

1. Were the Gospels Anonymous?

The “Telephone” Game

[N]early all of these storytellers had no independent knowledge of what really happened [to Jesus]. It takes little imagination to realize what happened to the stories. You are probably familiar with the old birthday party game “telephone.” A group of kids sits in a circle, the first tells a brief story to the one sitting next to her, who tells it to the next, and to the next, and so on, until it comes back full circle to the one who started it. Invariably, the story has changed so much in the process of retelling that everyone gets a good laugh. Imagine this same activity taking place, not in a solitary living room with ten kids on one afternoon, but over the expanse of the Roman Empire (some 2,500 miles across), with thousands of participants.¹

The Theory of the Anonymous Gospels

1. All four Gospels “originally” published without titles (e.g., No “Gospel according to Mark,” etc.)
2. Gospels circulated without any titles for almost a century before being attributed
3. Titles were added much later (2nd century A.D.!) to give “much needed authority” (e.g., false attribution, a kind of “forgery”)
4. Anonymous Gospels → None of the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses to Jesus

No Anonymous Copies Exist (Internal Evidence)

1. The Greek Manuscript Evidence: No Anonymous Gospels!²

<i>Titles</i>	<i>Earliest Greek Manuscripts</i>	<i>Date of Manuscript</i>
Gospel according to Matthew	Papyrus 4	2 nd century
Gospel according to Matthew	Papyrus 62	2 nd century
According to Matthew	Codex Sinaiticus	4 th century
According to Matthew	Codex Vaticanus	4 th century
[Go]spel according to Mat[th]e[w]	Codex Washingtonianus	4 th -5 th century
Gospel according to Matthew	Codex Alexandrinus	5 th century
Gospel according to Matthew	Codex Ephraemi	5 th century
Gospel according to Matthew [End]	Codex Bezae	5 th century
According to Mark	Codex Sinaiticus	4 th century
According to Mark	Codex Vaticanus	4 th century
Gospel according to Mark	Codex Washingtonianus	4 th -5 th century
[Gosp]el according to Mark	Codex Alexandrinus	5 th century
Gospel according to Mar[k] (End)	Codex Ephraemi	5 th century
Gospel according to Mark	Codex Bezae	5 th century

¹ Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 72–74.

² See Simon J. Gathercole, “The Titles of the Gospels in the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 104 (2013): 33–76.

Gospel according to Luke	Papyrus 75	2 nd -3 rd century
According to Luke	Codex Sinaiticus	4 th century
According to Luke	Codex Vaticanus	4 th century
Gospel according to Luke	Codex Washingtonianus	4 th -5 th century
Gospel according to Luke	Codex Alexandrinus	5 th century
Gospel according to Luke	Codex Bezae	5 th century
Gospel according to [J]ohn	Papyrus 66	late 2 nd century
Gospel according to John	Papyrus 75	2 nd -3 rd century
According to John	Codex Sinaiticus	4 th century
According to John	Codex Vaticanus	4 th century
According to John [End]	Codex Washingtonianus	4 th -5 th century
Gospel according to John (End)	Codex Alexandrinus	5 th century
Gospel according to John	Codex Bezae	5 th century

2. The Anonymous Scenario is Incredible

- a. How did scribes attribute the exact same titles?
- b. Why is there no trace of anonymity or different attributions?

Martin Hengel: Let those who deny the great age and therefore the basic originality of the Gospel superscriptions in order to preserve their “good” critical conscience give a better explanation of the completely unanimous and relatively early attestation of these titles, their origin and the names of the authors associated with them. Such an explanation has yet to be given, and it never will be.³

3. The Letter to the Hebrews: Actual Anonymous Manuscripts

<i>The Letter to the Hebrews: Actual Anonymous Manuscripts</i>		
<i>Title</i>	<i>Greek Manuscripts</i>	<i>Date of Manuscript</i>
To the Hebrews	Papyrus 64	2nd century
To the Hebrews	Codex Sinaiticus	4th century
To the Hebrews	Codex Vaticanus	4th century
To the Hebrews, written from Rome	Codex Alexandrinus	5th century
To the Hebrews, written from Italy	Codex Porphyrianus	9th century
To the Hebrews, written from Italy <i>by Timothy</i>	Minuscule 1739	10th century
To the Hebrews, written from Rome <i>by Paul</i> to those in Jerusalem	Minuscule 81	11th century
To the Hebrews, written in Hebrew from Italy <i>anonymously</i>		

³ Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, trans. John Bowden (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 55.

by Timothy

Minuscule 104

11th centur

4. Why Attribute Mark and Luke to Non-Eyewitnesses?

Matthew, the Tax-Collector and Apostle1. Title: “The Gospel according to Matthew” (Greek *euangelion kata Matthaion*)

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw *a man called Matthew* sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him. (Matthew 9:9)

The names of *the twelve apostles* are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and *Matthew the tax collector*; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. (Matthew 10:2-4)

2. Objection: Jesus’ Disciples were “Illiterate”

Bart Ehrman: [F]or the most part, Christians came from the ranks of the illiterate. *This is certainly true of the very earliest Christians, who would have been the apostles of Jesus. . . . most of Jesus’ disciples are simple peasants from Galilee—uneducated fishermen, for example. Two of them, Peter and John, are explicitly said to be “illiterate” in the book of Acts (4:13)*⁴

“Even if the original apostles had been forward looking . . . they would not have been able to write a Gospel.”⁵

Mark, Companion of Paul and Peter1. Title: “The Gospel according to Mark” (Greek *euangelion kata Markon*)

2. John Mark: Jewish companion of Paul (Philemon 23-24; Acts 12:12-14, 25; 15:36-40)

Peter: By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings; *and so does my son Mark*. (1 Peter 5:12-13)

Luke, the Physician, Companion of Paul, and Author of Acts

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, *and Luke, my fellow workers*. (Philemon 23-24)

Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas, . . . and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. . . . *Luke the beloved physician* and Demas greet you. (Colossians 4:10-11, 14)

⁴ Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2005), 39.

⁵ Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014), 244.

Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me. (2 Timothy 4:11)

“We Passages” in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 16:9-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)

John the Fisherman and Beloved Disciple

1. Title: “The Gospel according to John” (Greek *n*)

Peter turned and saw following them *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” . . . *This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true.* But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:20, 24-25)

When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. *One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus;* so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, “Tell us who it is of whom he speaks.” So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it.” (John 13:21-26)

2. Objection: the New Testament says John is “illiterate”

On the morrow *their rulers and elders and scribes* were gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. . . . *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated (Greek *agrammatos*), common men,* they wondered; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:5-6, 13)

3. Response: John could have dictated his Gospel to a Secretary

a. Paul used a secretary (Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11-18)

b. Paul had co-authors (1 Cor 1:1-2; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; Philem 1:1)

Richard Bauckham: John 21:24 means that the Beloved Disciple composed the Gospel, whether or not he wielded the pen. He could have received assistance of various kinds in the process of composition or his work could have been edited by someone else, but the statement requires that he was substantially responsible both for the content and for the words of the book.⁶

⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 362.

