

**Is Jesus Christ Both Lord & Son of God?  
A Historical Analysis of How the Earliest Christians Worshiped Jesus**

- “In the earliest Christian community, Jesus was already understood to be **risen** and **exalted to God’s right hand** in heaven.”<sup>1</sup>
- This “earliest belief” and “very high Christology . . . emphasized Jesus Christ as the **divine Son of God**, and especially his **lordship** and exaltation even extending to the worship of Jesus and his **sharing God’s throne**.”<sup>2</sup>

**I. Introduction**

Some argue that Jesus was merely a man who became a mythological god decades later.<sup>3</sup> In fact, these allegations are fictions. From the earliest days after the crucifixion, Jesus’ followers worshiped Him as “Lord,” “Christ,” and “Son of God” who shared God’s throne. History reports this evidence in Paul’s letters, the Gospels, Acts, and the pre-Gospel sermons and creeds preached “within days or weeks” after Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

This analysis focuses specifically on the evidentiary record for Jesus Christ’s divinity, addressing the following three issues:

- Do Paul’s Epistles Acknowledge the Deity of Jesus?
- Do the Early Sermons and Creeds Proclaim Jesus’ Deity?
- Do the Synoptic Gospels Recognize the Deity of Jesus?

**II. Do Paul’s Epistles Acknowledge the Deity of Jesus?**

In his earliest Epistles, Paul leaves zero doubt about Jesus’ deity – Jesus is “Lord,” “Christ,” “Son of God,” and God’s right hand on the throne. Paul proclaimed Jesus’ deity early and often, never backing off even through martyrdom. As an admitted eyewitness to the risen Jesus, Paul verified this message with Peter, James, and John before writing his many Epistles. In short, Paul brings powerful – and un rebutted – credibility in proclaiming Jesus’ divinity.

**A. What Did Paul Say?**

In his Epistles, Paul repeatedly opens with “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” seeking Their grace and worshipping both together.<sup>4</sup> Paul’s letters also consistently acknowledge

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, p. 128 (2008) (bold added).

<sup>2</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 442 (2024) (citing Vernon Neufeld, *Earliest Christian Confessions*, pp. 140-46 (1963) and other scholars).

<sup>3</sup> Skeptics and atheists like Maurice Casey, Wilhelm Bousset, and John Dominic Crossan have made such arguments. See Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years*, pp. 2-7 (2005).

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7.

Jesus as the Son of God.<sup>5</sup> If any doubt could remain (which it could not), Paul explains that God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ rule over “all things” in creation:

yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from **whom are all things** and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by **whom are all things**, and we exist through Him. [1 Corinthians 8:6 (NASB) (bold added)]

In his earliest Epistle (1 Thessalonians),<sup>6</sup> Paul highlights multiple facets of Jesus’ deity, including:

- Lord & Messiah. “Lord Jesus Christ” [1:1, 3; 3:11; 5:23]
- Heavenly Home. “His Son in heaven, whom He raised from the dead” [1:10]
- Second Coming. “His coming” & “coming of the Lord” [2:19; 4:15]
- Salvation. “obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” [5:9]
- Atonement. “who died for us” [5:10]

By their plain language, Paul’s Epistles plainly and thoroughly proclaim the risen Jesus as “Lord,” “Christ,” and “Son of God” dwelling “in heaven” with His “Father” until He returns in the second “coming” as Savior with “salvation” for those who believe in Him. On this written record, Paul left no doubt about the deity of Jesus.

Paul’s Epistles stand as powerful evidence for the proclamation of Jesus’ deity. First, even skeptical scholars almost unanimously accept seven of Paul’s Epistles as undisputed and genuine.<sup>7</sup> Second, Paul’s Epistles remain consistent about Jesus’ deity.<sup>8</sup> Thus, within 20 to 25 years after the crucifixion in AD 30, an undisputed written record proclaims the divinity of Jesus.

