Part 1 of 1: Did the Historical Jesus Claim to Be Divine?
with
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Welcome to The Table. We discuss issues of God and culture, and those of you who are familiar with The Table can tell I'm not in my normal seat, if you're watching, and the reason for this is our topic today. We're going to be discussing the divinity of Jesus and Mikel Del Rosario is going to host because I'm in an expert's seat. So Mikel, this is all yours.

That's right. Well, thank you for being our expert guest here today, Darrell.

It's a pleasure.

Thanks. Thanks for having me.

Recently, Justin was in a debate with Bart Ehrman on the question “Did the historical Jesus claim to be divine?” and you were arguing the affirmative.

Definitely. Definitely. I was arguing.

And so we're pleased to have you on the show because that's actually our topic here today. So we're just gonna dive right in and I want to ask you; If we think about the kinds of people who study what the historical Jesus said, many of them talk about the Apostle Paul. Can you explain to us why that is and how Paul can actually help us get back to some of the things that Jesus said about himself?

Yeah. A lot of people think that the gospels are our earliest sources for Jesus but it's fascinating that Paul, in his early letters, 1 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, these early letters were written within about 20 to 25 years of Jesus' death, and in those letters, Paul actually quotes creeds, and poems, and hymns, and other sayings of Jesus that go back to within even the first decade after Jesus' death and sometimes even as early, as scholars say, as five years after Jesus' death, which is really incredible. So through Paul's letters, we can go back all the way to the first decade of Jesus' death.

So back then, you can say we have people for sure saying Jesus was God. They were worshipping Jesus as God.
Dr. Justin Bass  Yes. Some of these traditions will say things like one of the classic ones is quoted in 1 Corinthians 15 where it says that Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again on the third day, and appeared to all these people. That doesn't specifically say he's God, but we have other creedal traditional that Paul quotes like 1 Corinthians 8:6, Philippians 2, and I'll quote the one from 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul says, and it seems to be quoted from early on, that, &quot;For us, there is one God, the Father, for whom all things came into being and for whom all things exist, and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came into being and through whom all things exist.&quot;

And that's an incredible statement because it's a redefining of the Shema, Deuteronomy 6, and Paul is basically making the Lord of Deuteronomy 6, Jesus, and God is God the father, and so he kind of cuts it in half and makes it where there are two – he doesn't say what – we use persons. Persons came later, but there are two but there's still just one God and there's Jesus somehow included in the one God of Israel, and so it's an incredible creedal tradition that goes back probably within the first five to ten years after Jesus' death.

Mikel Del Rosario  So the argument that you're making then is that if we have people this early on who were believing Jesus was God, certainly that didn't just come out of nowhere. They didn't just make that up out of nothing. They got it from somewhere certainly.

Dr. Justin Bass  Yeah. Where do you get a crucified man being hailed as God? And I use this line of argumentation because Bart Ehrman actually in his books makes the argument, this exact argument, that the historical Jesus claimed to be the messiah. He believes Jesus claimed to be the messiah and he argues that because the earliest followers of Jesus proclaimed him as the messiah. And he says, "Look, they were saying that he was the messiah and that he died and rose again from the dead," and no one in Second Temple Judaism taught that, no one ever said that, and so I'm saying, "Hey, let's look at in our topic. The earliest followers of Jesus said he was God. Where were they saying in Second Temple Judaism that the messiah would be God? So I'm saying it's the same argument. Why don't you go with that?"
He largely just dismissed it and said, "Oh, that doesn't say what Jesus said," but that's the same argumentation he used for how he gets to the fact that the historical Jesus claimed to be the messiah. 'Cause in the gospels, Jesus doesn't claim to be the messiah. He accepts it. He accepts people who say he's the messiah but you never have Jesus say, "I am the Christ," in the gospels. So that's exactly how Ehrman gets that argument and so that's how I'm trying to demonstrate that that's how he claimed to be God.

*Mikel Del Rosario*  
Okay. Well, certainly he had to have said something and –

*Dr. Justin Bass*  
Where did this come from?

*Mikel Del Rosario*  
That's right. And so Darrell, when we think about how Jesus began to reveal more and more about himself in the gospels, do you see him doing it more implicitly, or more explicitly, or what's the mix there?

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  
Well, he does it implicitly, but let's link it to the previous argument that we've got about Paul, and that is the written traditions go back to five, ten years, but the actual experience of Paul literally lands on top of the events in Jerusalem. If you think through what it took for Paul to be converted when Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus Road within 18 months, by the chronology, of the events tied to Jesus in Jerusalem, he had to have known the Christian message. He had to have been able to respond to it. When Jesus appears to him, he has to understand what that means. He immediately gets it.

