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with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

## **Did Jesus Really Claim to Be God?**

(January 13, 2020)

### **Frank:**

Who did Jesus of Nazareth think he was? What was his self-identity? You know, sometimes Muslim apologists will say, find a place in the New Testament where Jesus says, I am God, worship me. You won't find it. He doesn't say, I am God, worship me. What, if you're a Christian, do you say about that? Why do we think Jesus is God? Why do we think he said he was God? It doesn't seem like he came out so overtly and said it in such plain languages. I am, God worship me. Why not? He used some of these cryptic sayings like Son of Man. What does that mean? Son of Man. Son of God. Prince of Peace.

What do these phrases mean? Particularly Son of Man. That was his favorite phrase, self-referential phrase for himself, or title for himself. What do we make of that? Was Jesus really God in the flesh? God incarnate? How can we make a case for that? Well to do so, I have my friend, Ryan Crews, with me. Now Ryan is a fine young gentleman, who just a couple of years ago graduated from Baylor University in Waco, Texas. And he put together one of the best ever campus events that we have had at any campus. He had, I don't know, one room and four overflow rooms. We had well over 700 people showing up back there. I think that...Ryan, when was that? Was that January of '18?

### **Ryan:**

January of '18.

### **Frank:**

Yeah, January of 2018. That was your senior year, so you've only been out of college a couple years now. And that was a great event that you sponsored there. We had a lot of people and a lot of questions. But let's go back. Despite your age, only 24 years old, you have quite a history in apologetics already. How did you actually get into apologetics?

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**Ryan:**

Yeah. So, Frank, thanks for having me on the show today.

**Frank:**

Absolutely.

**Ryan:**

It's fun because it's kind of like everything has come full circle, because I first got into apologetics by reading, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, by none other than yourself and Dr. Geisler.

**Frank:**

And it was your dad who gave you the book.

**Ryan:**

It was. Yeah, so and this is a great reason why parents should take apologetics seriously and make sure to instruct your kids, because in my life, it's been instrumental. My dad got me started in this a long time ago. He gave me my first copy of your book. And that was when I was in the eighth grade. And I read it. I loved it. Just totally ate the material up and made myself somewhat of a social outcast at my public school, I think, afterwards because I was too excited about it. I wanted to talk with everybody about it but didn't quite have the tact and diplomacy part of it down just yet.

But it was huge for me, because for the rest of my life, you know, up until now, for the remainder of my time as a troubled middle schooler, and then all throughout high school, I was reading every apologetics book that I could, and I just loved it. And when I went to college, a friend of mine was on the board for Ratio Christi, which is another collegiate apologetics ministry. And so, when I went to Baylor, my goal was to start a chapter of Ratio Christi there. Now there is one there now. It's kind of a long story of why it took so long, but that's really what started my days in college ministry. And so, my entire time at Baylor, I worked in a ministry role there in apologetics. And now that I'm out, trying to keep it going.

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**Frank:**

Well, you started a club there at Baylor because they wouldn't approve the Ratio Christi club. What did you call that club and how did you get it started?

**Ryan:**

Yes, for sure. So, we did. We struggled with that. And there were some interesting political reasons that they were involved, but we call the group Oso Logos, and that's still what it's called today. Now it is formerly affiliated with Ratio Christi, but it wasn't at the time. But yeah, honestly, that group has been a huge blessing in my life. It was a great opportunity to get my first start into apologetics, and into instruction and teaching, but also just really character building, growing a group, learning how to organize around a common cause. And they're still going today and doing great things.

**Frank:**

Now since then, you have spoken several times at other universities on apologetics matters. You've spoken at UT Dallas several times. In fact, one of the presentations you've given on the college campus is the topic we're going to talk about today, Who Did Jesus Think He Was? But before we get there, I know there are young people listening. I know there are parents listening. You went to Baylor University. Now Baylor, at least ostensibly, is a Christian university. It has a Christian founding, Christian heritage. The faculty need to have certain beliefs at least, technically they do. We don't always know if they do. But, what did you find in terms of, I guess, beliefs and, not only the faculty, but of the students? Would you consider the students conservative evangelical Christians, and the faculty as well, or not?

**Ryan:**

Well, it depends. So, and that's the answer for everything, I feel like. One of the biggest things that I combatted at Baylor, in terms of our ministry, was apathy. Because at Baylor everything is ostensibly Christian, but that doesn't mean that there's not non-Christians on campus. There certainly are. But the majority of the people that you run into, and I shouldn't say the majority of the people, but of those that we engage with a lot, and had the most difficulty with, it was usually people who just didn't care. And sometimes this is because, you know, at that point in their life as young people, they just didn't see the need to, you know, think really critically about the intellectual side of the faith. Because you know, we're more focused on getting a job,

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and making money, and doing those kinds of things, that you're, you know, in college for to begin with. Or at least you think you are. So, that was part of it.