---

<sup>5</sup> Romans 1:3 (“His Son, who was born of a descendant of David”); Romans 1:4 (“declared the Son of God”); Galatians 1:16 (“reveal His Son in me”); Galatians 4:4 (“God sent His Son born of a woman”); Galatians 4:6 (“Spirit of His Son crying Abba, Father”); Colossians 1:3 (“God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”); Colossians 1:13 (“kingdom of His beloved Son”); 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (“wait for His Son from heaven”); 1 Corinthians 15: 28 (“the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One”).

<sup>6</sup> Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians “in the beginning of AD 50.” See Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, pp. 31, 66 (2003). Some suggest Galatians to be earlier in AD 48 (see Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 2 & App. B) (2005), but Galatians includes the same proclamations of Jesus’ deity. See Galatians 1:1 (“Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead”); 1:3 (“God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ”); 1:4 (“gave Himself for our sins”); 1:16 (reveal His Son in me”); “2:20 (“faith in the Son of God”).

<sup>7</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 105, 111 (2024); Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament*, pp. 302-61, Chaps. 19-21 (2004) (addressing 1 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, & Romans); Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 2 (2005) (identifying 1 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans as “not in dispute”).

<sup>8</sup> Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, p. 31 (2003); Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 2 (2005); *id.*, p. 51 (providing chart comparing consistency of Paul’s epistles).

## B. How Early Did Paul Recognize Jesus' Deity?

Soon after the crucifixion and Resurrection, Christians began proclaiming Jesus as Lord, Christ, and Son of God.

- Paul Barnett (bishop & historian). “In short, 1 Thessalonians is a window into Christian beliefs in the year [AD] 50. This teaching, however, predates its written form by many years and **goes back to the earliest period ‘after Jesus.’**”<sup>9</sup>
- Martin Hengel (German historian). “The time between the death of Jesus and the fully developed Christology which we find in the earliest Christian documents, the letters of Paul is **so short** that the development which takes place within it **can only be called amazing.**”<sup>10</sup>

A timeline illustrates just how quickly the earliest Christians – including Paul – understood Jesus' deity.

- AD 30          Jesus' crucifixion<sup>11</sup>
- AD 32-34      Paul's conversion (Damascus)<sup>12</sup>
- AD 35-37      Paul meets Peter & James (Galatians 1:18-19)<sup>13</sup>
- AD 48-49      Paul meets Peter, James, & John (Galatians 2:1, 9)<sup>14</sup>
- AD 50          1 Thessalonians<sup>15</sup>

As these dates show, Paul met Jesus about 2-4 years after the Resurrection and then met with Peter and James 5-7 years after AD 30. At the Apostolic Council (with Peter, James, and John) around 18-19 years after the crucifixion, everyone preached the same message – and they all agreed by sharing “the right hand of fellowship” (Galatians 2:9) on the message.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 54 (2005) (bold added).

<sup>10</sup> Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, p. 31 (2003) (bold added).

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 57 (2024); Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, p. 31 (2003).

<sup>12</sup> Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, p. 31 (2003); C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development*, p. 16 (1962); Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 453 (2024).

<sup>13</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 453-4; Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 58 (2024).

<sup>14</sup> Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, pp. 30-1 (2003); Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 39 (2005); Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 454-45 (2024).

<sup>15</sup> Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, pp. 31, 49 (2003); Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 42 (2005); F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*, p. 9 (1981).

<sup>16</sup> “Critical scholars acknowledge rather freely the agreement here between these four leaders on the essentials of the gospel message.” Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 391 & n. 70 (2024); see also Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 57 (2024).

### C. Why Can We Trust Paul?

Paul is an eyewitness to meeting Lord Jesus Christ, as confirmed by both the undisputed Epistles and Acts.<sup>17</sup> Even atheists and skeptics admit that Paul is an eyewitness.<sup>18</sup> As an actual and admitted eyewitness to the risen Jesus, Paul had good reason for “immediately” proclaiming that Jesus “is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20) and acknowledging Jesus as “Lord” (Acts 9:5) and “Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:3, 8).