That actually dates his theology that allows for his conversion to before his experience with Jesus because he's hearing what the church is preaching as a preparation for that. So now this gap that people like to talk about between the event and what's written in the Bible keeps shrinking and to the point where it's literally on top of itself, and so the issue becomes where there's smoke, there must be fire. In other words, the idea that we've got these teachings among the very earliest Christians that are going in this direction, where did they get it from?
Well, it's unlikely they made it up on their own because it got them into trouble. I mean why would you make up something that would get you into trouble? That doesn't make sense. There's no precedent for going here so you aren't forced to go in this direction. If Jesus had really taught that he was a great religious leader or even that he was just the messiah, there was no reason to make him divine. Just leave him where he is. But what we get in the gospels is Jesus choosing to show who he is rather than proclaim who he is, oftentimes, and that's what we see in the Synoptic Gospel. So he does the stuff the God does and that's how we see it.

These are what are called the implicit claims, things like forgiving sin, like saying he's Lord of the Sabbath, controlling the creation. There are a variety of things at work here, taking control of the temple, changing Passover liturgy into completely different set of references that refer to his life and death. That's a prescribed piece of liturgy coming out of the Pentateuch, coming out of the first five books of the Old Testament, coming out of the law. Who has the right to do that. And so you add all these things together, that's what you get.

Perhaps the most outstanding text that shows this is a passage where John the Baptist sends his emissaries and asks Jesus, "Are you the one to come or should we expect another?" And I say John the Baptist didn't watch enough television. He should have asked this question a different way. "Are you the one to come or should we expect another? Yes or no." Because by leaving the answer open-ended, he let Jesus roam, and that's what he did. So he goes back and he says, "Tell John what you see and hear," and he goes through this list. Lepers are cleansed, the blind are healed, the gospel is preached to the poor, and most of those phrases come out of sections of Isaiah that talk about what's gonna happen when God does his final deliverance.

So he's saying, "I am the messiah, but the way that you know it is by what I'm doing." He doesn't talk about it, because for Jesus, words are cheap. A lot of people can make claims. The real proof is in the pudding of real-life experience.
If I could just add to that, that's actually also a text, the story of I like to call it Doubting John the Baptist. We hear about Doubting Thomas but here is John the Baptist actually doubting. Bart Ehrman actually accepts this text as historical, as going back to Jesus, and it's really incredible to learn the way Jesus probably did talk about himself because here he is directly asked by John the Baptist himself, "Are you the one to come or should we expect someone else?" And he doesn't come out and just say who he is and he doesn't start calling himself God or, "I am the son of God," or "I am the messiah." He does it in a very implicit way, and I think this is the way Jesus did talk about himself until probably that last week before his death, and that's where he makes the most explicit claim, which I know we're going to talk about later, but his claim to be the Son of Man and God's right hand.

It certainly is the way the Synoptics lay it out, this very implicit kind of indirect way. In fact, it bothers a lot of believers when they read the Synoptic Gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke to have Jesus do it so indirectly, and then when we come to the Gospel of John, there's a lot more direct stuff going on here and there, very privately, by the way, in most cases, or there's implicit stuff, "I am the father of one," which the theologians who have a good theological antenna get. They get what the implication is of this kind of thing, so that's the way this works.

So an attempt to say that John is really radically different from the Synoptics, which is one of the arguments Ehrman made at the debate, actually doesn't work as well as Ehrman tries to portray it as if we've got an early Christology here that's something less than divine in the Synoptics and we've got this exaggerated Christology in John that's doing something later and that's really from the early church.

And this explains why he was rejected by the Jewish establishment, because of these kinds of claims. Is that right?

Exactly. That's what got Jesus into trouble.
And if I could, one of the ways I tried to demonstrate, too, that the way Jesus talks in John is even testified to in the Synoptics is what they called this "Meteorite fallen from Johannine skies," this great phrase, and it's a Q saying. It's found in Matthew 11 and Luke 10. I'll just read it real quickly. "All things have been handed over to me by my father and no one knows the son except the father, nor does anyone know the father except the son and anyone to whom the son wills to reveal him."

It sounds a lot like the way Jesus talks in John. He refers to himself as the son in the third person three times, an incredible saying, and only he knows the father. When I challenged Bart with this, he just said, "Well, I don't believe it went back to Jesus." I said, "On what basis?" And he really didn't give a response to that.

Now for those people who don't know what Q is, can you quickly explain what that is?

Yeah, Q just means source in German and it basically is the sayings of Jesus that are found in Matthew and Luke not found in Mark, so it seems that Matthew and Luke, who probably did not have each other when they were writing. They probably wrote independently of each other, each of them had Mark but they also had these other sayings that are almost identical in the way they say it, and so a lot of people think that goes back to a common sense or written. It's debated, but I think it's probably right that there's some common tradition, some common source, we can call it Q or whatever, that they, Mathew and Luke, are both drawing upon.

And Q, this saying, any saying found in Q, even critical scholars like Bart Ehrman would say that it dates to the early 50s, so now we're getting back to the same time as Paul's early letters when we talk about the Q sayings of Jesus, and this is the way he talks in the Q sayings.
Dr. Darrell Bock: Yeah. You're talking about 200 verses, 200, 235 verses, and the way it splits out is about a third of them are almost exact, about another third are very close, and then another third, there's debate because there's enough variation between them as to whether they're included or not. That's why you'll get different numbers when people talk about Q. But it basically is the sayings that appear in those two gospels, not in Mark, on the assumption – this is really the key part of it – that Luke and Matthew didn't use each other so where did all this stuff come from? It's about one-fifth of each of these gospels, so that's a substantial portion. Where did it come from? The idea is Q.