But another part that you can't help but ignore, or you can't ignore, is that at every university, and Baylor is no exception, any religion classes you take tend to downplay the faith element and the inspiration of Scripture. And so, when you're in a Christian scripture class, and you know, you're told that the Gospels probably were not written by the apostles. You know, Mark is not Peter's testimony. Matthew didn't write Matthew. You know, Luke, wasn't an apostle. So, who's his sources? John was probably written in the second century. You know, these are the kinds of things that you hear. And if you hear that your view of Scripture tends to go down a little bit. I know people who actually were very ardent evangelicals prior to their Christian scriptures class, and after their Christian scriptures class, they weren't. Some of them wouldn't consider themselves Christians anymore. And others just, you know, they couldn't figure out the solution to that problem, and so they just didn't try.

**Frank:**

You know, I know, and I've asked Gary Habermas this, because he's a real expert on it. I've asked Gary questions such as, I know that many of the New Testament documents are considered by the scholars of the world to have been written late, after 70 AD, and here you are saying that the gospel of John's written in the second century. And I asked Gary, what evidence do these scholars have that they're written late? Because I think there's great evidence, they're written prior to 70. Early. And Gary has said, they don't. They just assume it did. Do you remember getting evidence from these people to say that the New Testament documents are written after 70?

**Ryan:**

No, it's usually...

**Frank:**

...just assumed.

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**Ryan:**

Yeah, it's usually assumed. I mean, one of the main assumptions that you have, especially with the synoptics, is that, you know, prophetic capabilities are impossible. And so, you know, Jesus seeming to predict the destruction the temple, couldn't, you know, he couldn't do that. There's no way he could have known that it was going to be destroyed by the Romans.

**Frank:**

So, it's an anti-supernatural bias right off the bat.

**Ryan:**

Right. So, they assume it's got to be after 70 because of, you know, he couldn't have ever predicted the temple. And John is assumed to be so late because of his high Christology.

**Frank:**

Right.

**Ryan:**

And the assumption is, Jesus didn't think he was God, which is what we are gonna be talking about today. And so, if Jesus didn't think he was God, and you have this gospel that so clearly, you know, paints a portrait of him as divine, it must have been later, because there's no way that, you know, you could have early testimony with such a high Christology.

**Frank:**

Right. Now you ran into this. You did not take any classes at Baylor that you would consider to be taught by evangelical Christians, then, who gave a fair view of the evidence.

**Ryan:**

In my case I didn't. But that is both a commentary on...it's as much commentary on me as it is the university. I was short-sighted and didn't continue in the religion department at Baylor. And I was mostly focused in the business school. There are some good evangelicals in that department. But then there's some that are not. And so, at Baylor, you've got a little bit of a mix. But that's actually much more favorable than you have at most universities. Most places

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you still have people firmly rooted in the German liberal criticism of the late 19th and early 20th century.

**Frank:**

Yeah, they haven't gotten up to the times.

**Ryan:**

Right.

**Frank:**

And so, friends, if you have this kind of skepticism at a so-called Christian school, what must you have at the secular schools? Well, who did Jesus think he was? Can we really show that he did consider himself to be God? That's what we're going to be talking about. I'm talking about it with my friend Ryan Crews. C.R.E.W.S. Not like Tom Cruise. We're back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, can you help me with something? Can you help me get this podcast before more people? Not only tell your friends about it but go up to iTunes and put a five-star review on the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast. If you do that, it will help us move the podcast up the charts, so more people will hear it. Thank you so much for partnering with me on this.

Who did Jesus really think he was? You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, on the American Family Radio Network. Our website is [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org). That's crossexamined with a D on the end of it .org. If you haven't downloaded the CrossExamined app, why not? It's free. Two words in the App Store...Cross Examined. Download it. Over 200,000 people have downloaded it. They're using it. This podcast, this radio program is on there, as well as our TV show, which is on Wednesday nights at 9pm (ET) on DirecTV channel 378. It's also on Roku. Look for NRB TV, national religious broadcasters. We're going through the essentials of Christianity on TV right now. You might want to check out that series. And download the app. It's also got a quick answer section on there. There's plenty of resources on the app.

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And one of the questions we get a lot. My guest today is Ryan Crews. One of the questions we get a lot is, well, who did Jesus think he was? You're claiming he claimed to be God? Nowhere, at least it seems in the New Testament, does Jesus say, I am God, worship me. Now, my friend Ryan Crews has taught on this, at the university level, so I thought it would be good to have Ryan here to talk about this issue. Ryan, there are many ways, it seems, that Christians claim Jesus claimed to be God. One of them is this phrase that he used, or title he gave himself several times, called Son of man. What does that mean? Where does that come from?

**Ryan:**

Yeah, so that is a great question. And it's a funny one because, when I was growing up and reading the scriptures, I had no idea what Son of Man is.