2. The Early Church Fathers

The Early Church Fathers (External Evidence)

<i>Ancient Witness</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Time of Writing</i>
1. Papias	Turkey	Disciple of apostle John	around A.D. 130
2. Justin Martyr	Palestine	Philosopher Convert	around A.D. 140-165
3. Irenaeus	France	Disciple of Polycarp	around A.D. 180
4. Muratorian Canon	Italy	List of Scriptures	around A.D. 180
5. Clement	Egypt	Disciple of 2 nd generation	around A.D. 200
5. Tertullian	North Africa	Latin Christian apologist	around A.D. 200-225

1. Church Fathers Completely Unanimous: four Gospels were written by
 - a. Matthew the tax-collector (eyewitness and apostle)
 - b. Mark the follower of Peter (non-eyewitness, but based on Peter's preaching)
 - c. Luke the disciple of Paul (based on eyewitnesses; cf. Luke 1:1-4)
 - d. John the Beloved Disciple and fisherman (eyewitness and apostle)

The Early Fathers on the Origin of Matthew

Matthew composed the sayings in the Hebrew dialect and each person interpreted them as best he could. (Papias of Hierapolis)⁷

For in the Memoirs of the apostles and their successors it is written... (Justin Martyr)⁸

Now Matthew published among the Hebrews a written gospel also in their own tongue while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church. (Irenaeus of Lyons)⁹

Of all those who had been with the Lord only Matthew and John left us their recollections, and tradition says they took to writing perforce. Matthew had first preached to the Hebrews, and when he was on the point of going to others he transmitted in writing in his native language the Gospel according to himself, and thus supplied by writing the lack of his own presence to those from whom he was sent..." (Clement of Alexandria)¹⁰

The Early Fathers on the Origin of Mark's Gospel

And the elder [John] used to say this: "Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately everything he remembered, though not in order, of the things either said

⁷ Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39.16. Author's translation.

⁸ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 103.8. For the translation used here, see Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* (trans. Thomas B. Falls; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 157.

⁹ Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.8.2. Translation in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (2 vols.; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926, 1932). Hereafter, the Loeb Classical Library will be cited as LCL.

¹⁰ Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.24.5-6; trans. LCL.

or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, followed Peter, who adapted his teachings as needed but had not intention of giving an ordered account of the Lord's sayings. Consequently Mark did nothing wrong in writing down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one concern not to omit anything that he heard or make any false statement in them." (Papias of Hierapolis)¹¹

We are told that he [Christ] changed the name of one of the apostles to Peter, and it is written in his memoirs that this took place..." (Justin Martyr)¹²

After their [Peter and Paul's] departure, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter... (Irenaeus of Lyons)¹³

But a great light of godliness shone upon the minds of Peter's listeners that they were not satisfied with a single hearing or with the oral teaching of the divine proclamation. So, with all kinds of exhortations, they begged Mark (whose gospel is extant), since he was Peter's follower, to leave behind a written record of the teaching given to them verbally, and did not quit until they had persuaded the man, and thus they became the immediate cause of the scripture called "The Gospel according to Mark." And they say that the apostle, aware of what had occurred because the Spirit had revealed it to him, was pleased with their zeal and sanctioned the writing for study in the churches. (Clement of Alexandria)¹⁴

The Early Fathers on the Origin of Luke's Gospel

Luke also, who was a follower of Paul, put down in a book the gospel which was preached by him. (Irenaeus of Lyons)¹⁵

The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken him with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. (Muratorian Fragment, Rome)¹⁶

¹¹ Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39.15; trans. Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

¹² Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 106.3; trans. Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 101.

¹³ Irenaeus of Lyons; cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.8.3; trans. LCL.

¹⁴ Clement of Alexandria; cited Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.15.1-2; trans. Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3rd edition; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 759.

¹⁵ Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.8.3; trans. LCL; compare Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1.

¹⁶ Lines 2-8, Translated by Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 305-306.

Luke, however, was not an apostle, but only an apostolic man... not a master, but a disciple, and so inferior to a master—at least as far subsequent to him as the apostle [Paul] whom he followed... was subsequent to the others... Even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. (Tertullian of Carthage)¹⁷

And thirdly, that according to Luke, who wrote, for those who from the Gentiles [came to believe] the Gospel that was praised by Paul. (Origen of Alexandria)¹⁸

Luke, a physician from Antioch, indicated in his writings that he knew Greek and that he was a follower of the apostle Paul and the companion of all his journeying; *he wrote a gospel about which the same Paul says, "We have sent with him a brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches" (2 Corinthians 8:18)... (Jerome, Lives of Illustrious Men, 7)*¹⁹

The Early Fathers on the Origin of John's Gospel

Then [after the publication of Matthew, Mark, and Luke] John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself also gave forth the Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia. (Irenaeus of Lyons)²⁰

The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples. To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], he said, 'Fast with me today for three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us tell it to one another.' In the same night it was revealed to Andrew, [one] of the apostles, that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it... (Muratorian Canon of Rome)²¹

Of all those who had been with the Lord only Matthew and John left us their recollections (*hypomnēmata*), and tradition says that they took to writing perforce... John, it is said, used all the time a message which was not written down, and at last took to writing for the following cause. The three gospels which had been written down before were distributed to all including himself; it is said he welcomed them and testified to their truth but said that there was only lacking to the narrative the account of what was done by Christ at first and at the beginning of the preaching... They say accordingly that John was asked to relate in his own gospel the period passed over in silence by the former evangelists (*tōn proterōn euangelistōn*).... (Clement of Alexandria)²²

¹⁷ Tertullian of Carthage, *Against Marcion* 4.2, 5; trans. ANF 3.347.

¹⁸ Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.25.4; trans. LCL.

¹⁹ Translation in Orchard and Riley, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 203.

²⁰ Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.8; trans. LCL. Compare Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1. Elsewhere Irenaeus states that the author of the Fourth Gospel is John "the apostle." See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.9.1, 3.

²¹ Muratorian Fragment of Rome, nos. 9-16, 25-33; trans. in Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 305-307.

²² Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.24.1-13; trans. LCL.

We lay it down as our first position, that the evangelical Testament has apostles for its authors.... Since, however, there are apostolic men also, they are yet not alone, but appear with apostles and after apostles... Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instill faith into us; whilst of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterwards. (Tertullian of Carthage)²³

This Gospel therefore, written after the Apocalypse, was also given to the churches in Asia by John while still living in the flesh, as the bishop of Hierapolis, Papias by name, a dear disciple of John, has related in his “exoteric,” that is, in [his] last five books, who wrote out this Gospel, John dictating it to him. (Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Gospel of John, Recension 2).²⁴

What about Early Heretics and Pagan Critics?

The disciples of Jesus, having no undoubted fact on which to rely, devised the fiction that he foreknew everything before it happened... *The disciples of Jesus wrote such accounts regarding him*, by way of extenuating the charges that told against him. (Celsus, *Against the Christians*)²⁵

What about the “Lost Gospels”?

