



Q & A



Did Jesus Really Say He Was God? ***Making Sense of Historical Claims***

October 23, 2025 | \$24.99, 256 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-1101-0

Mikel Del Rosario (PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary) is professor of Bible and theology at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. He has coauthored thirty-one journal articles on apologetics and cultural engagement in *Bibliotheca Sacra* with his mentor, Darrell L. Bock, including “The Table Briefing: Did the Historical Jesus Claim to Be Divine?” A member of the Evangelical Theological Society, Del Rosario is host of *The Apologetics Guy Show*, a podcast on the Christianity Today Network. He previously hosted Dallas Theological Seminary’s cultural engagement podcast, *The Table*.

Jesus’ Divine Authority According to His Enemies

What led to your interest in studying the claims of Jesus and now sharing about the historicity of Jesus’ divine claims?

Mikel Del Rosario: While speaking at Christian apologetics events, I found that most programs moved quickly from presentations on God’s existence to presentations on Jesus’ resurrection. This reveals a large gap which leaves participants ill-equipped to explore, consider, or discuss the self-claims of Jesus. Recovering the historicity of Jesus’ divine claims is important because it is these claims which fill the resurrection with theological meaning. This is demonstrated by Peter’s speech in Acts 2—the first apologetic for Jesus as Lord and Messiah.

Today, many evangelical Americans express doubts about Jesus’ divine identity. Believers are also challenged by assertions like “Jesus never claimed to be God” and questions like “Why should anyone believe that Jesus is God if he never said he was God?” both in the public square and even inside the church. Others may not be coming from a skeptical place but still wonder how well the things the church teaches about Jesus really line up with what Jesus himself said. Perhaps they’ve heard some tough challenges or intriguing questions raised and now they’re wondering, “Did the historical Jesus claim to be divine?”

I wrote this book to give Christians more confidence in the historicity of Jesus’ divine claim, allowing them to better explain their faith in a world that increasingly doubts the biblical portrait of Jesus. I would like my primary Christian audience to be equipped to defend the historicity of Jesus’ claim to possess divine authority against competing theories which suggest that Jesus only claimed to possess a kind of human authority. I also hope that readers who see Christianity differently would appreciate a credible investigation of the claims of the historical Jesus and the highly evidenced data that must be accounted for by any theory of Jesus’ claims and self-understanding. I want to help them find answers to questions about Jesus’ divine claim and help them share “the rest of the story” to those who have already heard from the critics and perhaps written off the traditional view of Jesus’ deity or his divine claim as pious naiveté devoid of any historical grounding.

What is your main thesis in *Did Jesus Really Say He Was God?*

Del Rosario: There is continuity between Jesus’ claims and the early Christian belief in him as a divine figure because at least some of Jesus’ words and deeds were likely interpreted by his Jewish adversaries as claims to possess divine authority. While most books about Jesus’ claims focus on the perspectives of Jesus’ earliest followers, I wanted to focus on the perspective of Jesus’ enemies. How did they understand Jesus’ historical claims?

I employ highly evidenced data gleaned from two key events in Jesus life which I call the “Blasphemy accusation scenes” (the healing of the paralytic and Jesus’ Jewish examination) to build my case for Jesus’ claim to possess divine authority and demonstrate how it is superior to alternate hypothesis which assert that Jesus claimed a kind of merely human authority. The beauty of building our case on what some might call “minimal facts”—highly evidenced data the majority of critics acknowledge as facts—is that it can allow us to come to the table with people from a variety of religious backgrounds (as well as those who do not identify with a faith tradition) and have a reasoned conversation about some of the things that Jesus did and the things he said about himself. It can also demonstrate how certain details in the Bible can be corroborated and qualify as historical facts—even when working in scholarly contexts that do not privilege the biblical text beyond any other source from antiquity.



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Who did you have in mind as you were writing this book?

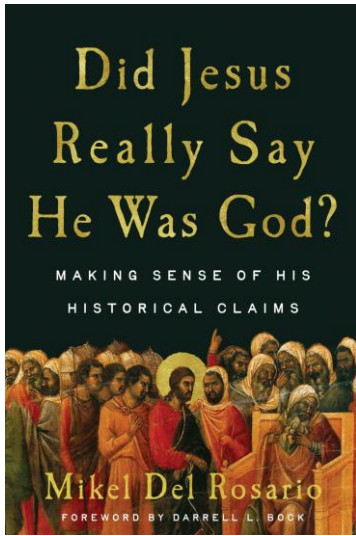
Del Rosario: I am primarily writing for Christian college students and college-educated adults in the church who are interested in a robust, yet approachable defense of the historical Jesus’ divine claim. I am also writing for those who are interested in historical Jesus studies, apologetics, and evangelism (including ministry leaders, pastors, popular apologists).



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TALKING POINTS



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“Mikel Del Rosario defends the vital doctrine of the deity of Jesus but does so in a remarkably systematic and careful way. He lays out his historical methodology, applies it to two key texts in the Gospel of Mark, and then responds to leading critics. This is not only a wonderful defense of the deity of Jesus but a model for how to do historical Jesus scholarship.”

-Sean McDowell, professor of apologetics at the Talbot School of Theology

Did Jesus Really Say He Was God?

If you're a Christian, this book will equip you to defend your faith against theories that suggest Jesus only claimed human authority, not divine. If you're someone who sees Christianity differently, this book offers a serious investigation into the claims of the historical Jesus, providing evidence that any theory of his identity must address. Whether you're searching for answers to your own questions or trying to share about Jesus with others, this book will help you communicate Jesus' divine claim with clarity and confidence.

- What motivated you to explore the question “did Jesus really say he was God?” from a historical perspective?
- In your book, you talk about Historical Jesus studies. How do you define this and why should Christians engage in Historical Jesus studies?
- How can historians investigate ancient figures like Jesus? What kind of historical tools or criteria do they use?
- You call the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2 “Exhibit A.” What kind of historical evidence makes this scene credible?
- How does Jesus forgiving sins amount to a divine claim?
- How common was it in Jesus' Jewish context for someone to claim to forgive sins?
- You call Jesus' Jewish examination in Mark 14 “Exhibit B.” How can historians investigate whether or not this general scene actually happened?
- How does Jesus' response to the high priest amount to a divine claim?
- Can you explain the theological significance of Jesus forgiving sins and claiming to sit at God's right hand?
- You say that the historical case for Jesus' divine authority challenges Christians too, not just skeptics. How so?
- You say you may be the first American-born Filipino scholar to publish on the historical Jesus. What does that mean to you personally and why is it important for the scholarly conversation today?



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