In historical Jesus discussions, which are always rooted in some form of skepticism about proving whether this stuff comes from Jesus or not, in historical Jesus discussions, your two major sources inevitably are the stuff that comes out of Mark and the stuff that comes out of Q. Those are the two major places where you're often landing to look for stuff that even skeptical scholars will acknowledge in many cases will come from Jesus.

Mikel Del Rosario: How do skeptical scholars who don't hold that the Bible is actually the word of God and that they can trust everything that's written in there, how do they try to figure out what Jesus actually said about himself if they can't trust the sources just by looking at them?

Dr. Darrell Bock: Well, most historical Jesus study is rooted in the principle that we actually use in our journalism today, which is corroboration. Is there some way we can corroborate, or get additional source, or multiple witnesses attesting to the fact that this took place? So it used to be in journalism, this isn't true anymore, but it used to be that newspapers didn't print a story unless they had two fairly independent witnesses testifying to the fact that something happened. Then they felt more confident about it, and actually one of the criteria, what are called criterion of authenticity, one of the criterion is what's called multiple attestation. The more source levels you have testifying to something, a theme, a saying, or something like that, the more likely it goes back to Jesus on the premise that the more widely spread this is across the tradition, the more likely it is to have roots. And so that's one.
There are other criterion that are also used in dealing with this, but it's basically a principle of corroboration they're looking for and so when you make these kinds of arguments and sometimes you have to be aware of these kinds of discussions with certain people because if you come along and say, "Well, it's just revelation. It's so." They'll go, "So I don't believe in revelation and I don't believe it's so, so what reasons do you have for believing that?" You've got to think through the other ways to say this.

So you're always often in an historical Jesus discussion in a high skeptical mode. When Justin's debating Bart Ehrman, he's in a high skeptical mode and you're wrestling with those kinds of questions.

_Mikel Del Rosario_ So there are ways to talk about this with your skeptical neighbors, coworkers, your skeptical relatives who don't hold that the Bible is the word of God, but you can say, "Look, here are different ways that we can figure out what happened in the past," and they can come to the conclusion that Jesus did claim to be God, not just by taking it on "faith" but that they could actually look at the historical evidence and be confronted with the claims that Jesus –

_Dr. Darrell Bock_ And it would be a kind of rationale you'd use with anybody in any kind of setting whatsoever, and so it's designed to give them pause, have them think about, "Oh, that's another way to think about this," that kind of thing, and boom. You're into a conversation. In some cases, people will be drawn to this kind of argumentation. Now there's a lot of discussion about why do people doubt and are they really just strictly for intellectual reasons or is there other stuff going on? A lot of the time, there can be other stuff going on that's impacting the way they argue rationally.

But what you're doing is you're taking away that support, that buttress that says, "Well, I object and I object strictly on rational grounds. You don't have to talk about whether I am personally because I've got these rational objections that you have to deal with first." And that oftentimes is a good way into these conversations because unless someone's really into this stuff, in most cases, they aren't aware of what these conversations are.
And this was my approach with Bart Ehrman. I basically said, "Okay, let's assume your criteria. Let's assume what you accept." I chose sayings of Jesus. All of them he accepted except for the climactic statement of Jesus in the trial scene. That was the only one and I was surprised he didn't accept his Q saying. I found that out during the debate. Of course he accepted that. Most critical scholars accept that. But I said, "Hey, let's look at the New Testament documents. Let's not assume they're inspired. Let's not assume they're inherent and let's just look at them as historical documents trying to find out what did Jesus say, and I think even if we do it that way, we still see Jesus claiming to be God." That's one of the reasons I love studying historical Jesus in this method.

One of the things that happens in this particular conversation is you get into a debate about what actually represents a claim to be divine, and so you sit there and some people say, "Well, Jesus didn't go around saying, 'I am the son of God.'" To which my response is, "Well, if I walked up to you and said, 'I am the son of God,' what would you think about me? Okay, you'd probably look for people in white coats and that kind of thing and say, 'Where can we take him tomorrow so he can rest and recover.'"

The claim is so vast, if I can say it that way, that it's not something you walk into, and so the way I think you see the gospels and Jesus handling this is he's doing it very carefully. He's doing it very carefully for a couple of reasons. One is that there's certain expectations that come with the territory as well. The Messiah in the Second Temple Jewish period, which is the period of the New Testament, is expected to be this strong, victorious figure. There's no suffering with this Messiah in the expectation. I tell people it's like Arnold Schwarzenegger on steroids except he's not saying, "I'll be back." He's doing it all this one time.

