

## **HOW JESUS BECAME GOD by Bart D. Ehrman,**

Bart Ehrman reveals how Jesus's divinity became dogma in the first centuries of the early church. The claim at the heart of the Christian faith is that Jesus of Nazareth was, and is, God. But this is not what the original disciples believed during Jesus's lifetime—and it is not what Jesus claimed about himself. *How Jesus Became God* tells the story of an idea that shaped Christianity, and of the evolution of a belief that looked very different in the fourth century than it did in the first. Ehrman reveals how an apocalyptic prophet from the backwaters of rural Galilee crucified for crimes against the state came to be thought of as equal with the one God Almighty, Creator of all things. But how did he move from being a Jewish prophet to being God? In a book that took eight years to research and write, Ehrman sketches Jesus's transformation from a human prophet to the Son of God exalted to divine status at his resurrection. Only when some of Jesus's followers had visions of him after his death—alive again—did anyone come to think that he, the prophet from Galilee, had become God. And what they meant by that was not at all what people mean today. Written for believers and non-believers alike who are interested in the historical developments that led to the affirmation at the heart of Christianity: Jesus was, and is, God.

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### **My Thoughts:**

Bart Ehrman is one of the most prolific and provocative contemporary writers and teachers about Jesus and early church themes. He began his life as an evangelical Protestant but his academic pursuits led him to reject his early Christianity and indeed the Christian faith itself.

I personally respect Ehrman and am grateful to possess many of his books and lectures. I have studied and taught from them and believe he has been willing to go where many of us who remain within the community of faith have hesitated to go.

"How Jesus Became God" continues his sequence of high quality scholarly investigations. While claiming to be an unbeliever, he is most interested in Jesus and is able to help us reflect on how those who followed him during the early centuries of the Christian era helped to shape the way future Christian centuries understood him.

Ehrman helps us take another look at what the Christian tradition has made of Jesus (often sincerely believing that this was all part of divine revelation) in light of modern scholarship and questions never before encountered.

Traditional orthodoxy is still important to me, even though I am not a slavish advocate. At the same time, I think Ehrman opens new doors of understanding that I must not ignore and with which I must come to terms.

Debating these issues in groups of believers and unbelievers alike will continue to help me shape and refine my understanding. I encourage you to read this book so that you, like me, might broaden your horizons and to come to see Jesus in ways you have not previously considered.

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Wayne Holst