<i>Four Apocryphal Gospels</i>	
<i>Title of Gospel</i>	<i>Contents</i>
1. <i>Infancy Gospel of Thomas</i>	Stories about the childhood of Jesus
2. <i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	Collection of 114 Sayings attributed to Jesus
3. <i>Gospel of Judas</i>	Dialogues between Jesus and Judas.
4. <i>Gospel of Peter</i>	Accounts of passion, death, and resurrection

When this boy Jesus was five years old he was playing at the ford of a brook, and he gathered together into pools the water that flowed by, and made it at once clean. . . . But the son of Annas the scribe was standing there with Joseph; and he took a branch of willow and dispersed the water which Jesus had gathered together. When Jesus saw what he had done he was enraged and said to him: “You insolent, godless dunderhead, what harm did the pools and the water do to you? See, now you shall also wither like a tree and shall bear neither leaves nor root nor fruit.” And immediately the lad withered up completely. . . . After this, [Jesus] again went through the village, and a lad ran and knocked against his shoulder. Jesus was exasperated and said to him: “You shall not go further on your way,” and the child immediately fell down and died. (*Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 2.1, 3.1-3, 4.1; trans. W. Schneemelcher, *NT Apocrypha*, p. 444)

The Early Church Fathers: the “Lost Gospels” are Forgeries

Eusebius: [*There are*] writings which are put forward by heretics under the name of the apostles containing gospels such as those of Peter, and Thomas. . . . To none of these has

²³ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.2; trans. ANF 3.347.

²⁴ Trans. B. Orchard, *Why Three Gospels?*, 151.

²⁵ Cited in Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 2.15, 16; trans. ANF 4.437, 438.

any who ever belonged to the ecclesiastical teachers ever thought it right to refer in his writings. Moreover, the type of phraseology differs from apostolic style, and the opinion and tendency of their contents is widely dissonant from true orthodoxy and clearly shows that *they are the forgeries of heretics*. (Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.25.6-7)

3. Are the Gospels Biographies?

The Gospels as Folklore?

Rudolf Bultmann: [M]ust we look around for analogies to the explanation of the form of the Gospel? What analogies can be suggested? There are none in the Greek Tradition; for there is no point in considering either the Memoirs which Justin . . . might have been thinking with his refer- ence to *apomne moneumata*, or the Hellenistic biography. *There is no historical-biographical interest in the Gospels*, and that is why they have nothing to say about Jesus’ human personality, his appearance and character, his origin, education, and development.²⁶

Bart Ehrman: Consider, for example, a story that every second-grader in the country has heard, the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. . . . [W]e tell the story, not because it really happened, but because in some sense we think it is true. The stories about Jesus in the early Church may have been similar.²⁷

The Gospels are Ancient Biographies

1. Ancient Greco-Roman “Biographies” or “Lives” (Greek *bioi*)

<i>Four Ancient Greco-Roman Biographies</i>		
<i>Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Time Period</i>
1. <i>Life of Josephus</i>	Josephus—Jewish historian	ca. 100 A.D.
2. <i>Parallel Lives</i>	Plutarch—Greek historian	ca. 90-100 A.D.
3. <i>Lives of the Caesars</i>	Suetonius—Roman historian	ca. 120 A.D.
4. <i>Life of Demonax</i>	Lucian—writer, student of Demonax	ca.150-180 A.D.

2. Focus on the Life and Death of a Single Individual

<i>Greco-Roman Biographies</i>	<i>The Four Gospels</i>
1. Birth and childhood (Brief or missing)	1. Birth and childhood (Matt 1-2, Luke 1-2 absent Mark and John)
2. Public career (Longest Section of book)	2. Public Career (Matt 3-25; Mark 1-13; Luke 3-21; John 1-12)
3. Death (Relatively Brief)	3. Passion and Death (Matt 24-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 13-19)

²⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh, 2nded. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 371–72 (emphasis added).

²⁷ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 75.

Begin with Ancestry (cf. Matt 1:1-2; Luke 3:23-24)

My great-grandfather's grandfather was Simon surnamed Psellus. He was a contemporary of the high-priest Hyrcanus. . . . I cite [my pedigree] as I find it recorded in the public registers. (Josephus, *Life*,

Are of Medium Length (10,000-20,000 Words)

<i>Greco Roman Biographies</i>	<i>The Four Gospels</i>
Average Length about 10,000-20,000 words	Matthew: about 18,000 words Mark: about 11,000 words Luke: about 19,000 words John: about 15,000 words

Not Necessarily in Chronological Order

Having given as it were a summary of his life, I shall now take up its various phases one by one, *not in chronological order, but by categories*, to make the account clearer and more intelligible. (Suetonius, *Life of the Deified Augustus*, 9)²⁸

Don't Tell You Everything about a Person

It is the life of Alexander the king, and of Caesar, who overthrew Pompey, that I am writing in this book, and the multitude of deeds to be treated is so great that I shall make no other preface than to entreat my readers, in case I do not tell of all the famous actions of these men, nor even speak exhaustively at all in each particular case, but in epitome for the most part, not to complain. *For it is not Histories I am writing, but Lives....* (Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 1.1)²⁹

These are a very few things out of many which I might have mentioned, but they will suffice to give my readers a notion of the sort of man he [Demonax] was. (Lucian, *Life of Demonax* 67)³⁰

But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:25)

Contemporary Scholars: the Gospels are Biographies

Graham Stanton: I do not think it is now possible to deny that the Gospels are a sub-set of the broad literary genre of "lives," that is, biographies.³¹

²⁸ The Latin is *neque per tempora sed per species*. Translation in *Suetonius* (2 vols.; trans. John C. Rolfe; Loeb Classical Library 31; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998, 1997), 1.161.

²⁹ Trans. LCL. See Plutarch, *Lives* (trans. Bernadotte Perkin; Loeb Classical Library 99; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), 225.

³⁰ Trans. LCL. See Lucian, *Volume 1* (trans. A. M. Harmon; Loeb Classical Library 14; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), 173.

³¹ "Foreword," to Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, ix.

James Dunn: Since the 1970s... it has become much clearer that the Gospels are in fact very similar in type to *ancient* biographies (Greek *bioi*; Latin, *vitae*).³²

The Gospels are *Historical* Biographies

1. Ancient Emphasis on Historical Truth:

The historian's task is one: to tell it as it happened. . . . This is the one peculiar characteristic of history, and to truth alone must sacrifice be made. (Lucian, *How to Write History*, 39, 40)

Having reached this point in my narrative, I propose to address a few words to Justus, who has produced his own account of these affairs, and to others who, while professing to write history, care little for truth, and either from spite or partiality, have no scruples about falsehood. The procedure of such persons resembles indeed the forgers of contracts, but, having no corresponding penalty to fear, they can afford to disdain veracity... [But] veracity is incumbent upon a historian. (Josephus, *Life*, 336-339)

2. The Gospels of Luke and John insist on their historical character:

- a. Lukan prologue: an “accurate” account based on eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4)
- b. Johannine epilogue: “true [eyewitness] testimony” (John 21:24-25; 19:35)

Are the Gospels Verbatim Transcripts?

1. Thucydides on Word-for-Word Transcription and Memory:

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; *it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory*, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, *of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said*. (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.1)³³

2. Compare Words of Institution in the Gospels and Paul:

The Words of Institution: Not Verbatim, but Substance

Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt 26:28)

This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. (Mark 14:24)

³² James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 185

³³ Trans. LCL, cited in David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1987), 92.