So in the midst of that then, he's got to be careful, because if he were to just came out and say, "I'm the messiah," people would have the wrong impression about what it is that he's claiming, so this also impacts why he's careful about what he says and rather chooses to do it by what he does.
And Justin's right. When we come to the last week and he enters into Jerusalem on the back of that donkey and he begins to be very explicit about who he is, he's actually intending to force the hand of the Jewish leadership either to accept him or to reject him, and so that leads to the sequence of events in that last week and ultimately to Jesus' crucifixion because he's becoming more open about how he's going about it.

But the problem becomes if you think the only way that counts for Jesus saying, "I'm divine," is to say, "I am the son of God," you're not gonna have much to work with. But if you step back and you look at what are these implicit claims actually saying, and another thing that's going on with the implicit claims is you might get an example or two of someone doing unusual things. Moses and the plagues messes with the creation. He does, but it's the cumulative argument of –

*Dr. Justin Bass*  
Yeah, the cumulative case.

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  
– it's in this area, this area, this area, this area. Who can do all of that? That's part of the way the argument works.

*Dr. Justin Bass*  
And that's also why I made sure the title of our debate was, "Did the historical Jesus claim to be divine?" and not claim to be God. I wanted to be more accurate because I feel like as I said many times in the debate, Jesus did not go around saying, "I'm God," even in the Gospel of John. Even in the Gospel of John, he never says, "I am the God," or "I am God." And I think the reason for that is he came to reveal the father and he did not want to confuse people in saying he was the father. And so he did claim to be God and the way he did that was by claiming to be, using the Jewish text of the Old Testament, the Lord at God's right hand and the son of man, from Daniel 7.

*Mikel Del Rosario*  
So the implied claim then seems to be if I have this level of authority, which is what he's saying, "I have authority over sickness, over demons, over the sacred calendar, over all these things," in a monotheistic culture, he's not saying, "Hey, I'm another god alongside Adonai who created heaven and earth," right?

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  
Yeah, it can't be that, yeah.
Mikel Del Rosario: So he's making this claim and they're having to put things together.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Exactly, and so his difficulty here is you've got a monotheistic belief but he's introducing the idea that there is personage in God. He doesn't use that terminology, but he says, "My status and my function equates to the types of things that God does but there is only one God." And you've got the idea of incarnation working here, that God is expressing himself through a human person. The word becomes flesh, if you want to think of it that way, so how do you do this and how do you get people who think there's only one God to begin to think about the differentiation? So he's gone about this I think very, very carefully in terms of how he's doing what he's doing.

Dr. Justin Bass: Yeah. There's no doubt Jesus was a strict monotheist. "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only." And yet he accepts worship, so it's those kind of things, those implicit things that show that he did claim to be divine and see himself as divine.

Dr. Darrell Bock: So they really do add up in terms of the scope of what it is. It's kind of an alpha to omega or an A to Z set of things that he's doing, many of which God alone does and so as a result, you begin to say, "Okay, who is this guy?" For example, when Jesus calms the creation, the disciples' reaction at the end is, "Who's able to command the winds and the waves?" and they obey him. That's the pronouncement that comes at the end of that miracle. That's exactly the right question to be asking.

And a good Jew would say, "Well, there's only one person who's able to control the creation. That's the creator." And so you get the introduction of this creator creature divide in which Jesus keeps functioning on the creator side of that divide and that begins to raise the question, all right, who is he claiming to be?

Mikel Del Rosario: So there is a unity with God and there is a distinction as well.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Exactly right, and he's trying to preserve both of those simultaneously so he's not understood as a second god but he's appreciated as divine on the other hand.
And you see that in Paul. He's clearly distinguishing. Even though he's saying Jesus is God, he's distinguishing from the father. You see it in the gospels. You see it in John. You see it all throughout the New Testament, that clear distinction and yet strict monotheism as well.

And yet there also is this subordination you also see because the son does what the father asks him to do, and so Jesus is always responding to the father in the context of this relationship. He is the sent one who is responding to what the father says, that kind of thing. So all these things are working together as we get to the distinction and the unity side by side, including how that distinction actually works.

So it seems that the argument that you're making, Justin, is from the very beginning when we started talking is that Paul really, really early on has heard people talking about who Jesus is, calling him divine, raising him to this super elevated status. Where did that come from, right? Where did that come from? That didn't just come out of nowhere. And then we see him making implicit claims, doing things, doing God things, and people just having to put that together like if this guy has authority over demons, and sickness, and the forces of nature, what's going on here? In a monotheistic culture trying to figure out who is Jesus and they're coming to this slowly by slowly.

Well, Justin, during the debate that you had with Bart Ehrman, you said that Jesus' favorite way of talking about himself is probably using the term son of man, and the term son of man is kind of controversial in terms of what does it mean? Does it always mean the same thing? Can you kind of explain what son of man would mean to a Jewish audience living in Jesus' time?