**Frank:**

You know, it makes it seem like oh, is he claiming to be human here? And when he claims Son of God, he claims to be divine. Is that what it's about? Or...

**Ryan:**

It's not. But that is what a lot of people think. And that's kind of, it's funny, at one point when I was a kid, I almost thought that I had accidentally read something incorrectly. And I read, Son of Man, I was like, but that can't be right. He's God. Why would he be saying that he's the Son of Man? But then you go back, and you look and it's like, no, he is saying that over and over and over and over again. And so, there are many critics who will say, this is just Jesus' way of using an Aramaic idiom that means, I'm a human, you know, just like you. But there's definitely something more going on here. And you can tell by the way that Jesus uses the phrase that it's not merely meant to say, I am a human, just like you guys.

In Daniel chapter seven, there is a prophetic passage where Daniel said, I saw in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man. And he came to the Ancient of Days, whose God, by the way, as a quick side...and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed. And that's what Jesus is referring to. And you can tell from the way that he used this the phrase. I mean, when Jesus is in his examination before

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Caiaphas, the high priest. After he's been arrested, Caiaphas challenges him and asked him, he said, are you the Christ? Are you the son of the blessed? And the way that Jesus responds is, he says, I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

**Ryan:**

And there's that that reference to coming on the clouds. And you can tell that Jesus is harkening back to this Daniel seven prophecy. And coming in the clouds, I've heard Dr. Gary Habermas say this, and other New Testament scholars. In the ancient world, you don't come on the clouds unless you are divine. That's not just some flippant phrase that he's saying here. He is very, very deliberately harkening back to this Danielic vision in Daniel chapter seven. And also, worth mentioning there, is his statement that he'll be seated at the right hand of power. That comes from Psalm 110. And that's also a characteristic of the Divine. And you can tell that everybody in the room understood what Jesus was saying here, because Caiaphas tears his clothes at Jesus statement, and that's a sign of blasphemy. Right? And so, that's the reason why they wanted to kill Jesus. Because he had committed the highest form of blasphemy, in their mind, because he claimed he was God, in their strictly monotheistic society, when they did not believe that he was.

**Frank:**

So, what does this character in Daniel chapter seven do? This son of man character. He is ascending, did you say? He's ascending to God? How is it put?

**Ryan:**

Yeah, it says that he comes before he ancient of days.

**Frank:**

Comes before the ancient of days.

**Ryan:**

And to him is given dominion, glory, and power. And you know, prophecies are interesting. Especially to us moderns who aren't used to speaking that way. And you know, the thing is, when Daniel was writing this, there was no conception of the Trinity. Right? That theology has

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been filled in after the fact. And so, now we have this fully fleshed out idea of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

**Frank:**

We have it. Now, they did have a concept of a plurality of some kind of the Godhead, because there's two Yahwehs in several places in the Old Testament. But I agree, it wasn't formed in a doctrine the way it is today to us. So, it must have been a little bit cryptic here, but there's no doubt, in most theologians' minds who study this, that the character in Daniel seven is a divine being.

**Ryan:**

Right. And so, if you take that, right, you understand that this character, the Son of Man, is a divine being. And then you have Yahweh, who says that he is the only God, the one true God. Well, you have to combine those two, right? Because they are both coming from the same source. They have to work together. You understand that Jesus is claiming to be part of this Godhead.

**Frank:**

And Caiaphas knew that.

**Ryan:**

Caiaphas knew that too. Yeah. Now Caiaphas did not believe it, but he understood what Jesus was saying. His reaction is telling of that.

**Frank:**

So, Son of Man, he uses several times of himself. I think that's his favorite title for himself.

**Ryan:**

It is. Yeah.

**Frank:**

But here in America, we want things to be black and white. Straightforward. Why doesn't Jesus just come out and say, look, I am God, worship me. This is the Muslim claim, right? Now, by the

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way, if you read Greg Koukl's new book, you need to get the updated book called, Tactics. Greg deals with this by saying, when somebody says, find somewhere in the Bible that Jesus says, I am God, worship me. You don't have to go, well, I guess I have to find that, in order for Jesus to be God. You could ask a question back by saying something like, is that the only way Jesus could claim to be God? By using those words. Well, no. But the question does remain though, Ryan. We're talking to Ryan Crews, who is...actually, I haven't told that our listeners this. You're on the board of CrossExamined.org. Because we wanted somebody who is intelligent, has been on the college campus recently, knows apologetics. So, you're our youngest board member, for good reason. But okay, you know how you get older, Ryan, and you start to lose your train of...where was I going with that?

**Ryan:**

We were going with, why didn't Jesus come out and say I'm God?

**Frank:**

Yeah. That's what I wanted to say. What's your perspective on that? Because you hear people say, well, Jesus could have been clearer. He was clear to Caiaphas. And he was also clear in John eight, which we'll get to in a minute. But he could have been clearer, couldn't he? Why didn't he?