In addition, Paul met with Peter and James (AD 35-37) and again with Peter, James, and John (AD 48-49), as discussed above. In short, Paul verified his message with eyewitnesses. Furthermore, Paul wrote his Epistles between AD 50 and 57,<sup>19</sup> meaning that Peter, James and John remained alive and certainly would have pointed out any errors.

Finally, Paul had compelling reasons to tell the truth, including the Ten Commandments (“not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16)), the death penalty for false testimony,<sup>20</sup> and blasphemy against God. Indeed, Saul supported the stoning of Stephen for proclaiming Jesus as “Lord” and “the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Acts 7:52-60. Thus, Paul believed what he wrote in the Epistles when he called Jesus “Lord,” “Christ,” and the “Son of God.”

### III. Do the Early Sermons and Creeds Address Jesus’ Deity?

The early Christians did not wait for written Epistles or Gospels, but instead began preaching Jesus’ deity soon after the Resurrection.

As surprising as it may seem, the evidence indicates that Jesus was first given the sort of **devotion** that we associate with a **deity among the circles of devout Jews** who comprised the **earliest adherents of the young Christian movement**.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (“Christ died,” “He was buried,” “He was raised on the third day,” and “**He appeared to me** also”) (bold added); 2 Corinthians 12:1, 9 (“revelations of the Lord” and Jesus spoke to Paul); Acts 9:3-9 (Jesus appeared to Saul/Paul); Acts 9:10-18 (Lord appeared to Ananias who met Saul/Paul and said “the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road . . . has sent me”); Acts 9:20 (“immediately [Saul/Paul] began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying ‘**He is the Son of God**’”) (bold added).

<sup>18</sup> Robert Funk & the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus*, pp. 1 (summary of color-coded rating system), 454 (“relative high level of confidence” that Jesus appeared to Paul); Michael Martin, *The Case against Christianity*, p. 81 (1993) (acknowledging Paul as a “contemporaneous eyewitness” to a “postresurrection appearance of Jesus”) *quoted in* Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 89 (2024).

<sup>19</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 2 (2005) (or AD 48 to 57 if Paul wrote Galatians in AD 48).

<sup>20</sup> Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* P. 169 (“Phinehas-type action [killing] for idolatry, apostasy, seduction by false prophets, and perjury”); Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, p. 146 (2009) (disciples knew false testimony “could be punished by death”).

<sup>21</sup> Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus*, p. 30 (2005) (bold added; italics in original); *see also* Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years*, p. 67 (2005) (“Nonetheless our contention is that Christology was born within the **earliest period of Christian history, A.D. 33-34**”) (bold added).

## A. What Do the Early Sermons and Creeds Say?

The earliest preaching took the form of compact, easy-to-recall, quick-to-recite sayings (sometimes called “creeds”).<sup>22</sup> The best known and virtually undisputed creed (1 Corinthians 15:3-7) identifies eyewitnesses to Jesus’ death, Resurrection, and deity (“Christ”).

Other early sermons and creeds tell us much about the Christology (the many divine attributes) of Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

- Son of God. “who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.” [Romans 1:4 (NASB)]
- Resurrection. “those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” [Romans 4:24]
- Salvation. “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” [Romans 10:9]
- Lord’s Supper. “For I received from the Lord that which I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread.” 1 Corinthians 11:23]
- Second Coming. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” [1 Corinthians 11:26]
- Lord Jesus Christ. See, e.g., 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11; Colossians 2:6; Acts 2:36; Acts 4:33; Acts 10:36 (“Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)”).

Thus, the earliest preaching confirms that Christians recognized the risen Jesus as “Lord,” “Christ,” “Son of God,” and Savior.<sup>24</sup>

## B. How Early Are the Sermons and Creeds?

The preaching that brought us these early sermons and creeds began soon after the Resurrection. Within 2-6 years (AD 32-36) after the Resurrection, these creeds had been become so widely circulated that they had become well-known to the Christians, including Paul.

