, especially the mythicist view. So from the very beginning as we travel this map there are these obstacles. Passing over those disagreements though, Ehrman's map seems to me to be a fairly standard mainline one which I've read in other works. Michael Coogan, John Collins and Paula Fredriksen probably agree with Ehrman since they wrote blurbs for it. Robert Funk, the founder of the Jesus Seminar, in the last chapter of his book "Honest to Jesus," says some of the same things. Regardless, I'm very glad Ehrman wrote it. It's written so that the general populace can understand it. He has a way of communicating these ideas very well.

This work is beyond fantastic! Not only does Bart deliver a tight and well-reasoned argument for when, how, and why Jesus came to be thought of as divine by his earliest followers, he does so in a way that is deeply sympathetic to Christianity and believers alike. While Bart candidly discloses his own disbelief in the divinity of Jesus and the general Christian position, he constantly engages the reader/listener (Audible) with his own ongoing development since his early days as a fundamentalist believer, often with honest and incisive self-reflections as to how he continues to refine his position with different approaches to the evidence. And yet — even given this apparently unbridgeable chasm between Bart and the Christian faithful — his love for the subject, period, and texts shines through without a doubt. I often read comments directed at Bart by Christian believers to the effect of, "Why do you spend so much time studying Christianity and teaching about it if you \*hate\* it so much?" Or, "If you're an agnostic, then why do you waste your time debating about Jesus?" While these kind of questions and comments betray a total lack of intellectual rigor, they all rest on a fundamental misconception: that you're unable to love a subject and yet disagree with central tenets of that subject as it is commonly understood. It's clear that Bart unabashedly loves the intricacies of how

and why Christianity came to dominate the West, and his labor in the area has helped to illuminate much of this material for us, his popular audience. And here's the real genius of this book: this book presents the culmination and epitome of Bart's scholarly career in the context of THE CENTRAL QUESTION of the Western world.

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