**Ryan:**

He absolutely could have been, but there's very good reasons for why he wasn't. There were very clear expectations in Jewish society about what the Messiah was supposed to be. What he was supposed to be like. What he was supposed to do. Second Temple Jews understood that the Messiah was going to be a military leader who would come in and be the king over the nation of Israel, and they were longing for him to free Israel from oppression. In this case, they were currently under the Romans, but in the centuries before that, they've been of the Greeks, and then the Persians, and the Babylonians. So, Israel has just gone from one overlord to another. And their expectation is that their Messiah, their deliverer, would be somebody who would come with power, and eliminate those people, and raise Israel back up. And that's not what Jesus came to do, yet, in that sense. That wasn't his mission in his first incarnation here on the earth. And so, if Jesus just came out and said, I am the Messiah. I am God. There's a very high likelihood that the expectation would have been okay, well, you need to get rid of Rome.

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But that's not what he came to do. And Jesus had a ministry to accomplish first. And so, he was much better served by keeping his identity much more obscure in the early years of his ministry. And it wasn't until his ministry had concluded, and he was ready to go to the cross, during what's often called his Passion Week, the week before the crucifixion, that he really comes out and starts being more clear about who he is.

**Frank:**

Yes. And of course, in John chapter eight, I think it's one of the clearest passages. Jesus claiming to be God, when he's talking to the Pharisees. Who, by the way, just prior to this passage, speaks to these Pharisees, who were the religious and political leaders of the day, and says, your father is the devil? Imagine saying that to somebody. Jesus was tough man.

**Ryan:**

Jesus meek and mild? No.

**Frank:**

Yeah, he is not always meek and mild. Anyway. He says, before Abraham was born, I am. And they said, you're not even 50 years old. You know, how could you know Abraham? Well, he said, before Abraham was born, I am. And then they picked up stones to stone him, because he's claiming to be Yahweh there. He's quoting from Exodus 3:14. The burning bush, when God appeared to Charlton Heston. You remember that. When God appeared to Moses and Moses says, who should I tell the Israelites you are? And God says, tell them I am sent you. The self-existent Eternal One. The being that will have no beginning. The being that will have no end. The being that just bes. The being that Aristotle conceived of as the unmoved mover. The uncaused cause of all things that exist. Jesus is claiming to be that being. That's why they picked up stones to stone him.

But you are, it seems to make you're correct, Ryan. And we talk about this in, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, that if he had claimed too early that he was God in that form. he wouldn't have completed his mission of atonement. In fact, they may not have...you don't know how it would have gone. It's a counterfactual right?

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**Ryan:**

Yeah, you don't know.

**Frank:**

They may not have killed him, or they may have killed him right away.

**Ryan:**

That's just it. And the other thing is, if he fails to be the deliverer that they're expecting. Because there were. There were many messianic pretenders, is what they're called. In some cases, they were actually killed because they couldn't demonstrate that they were who they said they were. And, you know, John eight is a good example. If Jesus comes out and says, I am, and they don't believe him, they're immediately picking up stones to kill them. And so, right there, you see, this is exactly why he can't go around saying, you know, I'm God right away. Because they're either going to try to put him on a military pedestal or they're going to try to kill them.

**Frank:**

Now, you've presented this on college campuses. What kind of response do you get when you present this self-identity of Jesus? Are students intrigued? Are they objecting? What are they doing?

**Ryan:**

They are. And I think it's because a lot of times people don't tend to talk about this. There's sort of an implicit assumption among Christians that, of course Jesus claimed to be God, because we go and sing songs about him every Sunday morning in church. You know, that's kind of the whole program. So, it's taken for granted among a lot of evangelicals that, of course Jesus claimed to be God. And so, it's really been more isolated to the academic community to investigate this question of the historical Jesus and who he actually thought that he was. Whether you claim to be God, whether you claim to be the Messiah. And so, you know, I didn't know the first time that I gave this this presentation. It's something that interests me a lot, but I wasn't sure how it would be received. But to my surprise, people find it very intriguing, because it's not something that a lot of people are talking about. At least not at the popular level.

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**Frank:**

I always ask audiences, and you can ask this of Jehovah's Witnesses, if they come to your door, because they don't think Jesus was God. You could simply ask them, if Jesus never claimed to be God, why did they kill him?

**Ryan:**

And that's a great question.

**Frank:**

I mean, you don't get killed for skipping around saying, love your neighbor, right? Love your neighbor. You must die! No, that doesn't get you killed. What gets you killed is claiming to be God, because that's blasphemy to the Jews, and its sedition to the Romans.

**Ryan:**

Exactly.