---

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 371 (2024) (“brief, originally oral reports” about “what the earliest church actually taught, preached, believed, and practiced” before the first New Testament books had been written); Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 54 (2024) (“formalized statements circulated in the earliest period of Christianity”).

<sup>23</sup> See Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 498 n. 63 (2024) (identifying the following early traditions and creeds in the Epistles and Acts: Romans 1:4, 4:24, 10:9; 1 Corinthians 11:23, 11:26, 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11; Colossians 2:6; Acts 2:25, 36; 4:33; 10:36); Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* p. 130 (2012) (acknowledging Romans 1:3-4 as “an earlier creed that was in circulation before his writing”).

<sup>24</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years*, p. 2 (2005).

After the crucifixion and Resurrection, the early Christians began proclaiming Jesus' deity very quickly.

- Paul Barnett (bishop & historian). “The material from previous chapters, however, points to ‘the faith’ (= ‘the teaching of the apostles’) that Jesus is ‘Christ,’ ‘Lord,’ and ‘Son’ having been formulated **exceedingly early**, between Jesus’ crucifixion and Paul’s conversion.”<sup>25</sup>
- Larry Hurtado (New Testament scholar). “In fact, all evidence points to the opposite conclusion that the devotion to Jesus that Paul affirms in his letters was manifest already in the very earliest circles of Jewish Christians, including those of the **very first years (perhaps months)** in Roman Judea.”<sup>26</sup>
- Bart Ehrman (atheist professor & author). “The idea that Christians were telling stories of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection before Luke, before Mark, and before Paul is held by **virtually all scholars** of the New Testament, and for compelling reasons. As I earlier pointed out, the only way the early Christians – **starting in months after Jesus’s death** – could have propagated their beliefs, converting first Jews and then Gentiles to believe in Jesus, was by telling stories about him.”<sup>27</sup>

When dating the sermons and creeds that appear in the Epistles and Acts, scholars generally place them within 2-6 years after the crucifixion and Resurrection.<sup>28</sup> On this record, the preaching of Jesus’ deity began within “months” of the Resurrection, followed by the creeds and sermons documented in the Epistles and Acts between AD 32 and AD 36. Thus, the historical record squarely refutes the skeptics who argue that Christians only belatedly asserted Jesus as “Lord,” “Christ,” and “Son of God” decades after the Resurrection.

#### **IV. Do the Synoptic Gospels Recognize the Deity of Jesus?**

As discussed above, multiple sources confirm Jesus Christ’s deity. Nonetheless, some skeptics have argued that the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, & Luke) only show Jesus as a man, not the divine Son of God.<sup>29</sup> On their face, the Synoptic Gospels refute this allegation. Furthermore, the skeptics’ argument fails the most basic legal and historical standards for construing records, such as the Gospels.

---

<sup>25</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 85 (2005) (bold added).

<sup>26</sup> Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* p. 36 (2005) (bold added).

<sup>27</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* p. 261 (2012).

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 445, 470, 494 (2024); Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* p. 131 (2012) (“traditions [Paul] inherited . . . must date to just a couple of years or so after Jesus’s death”); James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, p. 854 (2003) (creed “formulated as tradition within months of Jesus’ death”) quoted in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 449 (2024).

<sup>29</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, p. 127 (2014); Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, pp. 30-1 (2016) quoting Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, p. 82 (1993).

In multiple passages, statements in the Synoptic Gospels confirm Jesus Christ's divinity, including, but not limited to:

- Jesus' authority to forgive sin and heal paralysis;
- Jesus' walk on the water and claim "I am";
- Peter's confession of Jesus' divinity;
- Jesus' transfiguration and God's claim on His Son; and
- Jesus' answer to the high priest that "I am" Christ.