Yeah. This phrase is pretty much agreed upon, one of the few things most scholars agree on is that this originates from this figure, this very mysterious figure in Daniel 7. Daniel, the prophet, has this night vision and he sees this humanlike figure and he calls him one like a son of man who's flying with the cloud, something only Yahweh does, something only the God of Israel does, and he appears before the God of Israel. He appears before the ancient of days, and he's worshipped and he's given a kingdom, and so a very mysterious figure.
Later on, about centuries after Daniel was written, we have another Jewish document called 1 Enoch that mentioned the son of man figure and he's, again, similar to Daniel. He's seated on God's throne. He's worshipped. He's preexistent. He's a divine figure. In fact, Bart Ehrman even said in his book that he's probably the son of man figure in 1 Enoch because the most exalted figure we have not being God almighty himself. So very exalted, divine figure in the eyes of the Jews at this time.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**

And 1 Enoch is an interesting book. It comes long after the time of Daniel, where actually probably in the first century, in the transition from First Century BC to First Century AD. I actually edited a book with James Charlesworth of Princeton dealing with the date of this document. It actually may well have originated out of Galilee, so we're in the very region where Jesus was, possibly. That's been suggested. And so the point here is that this is a title that's kind of in the air at the time and it's a very exalted figure.

The other passage where this comes up is 4 Ezra 13. It's also a son of man figure, but what makes this difficult is Jesus doesn't make the connection to Daniel until pretty late in his ministry, and so son of man by itself is just an idiom. It's an Aramaic and Semitic idiom that can refer to someone. It's debated whether it's an indirect way of referring to oneself.

I like to use the example of Maggie Thatcher. The illustration is getting older and older so it doesn't work as effectively as it used to, but when Maggie Thatcher was prime minister of England, when she would get asked a question, are you going to change economic policy, she would say, "The lady is not for turning." So she's referring to herself in this indirect way and that's what Jesus is doing early on in his ministry, the son of man does this, the son of man does that, the son of man does this, but there's no passage connection to it yet. And so what a lot of people will say is, "Yeah, he's using it idiomatically but the connection that comes to Daniel is something that the church did and that's being put into the mouth of Jesus."
So even though you've got this very exclusive use of the title that's showing up over, and over, and over again only on the lips of Jesus, it's still indirect, much like the implicit claims that we were talking about earlier, and so it's there. In a few places, you almost read it and you think “The Son of Man.” Is he talking about someone else or is he talking about himself? And so some people get drawn to that and say the original title is actually talking about some apocalyptic figure, not Jesus himself, but the problem with that is that Jesus uses it too often himself, to draw attention to himself, to think did he change his mind, talking about someone else. Now, "Oh, no, no, no. That's wrong. Now it's about me. It's all about me." No, that's not probably what happened.

So this is Jesus' favorite way to refer to himself and the coming on the clouds and every passage except the Daniel 7 passage is dealing with a transcendent figure. So it's this unique combination between humanity – that's what son of man is. If I said son of Carl, he'd be Carl's son. If I said son of Deborah, I'd say that's Deborah's son. So son of man is the son of a human being. It's just another human being. It's this human figure who also has these divine characteristics associated with him. I think that's what made it attractive to Jesus.

**Dr. Justin Bass**

And to add on that, I don't know where you fall on that. There's a little bit of debate as far as it's no doubt it was an idiomatic phrase without the article, but the fascinating thing about the Greek phrase that's used every time on Jesus' lips in the gospels is it's the son of man, the son of man. And so the question is is that Jesus kind of pointing out meaning that son of man from Daniel. He's saying the son of man because the Greek phrase is not used anywhere else in ancient Greek literature the way it says the son of man in the gospels and the way Jesus refers to himself.

So it still would have been a cipher. It still would have been strange. People would have been like, "The son of man. What's he saying? The son of man from Daniel or this?" But it's an interesting thing that this phrase is so unique on the lips of Jesus.
Dr. Darrell Bock  
And so consistently marked off with the article to identify that I've got something specific in mind. That's actually what the article is doing is I've got something very specific in mind here when I'm using this phrase but it's building off this idiom on the one hand and it's moving towards an identification on the other. As we noted earlier, the time when you get these connections to the Daniel passage as we're moving into the last week of Jesus' life, so the Olivet Discourse, he uses it in relationship to Daniel, and then at the Jewish examination of Jesus when he's replying to the high priest. He's using it there. Those are the two places where it appears directly connected to Daniel. There are a few other places where it comes close to alluding to stuff that's going on in Daniel, but those two places are absolutely you can't deny that Daniel's in play in those two texts.

Mikel Del Rosario  
And he seems to link this term to authority sometimes as well, doesn't he, or even early on in his ministry in Mark 2, for example, when he healed the paralytic, he uses the term son of man and then he said, "Your sins are forgiven." So at a minimum, wouldn't it be something like at least saying this person has the authority to forgive sins?

Dr. Darrell Bock  
Yeah, the Mark 2 passage is important because what Jesus is doing is he's showing something that you can't see by something that you can see. So he's got a paralytic in front of him who's asked to be healed. When the paralytic drops in his presence, he doesn't say, "Be healed." He says, "Your sins are forgiven." Now I guaranty you when the paralytic first hear that, he was pretty disappointed. "That isn't why I dropped into this party."

Dr. Justin Bass  
Forget the sins. I want to walk.