**Frank:**

Now, when we come back from the break, Ryan, I want to ask you...we'll get into the Son of God title. But I also want to ask, what evidence do we have that the early Christians, from the very beginning, thought Jesus was God. In other words, this was not a late development, as some scholars try and say, oh John is way late, so they didn't think he was God. They made him to be God much later. We'll get into that.

I'm talking to Ryan Crews, board member at CrossExamined.org. And also, campus speaker. I'm Frank Turek. Our website [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org). We're back in two minutes.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. You are not going to hear this topic on National Public Radio, that Jesus really was God, did self-identify as God, and that his divine attributes were clearly seen from the beginning by the believers. You're not going to hear that there. Stay right here. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek and the American Family Radio Network.

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My guest is Ryan Crews, who is two years out of Baylor University. He's about to go to Dallas Theological Seminary, actually. And, Ryan, I know you've taken the course from Dan Wallace, the Textual Criticism course that we are running here at [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org). If you go to [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org) and click on online Christian courses, you'll see it there. Or online courses. And Dan is one of the top manuscript scholars in the world. In fact, he is actually digitally photographing every single possible manuscript that he can get in front of, and there are thousands of them, with an organization that he's developed. He has debated Bart Ehrman. And this course that you took on Textual Criticism, which our listeners, right now, can take as well. Ten days from now. It begins January 20. Go to [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org). Click on online Christian courses. What did you learn in that course with Dan Wallace?

**Ryan:**

Oh, all kinds of things. So, when it comes to a lot of these fields, you know, textual criticism, and historical Jesus, and things like that. You know, these are things that, those who have the time to go to seminary and to really study under the best, guys like Dan Wallace, and Dr. Darrell Bock, and Gary Habermas, and others. You know, you go in depth on these things. But it's hard for those of us in the professional community who don't necessarily have time to go to seminary. You know, how do you get access to that kind of material? And so, that's why these online courses are great. I mean, you know, as Dr. Wallace will tell you, you're really just touching the tip of the tip of the iceberg of textual criticism, but you still learned so much. And you know plenty enough to be dangerous. But you go into the different types of manuscripts and text types. And he'll explain in the course why that's important. And how they go about determining the authentic reading. If you have a passage where there's multiple different variants, it could go one way, or it could go the other. He'll teach you the methods that scholars employ to figure out, okay, what was the scribe likely to have copied? What would the author have been likely to write in the first place, in the context of the rest of the text? It's a great course. I learned so much and honestly, a lot of my propulsion to continue in my studies comes from these kinds of situations, where you get the tip of the tip of the iceberg, and then you decide that's not enough. I want to go more. I want to know more.

**Frank:**

Yeah. And Bart Ehrman has said, there are more differences among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament. Now that sounds like, oh, are you kidding me? Wow, well

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there's no way we could figure out what the original New Testament said. If you want to know how to answer that, you need to take this course by Dan Wallace. Again, go to [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org). Click on online courses. You'll see it there. Dan is sort of like an Indiana Jones type, when it comes to manuscripts. He's traveling all over the world, climbing ropes into monasteries, to try and discover these obscure manuscripts that people haven't seen in centuries. And then photographing them so they'll be catalogued in history forever. Because these manuscripts ultimately, as you know, degrade, written on papyrus, and animal skins, and that kind of thing. And so, if you want to really know about how we can be sure that the text we have in the New Testament is reliable from a manuscript perspective, you need to take this course. And you've already taken it. I've seen some of it myself, and it's just wonderful.

Let's go back to our topic now, Ryan. We're talking about the self-identity of Jesus. Before we get into that, though, there's been some new more liberal scholars saying, you know, the divinity of Christ is a late development among the believers. Jesus didn't think he was God. We've already shown why that's not true. He did think he was God. But they're trying to say it was a late development. Why are they wrong?

**Ryan:**

Yeah, it's a great question. And we mentioned earlier, in a kind of offhanded kind of way, that a lot of scholars will say that John was actually written in the early second century. And the reason they say that is because of the high Christology in John. They think there's no way this could have been part of the early Christian tradition because the Christology is too high. So, how do we combat that? Well, we certainly can, if nothing else, the apostle Paul, we know when he wrote his letters, to some degree. To the churches around Galatia, and Greece, and Asia Minor.

**Frank:**

Certainly, First Corinthians. Even skeptics like Ehrman who considers himself an atheist now. He's certain that Paul wrote First Corinthians in 55 or 56 AD. And we know this from an archaeological discovery in Delphi. We can pinpoint when Paul wrote.

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**Ryan:**

Exactly, exactly. And we know that Paul had a high Christology. You get it in his letters. And so, you know, at that point, you're only 20 years removed, which isn't that much. But we can do better than that. Because the Paul who wrote those letters is the same Paul, who had an experience on the road to Damascus, where he believed he saw a vision of the risen Christ, and His life was forever changed. Paul never changed, in the sense that he, before the event, was an ardent follower of Yahweh. And after the event was an ardent follower of Yahweh. But what changed is his understanding of who the Messiah was, and who Jesus was, in the program of God. And so, you know, Paul had this experience shortly after Jesus' crucifixion and alleged resurrection. And so, now all of the sudden, you're right back to the event itself.

