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No one is like YHWH

Psalm 89 and Jesus’s deity



JESUS AND THE TRINITY

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No one is like YHWH

How Psalm 89:7–10, the calming of the sea, and coming on the clouds testify to Jesus’s deity

BRIEF SUMMARY

Psalm 89:7–10 declares that no heavenly being is like YHWH and that YHWH alone rules the raging sea. In the New Testament, Jesus does not stand among heavenly beings. The angels worship him and accompany him at his return. Jesus stills the sea by his own authoritative word, likewise does everything the Father does, gives life, judges the world, and comes on the clouds in divine glory. These statements present Jesus as more than a particularly elevated creature: they include him within YHWH’s unique identity and activity.

CENTRAL THESIS

Jesus is not one of the “sons of gods” who happens to resemble YHWH exceptionally closely. He is the eternal Son who does YHWH’s works, possesses YHWH’s glory, and comes on the clouds as the divine Son of Man.

Translation note: Complete English translation of the supplied German source. Biblical quotations are translated from the wording of that source, not quoted verbatim from an official English Bible. Biblical numbering follows the source. Hebrew typography is normalized without changing the wording. The source’s arguments, qualifications, and repeated conclusions are retained; no independent theological revision has been made.

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1. The argument of Psalm 89:7–10

Psalm 89 presents YHWH in the midst of the heavenly world:

> For who in the clouds can be compared with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the sons of gods? God is feared in the council of the holy ones; great and fearsome is he above all who surround him. LORD, God of hosts! Who is mighty like you, Yah? Your faithfulness surrounds you. You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.
>
> Psalm 89:7–10

The train of thought is clear:

- No being in heaven is comparable to YHWH.
- No “son of gods” is like YHWH.
- The heavenly holy ones surround and fear him.
- No one possesses power like YHWH’s.
- YHWH rules the raging sea and stills its waves.

The statement about the sea is therefore not an unrelated thought. It makes YHWH’s incomparable power concrete. The God whom no heavenly being equals is the same God who sovereignly rules the untamable forces of nature.

> **IDENTITY AND WORKS**
> Psalm 89 connects YHWH’s unique identity with his unique works: no one is like him because no one rules and acts like him.

Precisely for this reason, the passage becomes Christologically significant when the New Testament attributes the same divine works and rights of dominion to Jesus.

2. No one among heavenly beings is like YHWH

The rhetorical answer is “No one”

The questions in Psalm 89:7 do not expect a search for a possible exception:

> Who is like the LORD among the sons of gods?

The expected answer is:

> No one.

The “sons of gods,” Hebrew bene elim (בְּנֵי אֵלִים), are probably heavenly beings. The following expression “council of the holy ones” confirms this heavenly setting.

YHWH is surrounded by these beings, but he is not one of them. Nor is he merely the most powerful member of the same kind. The difference between YHWH and the heavenly beings is not merely one of degree, but a fundamental difference between the sovereign God and all beings subordinate to him.

Jesus cannot count as an exception within this class

If Jesus were merely a created heavenly being, he would fall under the psalm’s negation. He too would then not be like YHWH.

One could not simply supplement the psalm:

> No one among the sons of gods is like YHWH, except Jesus.

Such an exception would contradict the statement's rhetorical unrestrictedness. The New Testament solution is therefore not to make Jesus the highest member of the created heavenly world.

Rather, Jesus is placed on the Creator's side:

- The angels worship him.
- He created heaven and earth.
- He possesses an eternal throne.
- He gives life.
- He judges the world.
- He rules over the sea.
- He comes on the clouds.
- All angels accompany him.
- Every knee will bow before him.

> **OUTSIDE THE CREATED CLASS**
> Jesus is no exception to the psalm's "no one." He does not belong at all to the created class over which this "no one" is pronounced.

3. YHWH alone rules the raging sea

Psalm 89 attributes to YHWH a dominion that repeatedly appears as a divine characteristic in Old Testament revelation:

> You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.
>
> Psalm 89:10

In biblical imagery, the sea frequently appears as the embodiment of a power human beings cannot control. People can try to travel on the sea, but they cannot simply command its waves to settle.

YHWH, by contrast, rules the sea because it is his creature:

> For he spoke and summoned a storm wind that raised its waves high. […] He changed the storm into stillness, and the waves subsided.
>
> Psalm 107:25, 29

Job too describes this divine majesty:

> He alone stretches out the heavens and walks upon the heights of the sea.
>
> Job 9:8

Context is decisive: calming the sea is not merely one impressive miracle among many. In the Old Testament it is a work through which YHWH reveals himself as Lord of creation.