Dr. Darrell Bock  
Exactly right. But then he turns around and he says, "In order that you might know that the son of man has authority on Earth to forgive sins," that's something you can't see, "I say to you, 'Get up and walk.'" He links it to something you can see and that requires the power of God in order to happen. And so that's how he links it, so that's actually how the implicit claims work. Jesus is doing something. If he's a sinner, if he's a deceiver, then how are these things happening? But if they require the power of God, and he's doing them, and he's making claims of authority while he's doing them, that underlies the implicit claim. Well, the son of man is the way he does this.
Another one that has the note of authority is, "The son of man is lord of the Sabbath." Okay. Who has authority not just over the divine calendar but literally one of the distinctives of Judaism, the Sabbath was a unique day in the worship of the Jewish faith. It marked out a Jew as distinct. It was part of the sacred calendar. It was commanded in the Pentateuch. It would seem to be a reflection of the seven days of creation. I mean the roots of this are deep and, "I have authority over that."

So that's how an implicit claim works and the implicit claim with the son of man is coming together to really give it this stamp of authority that you're connecting very correctly to the title.

Dr. Justin Bass And another thing on the son of man forgives sins, we have the resident expert on this, but they say blasphemy there, which is an important connection between Mark 2 and Mark 14, which we'll talk about later, but in the climactic statement of Jesus claiming to be the son of man before the high priest, they also declared blasphemy, so you have that connection between Mark 2, almost a foreshadowing of what's going to happen in Mark 14.

r. Darrell Bock Yeah. One of the great ironies of that text is we tend to give the Pharisees and the leaders in the gospels a hard time, but every now and then in the movement of the narrative, they actually are giving us major clues for what's going on.

Dr. Justin Bass They understood it.

Dr. Darrell Bock They get what Jesus is doing in a way that many people don't. Now they don't believe it. They reject it but they get the point –

Dr. Justin Bass They get what he's saying.

Dr. Darrell Bock – of what's being said and the text indicates that. They're saying to themselves in the Mark 2 text, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" In the gospels, whenever anyone's thinking something privately in front of Jesus, it's not good for the person doing the thinking. The next thing that happens in the passage is there's some type of response, or corrective, or explanation that is dealing with what the person is thinking, and that's exactly where Jesus goes through the example of what's easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or "Rise up and walk," and then, "In order that you might know that the son of man has the authority to forgive sins, I say to you get up and walk."
And when he gets up and walks, his walk talks, and what his walk is saying is the son of man has authority on Earth to forgive sins. And the Pharisees have already put the theological stamp on that. That's something only God does.

*Dr. Justin Bass*  
And it's clearly a claim by Jesus to be the son of man.

*Mikel Del Rosario*  
Right, and that was an excellent observation about Mark 2 and 14, because here you have early on he's using the term son of man. He's called a blasphemer, and then God vindicates his claim by healing this guy. Why would God vindicate the claim of a sinner or a blasphemer? But then towards the end of his life, we get the Jewish examination, which I can never get away with calling it a trial in front of you.

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  
That's right. It's a grand jury investigation because the Jewish authorities do not have the authority to put Jesus to death. They're actually gathering the evidence that they can take to Pilate and it has to work. This is what some people don't get about this scene. The worst thing that could have happened would have been for the Jewish leadership to take Jesus to Pilate, for Pilate to examine Jesus and to say, "He's not guilty. I'm releasing him." Because then he would have been put in the position of, "We went before the Roman magistrates and they said we're not doing anything in violation of the law."

So they have to get this right and so this examination is the gathering of evidence and the great irony of this scene is the person whose testimony is responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus is Jesus himself. He's the one who issues the utterance and they say, "We've got what we need. We can go to Pilate now." And it's because he responds by saying in effect when he's asked if you're the Christ, "I am and you will see the son of man riding on the clouds and seated at the right hand of power," is the way Mark puts it.
It's a roundabout way to refer to God out of respect because there's something respectful going on. He's been put under an oath when the question is asked and so he responds in kind, being, "Are you the son of the blessed one?" is the way the question is asked, showing respect for God by not saying son of God, and Jesus' responds by saying, "I'll be seated at the right hand of the power doing the same thing back." So they keep the solemn note of the exchange even as the exchange is going back and forth, but the claim is, "You can do whatever you want to me, but one day, I will be your judge and I will be seated at the right hand of the father," and they didn't like that answer.

Dr. Justin Bass: Things will be switched.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Things will be switched, and the assumption is that he's actually predicting his vindication by God 'cause God's going to take him to the right hand. That's an illusion to the resurrection. So when the tomb goes empty, Jesus is saying, "You'll be able to contact me at www.RightHandofGod.com, and God will have vindicated me and he will have cast his vote in this dispute."

Dr. Justin Bass: And that's important. He could have just said, "I am." He didn't have to say all the other stuff. He said, "I am," but he didn't have to say, "and you will see the son of man." He added that and that just happens to be what people have called the Christological climax of the Synoptics. It's on par I think with, "Before Abraham was, I am."