But even before that, Paul was a persecutor of the church. And the reason that he was persecuting them is because he believed that they were committing blasphemy and standing in the way of Yahweh's reunion with his people, Israel. Right? Israel had this covenant relationship with God where when they were unfaithful to him, they didn't receive His favor. And they had these series of overlords, as we've talked about already. The Romans, the Greeks, the Persians, the Babylonians. And so, Paul, belonging to the class of the Pharisees, and arguably a zealot, was very passionate about stamping out infidelity in among the Jewish people. And the Christian way seemed to him to be another instance of this, because they were going around committing the highest... [unintelligible] ...was just a man, as if he were gone himself. Their messianic deliver. And so, Paul had to understand what he was persecuting. And so, by doing that, we've now taken this high Christology all the way back to the event itself.

**Frank:**

I was just with Gary Habermas a few days ago in New Orleans. There was a conference down there put on by the Baptist Seminary in New Orleans. Bob Stewart is the man who organizes it. Faculty member there. Great guy. And he had Gary Habermas, myself, Tim McGrew, Richard Howe, several others down there. And Gary is in the middle, not in the middle, he's toward the end now, of his magnum opus. And it's near 5000 pages now. Gary's amazing. And he was talking about his minimal facts approach. And I said, he said, I boiled it down to six minimal facts. And one of the minimal facts was, now when we say minimal facts, what we mean is 90% or more of scholars, whether they're Christians, atheists, anywhere in between. New Testament scholars agree with these facts. And one of the facts that Gary talks about, that even these

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other scholars agree with, is that all of this, all of the idea that Jesus had resurrected from the dead, and the idea that Jesus' followers thought he had risen from the dead and appeared to them. All this occurred early. Early is one of the facts now. One of the minimal facts. And what do we mean by early? Even Bart Ehrman is saying it's within months, if not sooner, of the alleged resurrection itself. They're thinking he is a divine being very, very early. And if Paul is writing about communion, and First Corinthians, and he's quoting Luke to do so, they...and there's controversy over some issues, obviously, in First Corinthians. The church is well established by 55 AD and they're doing communion.

**Ryan:**

Right. Exactly.

**Frank:**

Well, if they're doing communion, they're thinking that Jesus is divine.

**Ryan:**

Yeah, yeah, I like what...there's a church historian by the name of Jaroslav Pelikan. What a name, right?

**Frank:**

Oh, Pelikan. Yeah, I've got some of his works up here, actually.

**Ryan:**

And he points out that the oldest sermon, the oldest account of a Christian martyr, the oldest pagan report of the church, and the oldest liturgical prayer, which you've just referenced in First Corinthians, they all agree that Jesus was regarded as the Redeemer and God Himself.

**Frank:**

Hmm. Very early very early. And you were just reading from Reasonable Faith.

**Ryan:**

I was.

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**Frank:**

I've heard of that book by Dr. William Lane Craig Yeah, you can't go wrong by listening to Dr. Craig. Reasonablefaith.org. So, okay, this is all early, despite the fact that some liberal scholars are trying to say this is a late development. It's not a late development, ladies and gentlemen, Okay, so we know that Jesus is God by his I am statement. That's one of like six other or seven other I am statements, the one we talked about John eight. Certainly, his reference to him being the son of man, which goes back to Daniel chapter seven. That he is claiming to be a divine being and everybody standing around him when he said that knew what he was claiming. That's why they killed him. They ripped her clothes and said, blasphemy. They wanted to stone him What about the Son of God term, or Son of God title, that he's given. What does that mean?

**Ryan:**

Yeah, absolutely. So, what, yeah, what did Jesus mean by the Son of God? Now there are some other figures in the Old Testament that were regarded as sons of God. Solomon, is referred to in this way in Second Samuel, when David wants to build a temple for God, and God tells him no. You know, your son will be the one who will build a house for me. And later this passage in Second Samuel came to be interpreted in a messianic sense. But you know, there are others that are called Son of God. So, by Jesus saying he's the son of God, that doesn't automatically mean that he is divine, but you can tell by the way that he uses it, he's talking about something a little bit different.

Let's go to one of the Jesus parables and Luke 20. Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard. And I'll read it really quickly here. He said that a man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the wine press and built a tower. And he leased it to tenants and went into another country. When the season came, he sent servants to the tenants, to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty handed. Again, he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another and him they killed. And so, with many others. Some they beat and some they killed. He had still one other, his beloved son. Finally, he sent him to them, that being his son, saying, they will respect my son. But those tenants said to one another, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and this inheritance will be ours. And so, they took him and killed him and threw him out of the venue.