This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. (Luke 22:20)

This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. (1 Corinthians 11:25)

4. Ratzinger: Gospels not a “transcript” but “the *substance*” of Jesus’ discourses.³⁴

4. When Were the Gospels Written?

The “Time-Gap” Between Jesus and the Gospels

Scholars typically date the New Testament Gospels to the latter part of the first century. Most everyone would agree that Jesus died sometime around 30 CE. Mark was the first Gospel to be written, probably around 65-70 CE; Matthew and Luke were written about fifteen to twenty years after that, say, 80-85 CE; and John was written last, around 90-95 CE. What is significant here is the time gap involved. The very first surviving account of Jesus’ life was written thirty-five to forty years after his death. Our latest canonical Gospel was written sixty to sixty-five years after his death. That’s obviously a lot of time.³⁵

The “Telephone” Game

N]early all of these storytellers had no independent knowledge of what really happened [to Jesus]. It takes little imagination to realize what happened to the stories. You are probably familiar with the old birthday party game “telephone.” A group of kids sits in a circle, the first tells a brief story to the one sitting next to her, who tells it to the next, and to the next, and so on, until it comes back full circle to the one who started it. Invariably, the story has changed so much in the process of retelling that everyone gets a good laugh. Imagine this same activity taking place, not in a solitary living room with ten kids on one afternoon, but over the expanse of the Roman Empire (some 2,500 miles across), with thousands of participants.³⁶

Jesus’ Prophecies of the Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple: *Ex Eventu*

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.” (Matthew 24:1-2)

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” And Jesus said to him, “Do you see

³⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth* (3 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 2007, 2013; San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011), 1.229.

³⁵ Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 90-91.

³⁶ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 72-74.

these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.” (Mark 13:1-2)

And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, “. . . [T]he days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44)

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. (Luke 21:20)

The Two-Source Solution to the Synoptic Problem

1. Mark wrote first; Matthew and Luke wrote *after* Mark and copied from Mark
2. Matthew and Luke wrote independently (cf. Infancy narratives)
3. Parallels between Matthew and Luke copied from lost “Q” source (German *quelle*)
4. Implications: Mark: ca. 65-70 A.D., Matthew and Luke: ca. 80-85 CE

Weaknesses of the Arguments for Late First-Century Dates

1. Signs that the Gospels Were Written *Before* the Temple Destruction

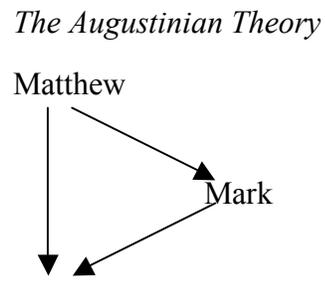
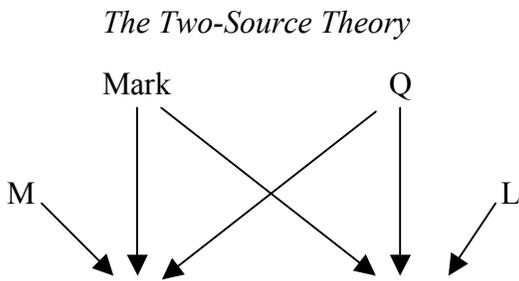
But when you see the abomination of desolation set up where it ought not to be... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. . . . *Pray that it may not happen in winter.* (Mark 13:14,18)

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. . . . *Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.* (Matthew 24:15, 20)

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies... Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, *and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it.* (Luke 21:20-21)

Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world; *and this took place in the days of Claudius.* (Acts 11:27-28)

2. Multiple Solutions to the Synoptic Problem



the Acts of the Apostles, taken in conjunction with the absence of any reference in the book to the result of the trial of St. Paul and to his martyrdom, make it *in the highest degree probable that the work was written at a time when St. Paul's trial in Rome had not yet come to an end.*³⁹

5. The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man

The Kingdom of God

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.*" (Mark 1:14-15)

These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, . . . "Preach as you go, saying, '*The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*'" (Matthew 10:5, 7)

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then *the kingdom of God has come upon you.* (Luke 11:20)

Jesus answered [Nicodemus], "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see *the kingdom of God.*" (John 3:3)

The Kingdom of God in the Book of Daniel

Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar:] "You saw, O king, and behold, a *great image*. . . The head of this image was of fine *gold*, its breast and arms of *silver*, its belly and thighs of *bronze*, its legs of *iron*, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, *a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it smote the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces*; then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. *But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*" (Daniel 2:31-35)

"And in the days of those kings *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever*; just as you saw that *a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.*" (Daniel 2:44-45)

³⁹ Adolf von Harnack, *The Date of the Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels* (trans. J. R. Wilkinson; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004 [original 1911]), 99 (emphasis altered).

<i>The Prophecy of the Kingdom of God (Daniel 2)</i>			
<i>Nebuchadnezzar's Dream</i>	<i>Daniel's Interpret.</i>	<i>Five Empires</i>	<i>Dates</i>
1. Gold head	1st Kingdom	Babylonian	6th cent. BC
2. Silver chest and arms	2nd Kingdom	Medo-Persian	5th cent. BC
3. Bronze belly and thighs	3rd Kingdom	Greek	4th cent. BC
4. Iron/clay legs and feet	4th Kingdom	Roman	1st cent. BC
5. Stone → mountain	5th Kingdom	Kingdom of God	1st cent. AD?

The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus

“For John [the Baptist] came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; *the Son of Man* came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ ” (Matthew 11:18-19)

As they were going along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but *the Son of Man* has nowhere to lay his head.” (Luke 9:57-58)

For *the Son of Man* goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom *the Son of Man* is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. (Mark 14:21)

The Son of Man in the Book of Daniel

“I [Daniel] saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And *four great beasts* came up out of the sea, different from one another. *The first was like a lion* and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, *another beast, a second one, like a bear*. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ After this I looked, and lo, *another, like a leopard*, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, *a fourth beast*, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet.” (Daniel 7:2-7)

As I looked, thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. . . Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came *one like a son of man*, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; *his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* (Daniel 7:9, 13-14)

<i>The Prophecy of the Son of Man (Daniel 7)</i>			
<i>Daniel's Dream</i>	<i>Angel's Interp.</i>	<i>Five Empires</i>	<i>Dates</i>
1. Lion	1st king	Babylonian	6th century BC
2. Bear	2nd king	Medo-Persian	5th century BC
3. Leopard	3rd king	Greek	4th century BC
4. Fourth beast	4th king	Roman	1st century BC
5. Son of Man	5th king	Kingdom of God	1st century AD?

The Death of the Messiah

And he began to teach them that *the Son of Man must suffer many things*, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, *and be killed*, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. (Mark 8:31-32)

The Death of the Messiah in the Book of Daniel

[The angel Gabriel said to Daniel:] “*Seventy weeks of years [=490 years] are decreed* concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy [one]. Know therefore and understand that *from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of a messiah*, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, *a Messiah shall be cut off*, and shall have nothing; and *the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” (Daniel 9:24-27)

<i>The Prophecy of the Messiah's Death (Daniel 9)</i>		
<i>Daniel's Prophecy</i>	<i>Historical Events</i>	<i>Dates</i>
“Going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem.”	Decree to rebuild the Temple by King Artaxerxes of Persia	ca. 457 BC
“Seventy weeks of years”	70 x 7 years = 490 years	AD 457–33
“Messiah” will be “cut off”	Jesus is crucified	ca. AD 33
“City and sanctuary”	Temple and Jerusalem	AD 70

will be destroyed

destroyed by Romans

The Timeline of the Messiah: Josephus, Eusebius, and Pascal!