Dr. Darrell Bock: And I actually think that Caiaphas, when he says, "Are you the son of the blessed one?" is simply asking, "Are you the Christ?" It's a regal title the way Caiaphas is using it. Caiaphas doesn't have a Trinitarian concept in –

Dr. Justin Bass: I don't think it would have been blasphemy if he would have just said –
It wouldn't have been blasphemy if he just said, "I am," and answered positively, but he drives the point home and it comes against the backdrop in Judaism of who gets to sit with God in heaven on his throne without some intermediary thing happening? God's the one who does this. He's gonna let me sit on his throne. Does that happen in Judaism? The interesting answer to that question is yes, it actually is debated in Judaism of the time, but not for Sadducees. Sadducees don't believe in those kinds of traditions but they do exist.

And even so, these are luminaries who certainly not a regular guy standing in front of you, who says, "Hi. I'm gonna sit at God's right hand." No way.

Yeah, this Jewish carpenter.

No, the two examples that we have coming out of Judaism where this is contemplated is a text called the Exagogue of Ezekiel. I'm sure you had your devotions in this text. It's a pseudo biographical text from a couple of centuries B.C. in which Moses has a dream in which God invites him to sit on the thrones, plural, of heaven. Now the interesting thing about that is there's only one text where throne is plural in the Old Testament.

Daniel 7:9, so it's an allusion to Daniel 7, and so Jethro interprets this experience and he basically says, "When you're exercising the power of the plagues, it's as good as you're sitting on the throne of God." So it's not an exaltation text in the full sense we're thinking about it in Christian terms, and you're right, it's luminary, Moses, one of the big boys in the Old Testament.

The second text is this first set of 1 Enoch text that we talked about earlier, 37-71. They're called the Similitudes or the Parables of Enoch, and they have this son of man figure exalted, sit at the right hand, are pursuing the judgment. This is a transcendent figure who's crashing the earthly party and partaking in the judgment. That's the figure that refers to there. So some group, if I can say it, Enochians, contemplate the possibility of there being a second figure in heaven.
Another set of texts has Moses put there rhetorically but it's not really an exalted claim in one sense. It's that God is working through him. A third text involves Akiba, and Akiba says that David is gonna get to sit at the right hand, another luminary. Now look who we have here. We've got Enoch taken up by God. We've got Moses, who in some Jewish traditions also was taken up by God, by the way, and we've got David, the king. And the sages respond to him, this is a negative vote in response, "How long will you profane the Shekina?" They're actually accusing him of blasphemy and they're warning him not to say this.

The fourth text that reflects this debate is a text in 3 Enoch. It's another pseudo biographical text. Enoch's being given a tour of heaven and in the midst of the tour, Metatron is leading the tour. That's not a cartoon character.

*Mikel Del Rosario*  Not a robot.

*Dr. Darrell Bock*  Metatron is leading the tour and he refers to himself in the midst of it as the lesser Yahweh himself, a little Yahweh, so you've got Whopper and Whopper Junior, all right? So in the midst of this, God calls Metatron in for a talk and when I was a kid, my dad used to call me in for talks and I found out they weren't conversations. And so he calls him in for a talk and he punishes Metatron for even suggesting that he could have this position next to God. So what you are dealing with, there are two texts that contemplate this possibility and actually three evidences of it, and then two texts that push back and say no way.

Now the thing to remember about the Jewish council that's built around Jesus is there full of Sadducees. Sadducees do not like additions to the sacred tradition. In fact, they tended to concentrate on the Pentateuch, so they aren't going to like these expanded traditions about who these figures are at all. They're going to reject it. So you've got this inner debate within Judaism that's contemplating the possibility there could be a big Number 2, if I can say it that way, but the officials who are in control of this trial, they're not going there.

*Mikel Del Rosario*  So here Jesus is using Son of Man and he's saying basically, one, "People will worship me, my kingdom will be unstoppable, and I will be your judges," to the representatives of God on Earth.
Dr. Darrell Bock  Yeah, what he's saying is, "I'm seated on the throne. I'm riding on the clouds. I'm doing God stuff. God is vindicating me and giving me this position with him. This is not something I'm claiming for myself. This is something God is gonna do to show who I am."

And in the midst of that, and again, they get it, because when he gives the answer, they tear their clothes. That's a Jewish symbol of having heard a blasphemy and what more need do we have of evidence? The next thing they do is they go to Pilate.

Dr. Justin Bass  There you go. And it's important to point out that this is not just a discussion between fundamentalists, or Bible thumpers, or something saying Jesus said this. This is something that Bart Ehrman is more on the fringe of rejecting that Jesus said all this. Even David Hay in the definitive work on how Psalm 110 was used, Glory at your Right Hand is the name of the book, and Psalm 110 in early Christianity, he says the historical Jesus referred to himself as that second Lord and the Adonai of Psalm 110, and Raymond Brown, Bart Ehrman even says, is the greatest New Testament scholar of the second half of the 20th Century, Raymond Brown said that scene in Mark 14 is historical. Jesus did make that claim for himself and that's probably what led – there was a cumulative case behind but he did make that claim to be the son of man and God's right hand.