#### **A. Jesus' Authority to Forgive Sin and Heal Paralysis**

When a group brought a paralytic to Jesus for healing, Jesus stated "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5 (NASB). The scribes immediately understood that Jesus had exercised divine authority, as they reasoned among themselves: "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 2:7 (NASB). Jesus responded:

"Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk?' **But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**" – He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."

Mark 2:8-11 (bold added) (NASB). As the paralytic got up and left, the people watching "were all amazed." Mark 2:12; *see also* Matthew 9:2-8; Luke 5:18-26.

First, Jesus expressly acknowledges himself as "the Son of Man" with "authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10), as well as to heal. Daniel 7:13-14 establishes the "Son of Man" as a divine authority with "dominion" not only over every person and every nation, but "His dominion is an everlasting dominion" – *i.e.*, eternal dominion that only God and his Son will ever have.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the scribes explicitly acknowledged that Jesus claimed divine authority to forgive sins, accusing Jesus of "blaspheming" because "who can forgive sins but God alone?" The scribes' accusation directly refutes the skeptic's assertion that "Jesus may be claiming a priestly prerogative, but not a divine one."<sup>31</sup> As eyewitnesses (and scribes who knew the difference between priests and God), their view of Jesus' claim to forgive sins controls over a

---

<sup>30</sup> Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB): "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory, and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed." *See also* Michael Bird *et al*, *How God Became Jesus*, p. 58, 62 (2014); William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 140 (1981).

<sup>31</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, p. 127 (2014).

skeptic's unsupported assertion 2,000 years later. Applying the well-established legal standard, the party with no evidence loses.<sup>32</sup>

## **B. Jesus' Walk on the Water and Claim "I am"**

Jesus' plain claim to divinity also arises during his walk on the water and response to the "terrified" disciples. As the disciples in the boat struggle against the sea winds, Jesus walks by:

But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." [Mark 6:50 (NASB)]

When Jesus stepped into the boat, the winds stopped and the disciples "were utterly astonished." Mark 6:51 (NASB); *see also* Matthew 14:22-32;<sup>33</sup> John 6:15-21.

The English version translates Jesus as saying "it is I." However, the original Greek states that Jesus said "I am":

Actually, the Greek literally says, 'Fear not, **I am.**' Those last two words are identical to what Jesus said in John 8:58, when he took upon himself the divine name, 'I am,' which is the way God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3:14.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, when the original Greek text is compared with Old Testament, Jesus made a fundamental claim of deity when He spoke to the disciples.<sup>35</sup>

## **C. Peter's Confession of Jesus' Divinity**

When Jesus asks the disciples who they think He is, Peter responds – and Jesus confirms – the claim of divinity:

---

<sup>32</sup> When one party offers evidence and the opposing party (in this case, the skeptics) responds with mere allegations and no facts, the Supreme Court has upheld summary dismissal against the party resting merely on unsupported allegations. *See Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 256 (1986) (opposing party must offer "significant probative evidence" to avoid summary dismissal of its argument); *see also Wynne v. United Technologies Corp.*, 463 F.3d 1261, 1267 (rejecting Air Force's \$299 million claim where agency failed to "assert any additional evidence" for a key element of its claim).

<sup>33</sup> *See* Matthew 14:33 (NASB) where, after Jesus walks on the water and calms the storm, the disciples in the boat "worshiped Him, saying 'You are certainly God's Son!'"

<sup>34</sup> Craig L. Blomberg *quoted in* Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 30 (2016)(bold added); *see* Exodus 3:14: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM;' AND He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

<sup>35</sup> *See Arizona v. United States*, 575 F.2d 855, 216 Ct. Cl. 221, 235-6 (1978) (document "must be considered as a whole and interpreted so as to harmonize and give meaning to all of its provisions, and that an interpretation that gives a reasonable meaning to all parts will be preferred to one which leaves a portion of it useless, inexplicable, inoperative, void, insignificant, meaningless [or] superfluous").