We are convinced... that Daniel spoke with God, for he did not only prophesy future events, as did the other prophets, but *he also determined the time at which these would come to pass*. (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10.267-68)⁴⁰

[W]e must count the numbers, that is to say the seventy weeks, which are 490 years, from the going forth of the word of answer and from the building of Jerusalem. *This took pace in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, King of Persia*. For Nehemiah his cup-bearer made the request, and received the answer that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and the order went forth to carry it out... *And from that date to the coming of Christ is seventy weeks*. (Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel*, 8.2.389)⁴¹

One must be bold to predict the same thing in so many ways. It was necessary that the four idolatrous or pagan monarchies, the end of the kingdom of Judah, and *the seventy weeks*, should happen at the same time, and *all this before the second temple was destroyed*... (Pascal, *Pensees*, 11.709)⁴²

6. Did Jesus Think He Was God?

C. S. Lewis: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. *A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or some-thing worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human*

⁴⁰ Trans. LCL, slightly adapted. See Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities, Books 9-11* (Loeb Classical Library 326; trans. R. Marcus; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), 305-06.

⁴¹ See Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel: Volumes I and II* (trans. W. J. Ferrar; repr.; Eugen: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 124-25. Eusebius is quoting Julius Africanus' explanation in the fifth book of his *Chronography*, which is no longer extant.

⁴² See Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (trans. W. F. Trotter; repr.; Mineola; Dover, 2003), 201 (see also 214, 223).

teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. . . Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.⁴³

A Fourth Option: “Legend”

Jesus probably never called himself God. . . . This means that he doesn’t have to be either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. He could be a first-century Palestinian Jew who had a message to proclaim other than his own divinity.⁴⁴

The Gospel of John: Jesus Clearly Claims to Be God

The Jews said to him, “. . . Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died?... Who do you claim to be?”... Jesus said to them, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.*” So they took up stones to throw at him. (John 8:52, 53, 58-59)

[Jesus said:] “*I and the Father are one.*” The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?” The Jews answered him, “We stone you for no good work but for *blasphemy*; because *you, being a man, make yourself God.*” (John 10:30-33)

Is Jesus Divine in the Synoptic Gospels?

If Jesus went around Galilee proclaiming himself to be a divine being sent from God . . . could anything *else* that he might say be so breath- taking and thunderously important? And yet *none of these earlier sources* [Matthew, Mark, Luke] *says any such thing about him*. Did they (all of them!) just decide not to mention the one thing that was most significant about Jesus? Almost certainly the divine self-claims in John are not historical.⁴⁵

1. The Stilling of the Storm: “Who Is This?”

Jesus Stills the Storm

On that day, when evening had come, [Jesus] said to [his disciples], “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd, they took him with them just as he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” And he awoke and re- buked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, “*Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?*” (Mark 4:35-41)

⁴³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Collins, 1952), 54–56 [emphasis added].

⁴⁴ Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don’t Know about Them)* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 142.

⁴⁵ Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014), 125.

The LORD Stills the Storm

Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded, and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men, and were at their wits' end. *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress; he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they had quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.* (Psalm 107:23-30)

The Stilling of the Storm and the Divinity of Jesus

The LORD Stills the Storm

1. Sailors in ships
 2. Stormy wind and waves
 3. Courage melts away
 4. Cry out to the LORD
 5. The LORD stills the storm
 6. Waves of the sea “quiet”
- (Psalm 107)

Jesus Stills the Storm

1. Disciples in boats
 2. Stormy wind and waves
 3. Disciples are afraid
 4. Cry out to Jesus
 5. Jesus stills the storm
 6. There was a “great calm”
- (Matthew 8; Mark 4; Luke 8)

Contemporary Scholars on the Stilling of the Storm

Joseph Fitzmyer: As Yahweh established order over chaos and rescued his people from watery disasters, so now Jesus is presented as having a similar role in their destiny.⁴⁶

John Meier: In short, what Yahweh does to save the crew of the ship on the sea on Psalm 107 Jesus does to save his disciples in the ship on the sea of Galilee.⁴⁷

2. The Walking on Water: “I Am”

Jesus Walks on Water: “I AM”

Immediately [Jesus] made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. *He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified.* But

⁴⁶ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2.728.

⁴⁷ John Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.932.

immediately he spoke to them and said, “*Take heart, I am; have no fear.*” And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded... (Mark 6:45-52)

The LORD Reveals His Name to Moses: “I AM”

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘*I AM has sent me to you.*’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: *this is my name for ever*, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Exodus 3:13-15)

Contemporary Scholars on the Walking on Water

John Meier: [W]hile the ‘surface meaning’ of in the Gospel narrative is “It is I,” the many OT allusions... intimate a secondary, solemn meaning: the divine “I am.” Ultimately this solemn utterance goes all the way back to Yahweh’s revelation of himself to Moses in the burning bush...⁴⁸

Joel Marcus: The OT texts in which God identifies himself by means of ... are especially relevant for our passage [the walking on water]... These OT texts are all based on Exod 3:14, in which God identifies himself by means of “I am the One who is,” a name denoting his active, upholding, uncircumscribed, everlasting presence, which allows no rival force to withstand it.⁴⁹

3. The Transfiguration on the Mount

Jesus is Transfigured on the Mountain

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and *he was trans- figured before them, and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”* And suddenly looking around they no longer saw any one with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead. (Mark 9:2-9)

⁴⁸ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.918.

⁴⁹ Joel Marcus, *Mark*, 1.427.

Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai

Moses said, “I beg you, show me your glory.” And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD’; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. *But,*” he said, “*you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live.*” And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and *you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.*” (Exodus 33:18-23)

And there he [Elijah] came to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him. . . . And he said, “Go forth, and *stand upon the mount before the Lord.*” *And behold, the Lord passed by,* and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. *And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.* (1 Kings 19:9, 11-13)

Contemporary Scholarship on the Transfiguration

By introducing the voice from the cloud (“This is my beloved son!” 9:7), Mark reveals that the transformed Jesus was more than an angel and higher than glorified saints (i.e., Moses and Elijah). The account indicates that Jesus was revealed specifically *as a deity*...⁵⁰

Bart Ehrman: Explaining the Evidence Away

[E]ven in the Gospels Jesus appears to have a heavenly body during his earthly life—one that can walk on water, for example, or be transfigured into a radiating glow in the presence of some of his disciples. *But it is important to remember: these Gospels were written by believers in Jesus decades later who already “knew” that Jesus had been exalted to heaven.* As storytellers told the stories of Jesus’ earthly career, year after year and decade after decade, they did not separate who Jesus was after his death—the one who had been exalted to heaven—from who he was during his life. And so their belief in the exalted Jesus affected the ways that they told their stories about him. They recounted