Dr. Darrell Bock  There's a huge discussion around this event that says how in the world would the early church even know what Jesus said here? There were no disciples around. Now again, remember, you're in a skeptical mode, so your appeal can't be, well, Jesus was there. He was resurrected. He let the disciples know what happened. You can't go there. So where else are you gonna go for witnesses?

Well, you've got people like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, people that were associated with this council. You would have had the public debate about what the Jewish position was on Jesus, and why he went to the cross, and how it happened. You actually have a 30-year family feud going on in Jerusalem between the house of Caiaphas and Annas. Annas the Second is responsible for James, the brother of the Lord's death, in the 60s, so that's the Jewish side of the family. And then of course you've got Jesus and James running the church in Jerusalem. That would have been a very public debate in a very small Jerusalem, probably about 75,000 people normal population, et cetera.
So this stuff would have been known, what the official Jewish position would have been, and how they reacted to Jesus, and why they sent him on to Pilate. When they take him on to Pilate, they translate the charge into political terms. They don't use religious terms. If they had gone to Pilate and said, "Oh, Jesus committed blasphemy against our religion," Pilate would have gone [yawns] yawned and said, "I don't care."

**Dr. Justin Bass**  Yeah, "I don't care. Get out of here."

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  But what he did is they went and they said, "You're claiming to be a king that Rome didn't appoint."

**Dr. Justin Bass**  He cares about that.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  And he cares about that, but that's his job. His job is to protect –

**Dr. Justin Bass**  Keep peace.

**Dr. Darrell Bock**  – Cesar's interest in Judea, and so Rome believed in law and order. You believe our law or we'll put you in order, and so in the midst of that, they lay it before him and say, "This is your responsibility to take care of this." And even though Pilate's of two minds in taking care of it, he eventually dances with the daughter that he brought to the party. He had appointed Caiaphas as his high priest every year that he was prefect and so he decided to trust him rather than the instincts that he was having about this isn't quite something that's worthy of guilt. All that is implicit divine claim and now the divine claim has become very explicit because now we're seated with God in heaven in a context in which we've got monotheism.

**Dr. Justin Bass**  If I could say a word on the eyewitness as well, just on Joseph, Mark, when he first brings up Joseph Arimathea, he doesn't mention Nicodemus. The other gospels do, but he brings up Joseph Arimathea and he says he's a member of the council. Richard Bauckham, I brought it up in the debate, and his great book, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses, he has a detailed argument of why Joseph Arimathea would have been an eyewitness there and would have been probably the source ultimately of what went down when Jesus stood before Caiaphas. I think we have very solid reasons that we have the eyewitness testimony in our gospels.
Dr. Darrell Bock: There's one thing we haven't brought up that people listening probably, "Why haven't you brought this up?" You notice we haven't done any citation from the Gospel of John, and people go, "Why don't you do that?" It's because in an historical Jesus discussion, John is seen as being so explicit that the credibility of what he says is doubted, so we're dealing with sources that skeptics will recognize, and will play with, and will accept, but they tend to be very slow about anything that'd direct out of the Gospel of John. So we're working with evidence that a skeptic accepts as a way of thinking about did Jesus make divine claims about himself.

Dr. Justin Bass: And I feel like Jesus did the same thing with the Sadducees, that we're following Jesus' lead. What did he do when he quoted to demonstrate the resurrection to the Sadducees? He didn't quote from Isaiah. He didn't quote from Daniel because they didn't believe in that. He quoted from the Pentateuch, which is what they believed. So I think we're following Jesus' lead on that.

Mikel Del Rosario: Well, guys, we have covered a lot, a lot of material over the last few minutes together, but real quick, why does any of this matter? If someone were just to ask you for a one sentence response, you debated this topic, why does it matter if Jesus claimed to be God?

Dr. Justin Bass: One of the first books I read when I came to Christ was C.S. Lewis' Mere Christianity, and I really loved the challenge, the power of the trilemma that Jesus, if he claimed to be God, if he claimed to be divine, he was either lying, he was crazy, he was on the level of a poached egg, or he was telling the truth. And so I think putting that before people, if we can get that back into the accepted, critical scholarship of today, I think that's a powerful place for people to be. 'Cause I think for skeptics, even skeptics like Bart Ehrman, as I read what he said, I think he feels the weight of that question of whether or not Jesus claimed to be God, and if he did claim to be God, I think he feels the weight of, man, he probably wasn't crazy. He probably wasn't lying, so that only leaves one other option.

Dr. Darrell Bock: Yeah, the scripture actually only leaves us two choices. He's from above or he's from below. C.S. Lewis is a little too complicated. He's either above or from below, and if he's from above, then we've gotta deal with him. We are creatures. He's the creator. We've gotta respond to what it is that he asks of us. Fortunately, what he asks of us is pretty gracious, "Let me take your place. Let me pay your penalty." If we'll do that, then we can appreciate why Jesus claimed that he was divine.
Well, thank you, Darrell. Thank you, Justin, for being with us. And thank you for joining us on the The Table today where we discuss issues of God and culture.