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And so, Jesus is saying this to the Pharisees. And what he's doing here is, this is a reference to Isaiah five. And in Isaiah, it's clear who's being talked about here. This vineyard is meant to symbolize the nation of Israel. And the servants that are sent are God's prophets, Elijah, Isaiah, you know, so on and so forth. And then you get down to the son, and in the parable, right. In this symbol, the son is truly the son of the owner of the vineyard, in a filial sense. It's not just another delegate. There's a different, unique kind of relationship there. And you can tell that too, because when the tenants say that they're going to kill the son, they say, you know, when we do this, the inheritance will belong to us. Implying that the inheritance, the nation of Israel, the whole world, belongs to this unique son figure. Jesus clearly identifying with the son in this passage is expressing a more unique relationship than Solomon or anybody else ever could.

**Frank:**

And he did so in some other parables, as well. And after the break, we'll get into that. We're talking about, who did Jesus think he was? Did he really think he was divine? And my guest is Ryan Crews, a board member here at CrossExamined.org. And also, obviously, an intelligent young man, who just came out of Baylor University and is helping us reach other students for Christ. We're back in a couple of minutes. Don't go away.

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Before I forget, I want to thank those of you who have donated to us in 2019. You really helped us out quite a bit. We're going to have a, God willing, Lord willing, a great year because of the fuel that you've given us to go to these campuses and not worry about finances. When we go to a college campus, we don't charge the students a dime. There's no admission fee. None of that. We're there to provide the evidence that Christianity is true and to take questions. And we can do that because you provide us with the finances we need to make it happen. So, thank you so much for that.

Now, Ryan, just before the break, we were talking about the idea that, in the parable in Luke 20, that Jesus is in some way claiming to be God. Why don't you wrap up that thought there?

**Ryan:**

Yeah, absolutely. So, we were discussing right before the break how in this parable, there's one, the son, who the inheritance of the vineyard belongs to him. He's the owner's son. And we know the owner is meant to be God. The vineyard owner is a symbol for God in Isaiah five. And Jesus is clearly identifying with this unique son figure. Right? And you can tell that from other passages, too. If we hop over to Matthew 11, Jesus said that, all things have been handed over to me by my father, and no one knows the son except the Father. And no one knows the Father except the son, and to whom the son chooses to reveal him.

And this is interesting, because it's not like no one ever thought of God as a father before. But Jesus is clearly identifying a unique filial, exclusive relationship between him and Yahweh, that is not characteristic of the rest of the nation, right? He's saying, you know, I'm the only one who can reveal the father to you. Well, that's kind of a narrow, objectionable statement if Jesus isn't in fact, divine himself. You can tell from Jesus' prayer life, he calls the Father, Abba, which is this very informal, you know, term for a son to us with a father. And so, you can tell that his relationship, his understanding of how him and Yahweh are related to one another is very unique. It's not like the rest of the nation, just thinking of God in general as a father. It's much more exclusive than that.

**Frank:**

Tim Keller brought up a very interesting point with regard to Jesus's address to the Father. Most of the time, he's talking to his father, as you say, Abba Father, or father. But when he was on

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the cross, he didn't use that term. He said, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That was the time he was most alone. He felt, as a man, that God at least judicially, had forsaken him. Because he was innocent, yet he was going to the cross to take our punishment on himself, not his own. Why have you forsaken? You know, he volunteered to do that. But there wasn't that intimate relationship in his expression at that time. That's the only time we see him saying that. He's on the cross.

I'm just going to read some of the things Jesus said, ladies and gentlemen. And as I read these statements of Jesus, see if this sounds like just a man could have said these things. Before Hey, Abraham was born, I am. Your sins are forgiven. I and the father are one. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Whoever obeys my word will never see death. I am the resurrection and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me. I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. I am the bread of life. Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? Pray in my name. Father glorify me with the glory I had before the world began. Does that sound like just a man?

**Ryan:**

Not really.

**Frank:**

No. Can you imagine anyone saying that? Any of those things.

**Ryan:**

Well, and that's why I like what CS Lewis had to say about it in, Mere Christianity. Lewis put up the famous trilemma, where he said that, given those kinds of things Jesus said, he is either a liar, a lunatic, or he is Lord, as he claimed. Because there's no other way that you can say those kinds of things and just be a normal average everyday person. You're either crazy, you're selling something, or your God.

**Frank:**

Well, Lewis was so good at putting things that...maybe we should find that quote and read it, because it was just so well said. But here is another way that Jesus, I think, claimed to be God. You pointed out, in that one parable in Luke 20. But I'd love to go to Luke chapter 15. Because if

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you go to Luke chapter 15, Jesus is being observed by the Pharisees. And here's what it says. Now the tax collectors and the sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus, but the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, this man welcome sinners and eats with them. Then Jesus told them this parable.