⁵⁰ M. David Litwa, *Jesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as a Mediterranean God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 114 (emphasis added). See also Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man: The Genre, History of Religions Context, and Meaning of the Transfiguration,” in *Auferstehung-Resurrection* (eds. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger; WUNT 135; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 247-300 (here 253-54). Among older works, Litwa cites Ferdinand Hahn’s interpretation of the transfiguration as a revelation of Jesus’ divine nature, as well as Bultmann’s description of it as a “theophany.” See Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (trans. Harold Knight and George Ogg; New York: World Publishing, 1969), 300-302, 334-37; Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 259-61.

miracles that he had done as a divine human—healing the sick, casting out demons, walking on water, multiplying the loaves, raising the dead. Why could Jesus do these things? They were attributed to him by his later followers who already “knew” that he was a mere mortal because God had exalted him to heaven. As a heavenly being, Jesus was in some sense divine. The storytellers told their tales fully believing that he was uniquely divine, with that belief affecting how they told their stories.⁵¹

7. The Secret of Jesus’ Divinity

The Messianic Secret in the Gospels

1. Jesus does not permit demons to speak (Mark 1:34; Mark 3:11-12)
2. Jesus does not permit the leper or mute to speak (Mark 1:43-44; 7:36)
3. Jesus tells the disciples: tell “no one” about Peter’s confession (Mark 8:30)
4. Jesus tells Peter, James, and John to tell no one about the Transfiguration (Mark 9:9)

Craig S. Keener: [O]ne important reason for allowing claims of his messiahship only toward the end of his ministry was a matter of *practical strategy*. Messianic acclamations could (and did) lead the authorities wrongly to classify Jesus as a revolutionary and seek his execution; thus Jesus presumably delays his martyrdom until the appropriate time and place (Passover in Jerusalem)... If Jesus knew anything at all about the political situation in Jerusalem, he would know that a public messianic claim would lead to his almost immediate execution...⁵²

The Messianic Secret in the Gospel of John

So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, “*How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.*” (John 10:24)

His disciples said, “Ah, *now you are speaking plainly*, not in any figure [of speech]!” (John 16:29)

1. The Healing of the Paralytic

Who Can Forgive Sins but God Alone?

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to

⁵¹ Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 206-207 (emphasis).

⁵² Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, 263-64.

the paralytic, “My son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “*Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your pallet and walk’? *But 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, rise, take up your pallet and go home.” And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “*We never saw anything like this!*” (Mark 2:1-12)

The One God

“Hear, O Israel: *The LORD our God, the LORD is one*; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

Adela Yarbro Collins: [T]here is no precedent for a human being making a simple declaration that God is at this moment forgiving another human being’s sin... What Jesus has said calls the unity of God into question.⁵³

The Son of Man

As I looked, thrones were placed, and *one that was ancient of days* took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. *Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man*, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:9, 13-14)

Contemporary Scholarship

Daniel Boyarin: What this text [Daniel 7] projects is *a second divine figure* to whom will be given eternal dominion of the entire world... In other words, a simile, *a God who looks like a human being* (literally Son of Man) has become the name for that God, who is now called “Son of Man,” a reference to his human-appearing divinity.⁵⁴

Adela Yarbro Collins: *T]he use of the epithet “the Son of Man” conceals as much as it reveals about who Jesus is...* The phrase alludes to Daniel 7:13, but in a very indirect and cryptic way. Its use by Jesus in his dialogue with the scribes is, in effect, *a riddle*. Jesus

⁵³ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 185.

⁵⁴ Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: the New Press, 2012), 32-33. See also Markus Zehnder, “Why the Danielic ‘Son of Man’ Is a Divine Being,” *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 24.3 (2014): 331-47; Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Messianic Son of Man: Jesus’ Claim to Deity,” in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* (eds. Scot McKnight and James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 325-346.

issues them a challenge to discern his identity, a challenge they apparently failed to meet.”⁵⁵

2. Jesus and the Pre-existent Messiah

The Riddle of David’s Son

And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the Son of David? *David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet.’ [Psalm 110:1] David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?*” And the great throng heard him gladly. (Mark 12:35-37)

Psalm 110 and the Pre-existent King

A Psalm of David. *The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.”* The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion: Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor; *From the womb of the dawn, like the dew, I have begotten you.* the LORD has sworn and will not repent: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:1-4)

Contemporary Scholarship

A seated position at the right hand of a deity implies co-regency with him... The imagery of the quoted portion of the psalm, then, implies that “my lord” stands in a relation of *near-equality with God*...⁵⁶

3. Jesus and the Rich Young Man

“No One is Good But God Alone”

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “*Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.* You know the commandments: ‘Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.” And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, “*You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.*” At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:17-22)

The Shema: The One God

⁵⁵ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 186, 187 (Emphasis added; Greek omitted).

⁵⁶ Marcus, *Mark*, 2.850-51. See also Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, 270; Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 175-79.

Hear, O Israel: *The LORD our God, the LORD is one*; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

Contemporary Scholarship

Sigurd Grindheim: The most natural way to read the first part of this saying is that Jesus wants the rich man to make clear what he means. In other words, *Jesus wants to elicit from the man what he thinks about Jesus...* The diverging interpretations of this saying continue to demonstrate the openness of Jesus' words. He does not make a statement about himself, but provokes the audience to *make their own judgment*.⁵⁷

Simon Gathercole: [W]hat is most striking is that having established the one good God as the one who defines what is required of human beings, in the final analysis Jesus is the one who defines what is ultimately commanded... *If God alone is good and able to give commandments, then Jesus does so as well. By implication then, he is also good.* And he is good not in the sense implied by the rich man, but in the absolute, divine sense used by Jesus himself.⁵⁸

4. The Early Church Fathers

The Riddle of Jesus' Identity

If Christ forgives sins, Christ must be truly God because no one can forgive sins but God alone. (Novatian, *The Trinity*, 13)⁵⁹

He confirmed this [his divinity] through his own actions... The scribes themselves had devised this definition. They themselves had introduced the precept. But he proceeded to entangle them in their own words. In effect he said: it is you yourselves who have confessed that forgiveness of sins is given to God alone. (John Chrysostom, *The Paralytic Let Down Through the Roof*)⁶⁰

He did not say, "He is not his Son," but "How is He his son?" *When he says "How," it is a word not of negation, but of enquiry...* [It] is a great thing to know *the mystery of how He is David's Son and David's Lord: how one Person is both Man and God...* Seeing this is a great mystery, our conduct must be fashioned, that it may be comprehended. For to the unworthy is it closed up, it is opened to those who are meet for it. (Augustine, *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*, 91.2)⁶¹

The Lord, then, does not deny His goodness... For when the scribe said, "Good Master," the Lord answered, "Why do you call me good?"—which is to say, "It is not enough to

⁵⁷ Grindheim, *God's Equal*, 187 (emphasis added). See also John M. McDermott, "Didn't Jesus Know He Was God? Mark 10:17-22," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 73 (2008): 319-20.

⁵⁸ Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son*, 74.

⁵⁹ See Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, *Mark* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture New Testament II; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 28.