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 16:15-17 (NASB); *see also* Mark 8:29-30 (“the Christ”); Luke 9:20-22 (“the Christ of God”). Thus, Simon Peter understood – and Jesus confirmed – His divine status.

**D. Jesus’ Transfiguration and God’s Claim of His Son**

During the transfiguration, Jesus took on a heavenly appearance and God claimed Him as “My beloved Son”:

Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

\* \* \*

Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!”

Mark 9:2-4, 7 (NASB); *see also* Matthew 17:1-3, 5; Luke 9:28-30, 34; 2 Peter 16-18.

Based on their plain language, all three Synoptic Gospels agree on Jesus’ divinity as shown by His transfiguration and God’s confirmation that “This is My beloved Son.”

**E. Jesus’ Answer to the High Priest that “I am” Christ**

During his trial before the high priest and chief priests, Jesus not only responded that “I am” Christ, but also confirmed Himself as the Son of Man at the right hand of God:

Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

Mark 14:61-64 (NASB); Matthew 26:63-66; Luke 22:67-71.

Three separate and independent sources corroborate that, during the trial, Jesus claimed to be Christ and the Son of God.

- High Priest in Synoptic Gospels. The high priest certainly understood Jesus’ response as a divine claim of being “Christ, the Son of the Blessed One” and the “Son of Man,” because the high priest then accused Jesus of “blasphemy.”
- Jewish Historian. In one of his major works (*Antiquities*), the Jewish historian Josephus refers to James as “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ,”<sup>36</sup> thus confirming during the first century that the Jewish scholars understood that Jesus had claimed divinity.
- Jewish Physician. In “The Jewish Account of the Trial of Jesus,” Joseph Salvador described the trial and Jesus’ response as follows: “The question already raised among the people was this: Has Jesus become God? But the senate having adjudged that Jesus, son of Joseph, born at Bethlehem, had profaned the name of God by usurping it to himself, a mere citizen, applied to him the law of blasphemy . . . .”<sup>37</sup>

As this evidence demonstrates, no one – not the Jewish high priest, the Jewish historian (during the first century), or the Jewish retrospective (1,800 years later) – shared the skeptics’ theory that the Synoptic Gospels were silent on Jesus’ claim of divinity. To the contrary, the plain meaning of what Jesus testified at the trial confirms His deity.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the multiple attestation – *i.e.*, multiple sources confirming the fact – establishes yet another basis for accepting the Synoptic Gospels as proof of Jesus’ express claims of divine authority.<sup>39</sup>

## V. Conclusion

In summary, multiple sources – Paul’s Epistles, Acts, pre-Gospel sermons and creeds, and the Gospels themselves – repeatedly and consistently reported Jesus as “Lord,” “Christ,” “Son of Man,” and “Son of God” with divine authority and attributes. Furthermore, these multiple sources span the time from mere months after the Resurrection to decades later, yet they proclaim a single truth: Jesus claimed, and Christians proclaimed, Jesus as Lord, Christ, and Son of God. On this historical record, the deity of Jesus is well established.

David Z. Bodenheimer  
 Trial Attorney (1982-2022)  
 Faith Defender & Advocate

---

<sup>36</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 172 (2024) quoting Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9; see also Michael Bird, Craig Evans *et al*, *How God Became Jesus*, p. 82 (2014) (also quoting same).

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Salvador, “The Jewish Account of the Trial of Jesus,” *quoted in* Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence*, p. 81 (1874).

<sup>38</sup> See, *e.g.*, *Coast Federal Bank, FSB v. United States*, 323 F.3d 1035, 1040-41 (Fed. Cir. 2003) (applying plain meaning rule).

<sup>39</sup> As ancient historian Paul Maier states, “Many facts from antiquity rest on just one ancient source, while two or more sources in agreement generally render the fact unimpeachable.” Paul Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*, p. 197 (1998).