

I am posting two brief posts a day giving the short boxes I include in the new edition of my textbook, [The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings](#). This particular one deals with a topic I've addressed several times on the blog, in view of my book [How Jesus Became God](#).

What Do You Think?

Box 10.5 Did Jesus Call Himself God?

It is an interesting to ask: "What did Jesus say about himself?" More specifically, you might ask: "Did Jesus ever call himself God?" As it turns out, it depends on which Gospel you read.

In the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus never says he is God. He does talk about himself as the Son of Man; he says he must be killed and raised from the dead; and he admits he is the messiah. But the vast bulk of his teaching in these Gospels is not about himself at all. It is about God, the coming Kingdom of God, and the way to live in preparation for it.

Not in John. In John Jesus teaches almost entirely ...

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In John Jesus teaches almost entirely about himself: who he is, his relation to the Father, how he has come into the world from heaven above to convey the truth that can bring eternal life. And he makes some remarkable claims about himself. These claims are found in John and nowhere else.

For example, to the Jews who do not believe in him, Jesus says "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Abraham lived 1800 years earlier, and Jesus is claiming to have existed before that. Even more than that, he claims for himself the name of God, "I am" (see Exodus 3:13-14). His Jewish opponents know exactly what he is saying. They pick up stones to execute him for blasphemy. Two chapters later, he does it again, claiming "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Once again they break out the stones. Later, to his disciples, he says "If you have seen me you have seen the Father" (John 14:9).

These teachings of Jesus that he is a divine correlate with what John says elsewhere, as we have seen in the Prologue "The Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1) And in the ending, when Thomas confesses that Jesus is "My Lord and my God" (20:28)

For John, Jesus is obviously God, and he says he is (not God the Father but ... equal with God?). Why do you suppose these sayings are not in the earlier Gospels? If Matthew, Mark, and Luke knew that Jesus had said such things, wouldn't they want to tell their readers? It's worth thinking about.[/private]



[Jesus' Apocalyptic Message in Matthew](#)
[How Reliable are Oral Traditions?](#)