⁶⁰ See Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 28. Trans. NPNF 1.9.218.

⁶¹ Trans. NPNF 1.6.397-98.

call him good, whom you believe not to be God.” Not such do I seek to be My disciples—men who rather consider my manhood and reckon me a good master, than look to my Godhead and believe me to be the good God.” (Ambrose, *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, 2.1.19).⁶²

When he [Jesus] says, “No one is good,” *he does not say this to show that he is not good; far from it. For he does not say, “Why do you call me good? I am not good” but “No one is good,”* that is, no human being. When he says this, he does not mean to exclude men from goodness but to make a comparison with the goodness of God. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, 63.1).⁶³

8. The Crucifixion of Jesus

Why Was Jesus Crucified?

Bart Ehrman: The most certain element of the tradition about Jesus is that he was crucified on the orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate. The crucifixion is independently attested in a wide array of sources and is not the sort of thing that believers would want to make up about the person proclaimed to be the powerful Son of God. *Why, historically, was Jesus crucified? This is the question that every reconstruction of the life of Jesus has to answer*, and some of the answers proffered over the years have been none too plausible. If, for example, Jesus had simply been a great moral teacher, a gentle rabbi who did nothing more than urge his devoted followers to love God and one another, or an itinerant philosopher who urged them to abandon their possessions and live a simple life, depending on no one but God, then he would scarcely have been seen as a threat to the Romans and nailed to a cross. Great moral teachers were not crucified—unless their teachings were considered subversive...⁶⁴

Bart Ehrman: [F]or Jesus, the Temple cult and the officials in charge of it were a temporary measure at best and a corruption of God’s plan at worst. They would soon be done away with when the kingdom arrived. This message did not escape the notice of those in charge of the Temple, the chief priests who also had jurisdiction over the local affairs of the people in Jerusalem. These priests, principally Sadducees, were the chief liason with the Roman officials, in particular, the Roman prefect Pilate. For these reasons, the most plausible scenario for explaining Jesus’ death is that Jesus’ apocalyptic message, including its enactment in the Temple, angered some of the chief priests on the scene. These priests recognized how explosive the situation could become during the Passover feast, given the tendency of the celebration to become a silent protest that might erupt into something much worse. The Sadducean priests conferred with one another, had Jesus arrested, and questioned him for his words against the Temple. Knowing that they could not execute Jesus themselves, perhaps because the Romans did not allow the

⁶² Trans. NPNF 2.10.226.

⁶³ See Manlio Simonetti, *Matthew* (2 vols.; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture New Testament Ia-b; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001, 2002), 1.98.

⁶⁴ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 275-76.

Jewish authorities to execute criminals (the matter is debated among historians), they delivered him over to Pilate, who had no qualms at all about disposing of yet one more troublemaker who might cause a major disturbance.⁶⁵

1. The Trial of Jesus

Crucified for Blasphemy

Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin sought testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, and their witness did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” Yet not even so did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “*Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*” And Jesus said, “*I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*” And the high priest tore his garments, and said, “Why do we still need witnesses? *You have heard his blasphemy.* What is your decision?” *And they all condemned him as deserving death.* (Mark 14:55-64; cf. Psalm 110:1-4; John 19:5-7)

Jesus’ Response to Caiaphas: Daniel 7 and Psalm 110

Behold, *with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man*, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. *And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.* (Daniel 7:13-14; compare Psalm 110:1-4)

A Psalm of David. *The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.”* The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion: Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor; *From the womb of the dawn, like the dew, I have begotten you.* the LORD has sworn and will not repent: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:1-4)

Contemporary Scholarship

Gerhard Lohfinck: Naturally, the reader of the gospel wonders how Jesus can accept in the presence of the Sanhedrin a title of authority... he has long avoided in public and even forbidden his disciples to use openly... The answer can only be that now, in the presence of the highest authority in Israel, the hour has come to speak openly. Now the possibility of misunderstanding and deliberate misinterpretation must be accepted.⁶⁶

Adela Yarbro Collins: In this saying, Jesus claims to be a messiah of the heavenly type, who will be exalted to the right hand of God (Ps 110:1). *Being seated at the right hand of*

⁶⁵ Erhman, *The New Testament*, 279.

⁶⁶ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 275.

God implies being equal to God, at least in terms of authority and power. The allusion to Dan 7:13 reinforces the heavenly messianic claim.⁶⁷

W. D. Davies and Dale Allison: But it is also possible that Jesus himself was in fact accused of blasphemy—not for claiming to be the Messiah, nor for speaking against the temple, nor for things done during the course of his ministry, but for seating himself on a throne... in heaven.⁶⁸

Josephus on the Penalty for Blasphemy

Let him that blasphemeth God (Greek) be stoned, *then hung for a day*, and buried ignominiously and in obscurity. (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 4.202).⁶⁹

Previous Accusations of Blasphemy

And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “*This man is blaspheming.*” (Matthew 9:3)

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this man speak thus? *It is blasphemy!* Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:6-7)

[Jesus said:] “I and the Father are one.” The Judeans took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?” The Judeans answered him, “*It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.*” (John 10:30-33)

Jesus is Crucified for Blasphemy in John

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!” When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him.”⁷ The Jews answered him, “*We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God.*” (John 19:5-7)

“He who blasphemeth the name of YHWH shall be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16)

2. “My God, my God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

The Cry of Dereliction

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* ...And

⁶⁷ Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 706.

⁶⁸ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 534.

⁶⁹ Cited in Yarbrow Collins, “Blasphemy,” 445.

Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. (Mark 15:33-35, 37; compare Matthew 27:45-50)

The Old Testament Background: Psalm 22

A Psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest... (Psalm 22:1-2)

You who fear the Lord, praise him! all you sons of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel! *For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and he has not hid his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.* (Psalm 22:23-24)

You who fear the Lord, praise him! all you sons of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel! *For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and he has not hid his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.* (Psalm 22:23-24)

You who fear the Lord, praise him! all you sons of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel! *For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and he has not hid his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.* (Psalm 22:23-24)

The Words of the Centurion

And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, *“Truly this man was the Son of God!”* (Mark 15:37-39)

3. The Temple of Jesus’ Body

The Cleansing of the Temple

The Jews then said to him, “What sign have you to show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he spoke of *the temple of his body.* (John 2:18–21)

The Blood and the Water

Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.*

He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. (John 19:31-35)

So these High Priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour to the eleventh... found the number of sacrifices was 256,500; which, upon the allowance of no more than ten that feast together, amounts to 2,700,200 persons that were pure and holy. (Josephus, *War*, 6.423-37)⁷⁰

4. Jesus' Words to Peter: "Who Do You Say That I Am?"

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "*But who do you say that I am?*" Simon Peter replied, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! *For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 16:13-18)

The Blood and Water from the Side of the Temple

At the south-western corner [of the Altar] there were two holes like two narrow nostrils by which *the blood that was poured* over the western base and the southern base *used to run down and mingle in the water-channel and flow out into the brook Kidron.* (Mishnah *Middoth* 3:2).⁷¹

The Temple: Dwelling Place of God on Earth

*The Temple was holy not only because the holy God was worshipped there, but because he was there. ... Jews did not think that God was there and nowhere else, nor that the Temple in any way confined him. Since he was creator and Lord of the universe, he could be approached in prayer at any place. Nevertheless, he was in some special sense present in the Temple.*⁷²

Something Greater than the Temple is Here

Have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless? *I tell you, something greater than the Temple is here.* (Matthew 12:5-6).