Okay, stop right here. You got to see the context here. What's the context? Jesus has been criticized for meeting with sinners and ministering to sinners. And then he tells them a parable. In fact, he tells them three parables in a row. He tells him the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, actually lost sons. They're both lost in the parable of the lost son. And in each of these parables, the figure who represents Jesus goes out and find something that is lost. So, he goes out to find the lost sheep. He goes out to find the lost coin. H goes out to find the lost son. He runs to the son, right? He's going out to find what is lost. [Unintelligible]... what God does.

And so, when Jesus responds to the Pharisees, who are criticizing Jesus for ministering to sinners, He tells them three parables to show them that he is doing exactly what God does. He goes and finds what is lost. So, he's claiming to be the God figure in these parables. In fact, whenever you look at a parable, ladies and gentlemen, realize there are at least two characters in the parable. There's God, and then there's you, in the parable. Now, there may be a third group of people in this particular group of people, or I should say, in this particular parable. Particularly the last son. The third group of people are the Pharisees. Who were the Pharisees represented by? They're represented by the older brother who stays home and thinks he's good with God, or good with the father, because he's obeying everything the father wants him to do. In other words, he's going to earn his way to his father's favor by doing good works. And Jesus points out they're both lost. The Pharisees are lost, and the sinners are lost. The people who stay home and help the father and the prodigal son. They're both lost. They need the grace of the Father. So, Jesus is claiming to be God through the parables.

**Ryan:**

He is. And I want to run with something else that you kind of got into there. So, you mentioned Jesus' fellowship with sinners as something that was criticized. And that's really interesting because another way that we know Jesus had a divine self-identity is by his relationship with sinners. Namely, that he forgave sin. In Mark chapter two, everybody, I hope is familiar with the

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story where there's a paralytic who, his friends want to bring him to Jesus, but the crowd outside the house is too large, and so they can't get there. So, they go up to the roof, they take off some of the roofing, and they lower the man down on palette. And I'm going to read now from Mark. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic son, your sins are forgiven. Now some of the scribes were sitting there. The scribes belong to a similar class as the Pharisees, right. These teachers of the law. And they were questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And that's exactly the point. And so, Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they questioned this within themselves, said to them, why you question these things? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven or to say, rise, pick up your bed and walk. But that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, I say to you rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

And that's the whole point. Jesus' ability to forgive sins at all. To be in that position, he is arrogating to himself, divine authority.

**Frank:**

Jesus claimed to be God in many ways. These are just some of the ways we're talking about. And actually, if you look at those first chapters of Mark, Mark portrays Jesus as God, as well. In fact, if you look at Mark chapter one, John prepares the way of the Lord. That's Yahweh. And Jesus, in this case, is Yahweh, in Mark 1:3. A little later, the father calls Jesus his beloved son, in Mark chapter one. Evil spirits recognize Jesus and obey Him. That's Mark chapter one. In Mark chapter two, Jesus forgive sins. That's just the passage you just talked about Ryan. A little bit later in that chapter, he claims to be the divine Son of man. We've already been through that. He claims to be Lord of the Sabbath, in 2:28. But how can he be Lord of the Sabbath if he's just a man? He heals diseases and drives out demons, in Mark chapter three. In Mark chapter four, he demonstrates his power over nature. And then once you get to the passage, we might as well end with the passage we started with. When you get to Mark chapter 14, he affirms he's the Messiah and the Son of Man. So, even Mark has shown, by how Jesus behaves, that he's God.

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**Ryan:**

Exactly.

**Frank:**

Not just in what he says.

**Ryan:**

Right. And that is really important. Jesus' actions are equally as important as his sayings demonstrating who he is. And another quick point to make is that, you know, it's important that we see all these things in Mark, because according to the most critical liberal scholarship, Mark is the favored gospel.

**Frank:**

And it's the earliest. Yeah.

**Ryan:**

Because it's believed to be the earliest, and to some degree, a source for some of the others. And so, seeing these things in Mark, in this favored gospel, by critical scholars, that should give us some confidence that it's there in the one that is most beloved.

**Frank:**

Right, right. I'm just going to end with CS Lewis's quote, because it's so good in Mere Christianity. He says, I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish things 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 is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would rather be a lunatic on the level with a man who says he's 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 something worse. You can shut him up for fool. You could 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 patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

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Ryan Crews. Thanks for doing this show, man. You're doing great.

**Ryan:**

Absolutely. I appreciate it.

**Frank:**

Great insights. That's Ryan Crews. He's on the board of CrossExamined.org. He's also a fine gentleman that is out doing presentations on college campuses like this. So, check him out. Also, check out the online course with Dan Wallace. Go to [cross-examine.org](http://cross-examine.org). Click on online courses. You'll see it there. Be back here next week. God bless.

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