⁷⁰ Trans. William H. Whiston, *Josephus: Complete Works* (repr. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 749.

⁷¹ Trans. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 594.

⁷² Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 70-71.

9. The Resurrection of Jesus

1. What the Resurrection Is NOT

Not claiming that Jesus *returned to ordinarily earthly life.*⁷³

1. Elijah and the dead the son of a widow (1 Kings 17:17-24).
2. Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56).
3. Lazarus (John 11:39)
- 4 All of these die again.⁷⁴

Not claiming that *his 'soul' or 'spirit' was alive with God.*⁷⁵

1. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Luke 20:38)
2. Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16)
3. Not the "immortality" (Greek *athanasia*) of Jesus' "soul" (Greek *psychē*)

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died, and their departure was thought an affliction, and their going forth from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3)

4. But the "resurrection" (Greek *anastasis*) of Jesus' "body" (Greek *sōma*).⁷⁶

Not simply claiming that *he 'went to heaven' after he died.*⁷⁷

1. Literally dead wrong!
2. Jesus does *ascend into heaven* (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:6-11).
3. Ascension clearly takes place *after he has already been raised from the dead.*
4. Resurrection of Jesus and his ascension into heaven are *two different events.*

⁷³ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 243.

⁷⁴ This is particularly clear in the case of Lazarus, who, as a result of his being raised, was the subject of a plot by the chief priest "to put Lazarus also to death" (John 12:10)!

⁷⁵ See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), for the range of views.

⁷⁶ See Acts 1:22; 2:31; 4:33; 17:18; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:35-45; Philippians 3:21; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:21. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 31, puts it well: "Here there is no difference between pagans, Jews, and Christians. They all understood the Greek word *anastasis* and its cognates... to mean... new life after a period of being dead... All of them were speaking of a new life *after* 'life after death' in the popular sense, a fresh living embodiment *following* a period of death as a state."

⁷⁷ See Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 204, in which he critiques Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), 134, 136, for claiming that "resurrection" meant that "after his crucifixion... Jesus entered into the powerful life of God" or "the passage of the human Jesus into the power of God."

Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “*Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*” (John 20:16-17)

To them [the apostles] he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father... *And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* (Acts 13-4, 9-10)

5. *Resurrection* has to do with what happened to Jesus’ *dead* body in the tomb
6. *Ascension* has to do with what happened to Jesus’ *living* body after it exited the tomb.
7. They are not two ways of saying the same thing.⁷⁸

2. What the Resurrection IS

Jesus Returns to Bodily Life.⁷⁹

As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to You.” *But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit.* And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? *See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.*” And when he had said this he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. (Luke 24:36-43).

Jesus Has the *Same* Body

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “*Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.*” Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.*” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to

⁷⁸ *Contra* Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 290: “Originally there was no difference between the Resurrection of Jesus and his Ascension; this distinction first arose as a consequence of the Easter legends...” This is complete fantasy; Bultmann has no evidence to support such a claim (which is why he has to appeal to its “original” form.) For a fuller discussion of the ascension, see Keener, *Acts*, 1.711-31; Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 278-93. See also Douglas Farrow, *Ascension Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2011); Gerritt Dawson, *Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ’s Continuing Incarnation* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2004).

⁷⁹ See Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 2.244.

him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” (John 20:24-29)

Jesus Has a *Transformed* Body

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. *But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.* (Luke 24:13-15)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, *the doors being shut where the disciples were*, for fear of the Jews, *Jesus came and stood among them* and said to them, “Peace be with you.” (John 20:19)

3. Why Did Anyone Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus?

***Not* Because Ancient People Were Credulous**

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee... And when they saw him they worshiped him; *but some doubted.* (Matthew 28:16-17)

After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but *they did not believe them.* (Mark 16:12-13)

Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; but these words seemed to them *an idle tale*, and *they did not believe them.* (Luke 24:10-11)

So the other disciples told [Thomas], “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, *I will not believe.*” (John 20:25)

So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens... [God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.” *Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked...* (Acts 17:22, 31-33)

1st Reason: The Empty Tomb

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.*” Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came,

following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. (John 20:1-10)

The Empty Tomb is Not Enough

While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sum of money to the soldiers and said, “Tell people, *‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’*” (Matthew 28:12-13).

2nd Reason: The Appearances of the Risen Jesus

1. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1-10; John 20:14-18)
2. Jesus appears to several female disciples (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11)
3. Jesus appears to Simon Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5; John 21:1-24)
4. Jesus appears to James, John, Thomas, Nathanael, and two others (John 21:1-24)
5. Jesus appears to the eleven disciples as a group (Matthew 28:16-20; John 20:19-29)
6. Jesus appears to Cleopas and one unnamed disciple (Luke 24:13-35)
7. Jesus appears to more than five hundred “brothers” at once (1 Corinthians 15:6)
8. Jesus appears to James (a.k.a. “the Lord’s brother”) (1 Corinthians 15:7; compare Galatians 2:19)

3rd Reason: the Fulfillment of Scripture

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, “*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.*” (Luke 24:45)

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know *the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.* (John 20:8-9)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, *that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

4. The Sign of Jonah

Jesus and the Sign of Jonah

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but *no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three*

days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Matthew 12:38-41)

Jonah's Prayer

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and *Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, "I called to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; *out of the belly of Sheol I cried and thou didst hear my voice...* The waters closed in over me, the deep was round about me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. *I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me for ever; yet thou didst bring up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to thee, into thy holy temple...*" And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.*" So Jonah *arose* and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. (Jonah 1:17-3:3)

The Sign of Jonah and the Resurrection of Jesus

The Sign of Jonah

1. Death and resurrection
after three days in Sheol.

2. Repentance of the Ninevites
in response to his preaching.

The Sign of the Son of Man

1. Death and resurrection
after three days in tomb.

2. Repentance of Gentiles
in response to his preaching.

The Early Church Fathers: the Conversion of the Pagan World

Behold how today, yes, in our own times, our eyes see not only Egyptians, but every race of men who used to be idolaters... released from the errors of polytheism and the demons, and calling on the God of the prophets!... *Yes, in our own time the knowledge of the Omnipotent God shines forth and sets a seal of certainty on the forecasts of the prophets. You see this actually going on, you no longer only expect to hear of it, and if you ask the moment when the change began, for all your inquiry you will receive no other answer but the moment of the appearance of the Savior...* And who would not be struck by the extraordinary change—that men who for ages have paid divine honor to wood and stone and demons, wild beasts that feed on human flesh, poisonous reptiles, animals of every kinds, repulsive monsters, fire and earth, and the lifeless elements of the universe should after our Savior's coming pray to the Most High God, Creator of Heaven and

earth, the actual Lord of the prophets, and the God of Abraham and his forefathers? (Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel*, 1.6.20-21)⁸⁰

⁸⁰ See Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel, Volumes I and II* (Trans. W. J. Farrer; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 37-39.