4. Jesus stills the sea by his authoritative word

Against this Old Testament background, the accounts of the storm's calming receive their full significance.

Mark reports:

> And he awoke, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Be silent, be still! And the wind ceased, and a great calm arose.
>
> Mark 4:39

Jesus does not first ask someone higher to calm the sea. He confronts the storm with immediate authority. He rebukes wind and waves, and creation obeys his word.

The parallel with Psalm 107 is particularly striking:

- In Psalm 107, people on the sea are terrified for their lives.
- The waves rise.
- The people cry to YHWH.
- YHWH stills the storm.
- The waves subside.
- The people reach their desired destination.

The same thing happens in the Gospels, but Jesus is in the boat. The disciples turn to him, and he performs the work the psalms attribute to YHWH.

They then ask:

> Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?
>
> Mark 4:41

This question concerns Jesus's identity. The correct answer emerges from the Old Testament background:

> **THE WORK OF YHWH**
> The one whom wind and sea obey performs YHWH's work before their eyes.

Psalm 89 and Psalm 107 say that YHWH stills the waves. The Gospels show Jesus commanding the waves and thereby producing "a great calm."

This does not mean that every person through whom a miracle happens must therefore be God. Prophets and apostles performed miracles by God's authority. With Jesus, however, a broader pattern emerges:

- He acts with his own authority.
- Creation obeys his word.
- He forgives sins.
- He gives life to whom he wills.
- He receives the same honor as the Father.
- He judges all humanity.
- Old Testament YHWH texts are applied to him.

A SIGN OF DIVINE IDENTITY

The calming of the sea is not the only proof of his deity. Within the overall New Testament picture, however, it is a revelatory sign of his divine identity.

5. The Son likewise does everything the Father does

John 5 supplies the theological explanation for why Jesus can perform God's works.

Jesus says:

> Truly, truly, I say to you: the Son can do nothing of himself except what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, the Son likewise also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he himself does.
>
> John 5:19–20

This statement is sometimes understood as though Jesus were restricting his authority or admitting his inferiority as a creature. Yet the following sentence makes such an interpretation impossible:

> For whatever he does, the Son likewise also does.

Jesus does not merely say that he occasionally performs works similar to the Father's. He makes a comprehensive statement:

- Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.
- The Son does it likewise, thus in corresponding divine activity.
- The Father shows the Son everything he does.
- The Son's activity is perfectly united with the Father's activity.

No ordinary prophet could say:

> Whatever God does, I too do in the same way.

The Son gives life to whom he wills

Jesus then explains:

> For just as the Father raises the dead and makes them alive, so also the Son makes alive whom he wills.
>
> John 5:21

Giving life is a divine work. It is also noteworthy that Jesus does not say that the Son gives life only to those whom the Father expressly names to him in each individual case. The Son makes alive whom he wills.

The Son therefore possesses:

- Divine life-giving power.
- An effective divine will.
- Authority over life and death.
- The ability to raise the dead.

The Son executes divine judgment

Jesus continues:

> For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.
>
> John 5:22

In the Old Testament, the final judgment over all human beings is YHWH's judgment. In the New Testament this universal judgment is entrusted to the Son.

Jesus immediately names the purpose:

> So that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.
>
> John 5:23

Jesus does not ask merely for some appropriate honor as Messiah. All are to honor the Son as they honor the Father.

> **HONORING THE SON**
> According to Jesus's own statement, anyone giving the Son a lesser, merely creaturely honor also fails to honor the Father.

John 5 therefore shows no competition between Father and Son. The Son does not act independently or as a second God alongside the Father. Rather, there is an inseparable unity of activity between them:

- The Father acts through the Son.
- The Son does everything the Father does.
- The Father gives life.
- The Son gives life.
- The Son judges on the Father's commission and with his authority.
- Father and Son must be honored alike.

The incarnate Son's subordination in his mission is therefore not inferiority of essence. It describes the Son's personal relationship and salvation-historical mission, not his membership in the created world.

6. Jesus comes on the clouds

Psalm 89:7 is not a direct prediction

Psalm 89:7 says:

> For who in the clouds can be compared with the LORD?

The Hebrew expression here designates heaven or the cloud region. The question means: who in the heavenly realm could be compared with YHWH?

The verse does not yet expressly say that YHWH "comes on the clouds." Therefore no direct messianic prediction should be constructed from this wording alone.

Nevertheless, a remarkable connection emerges within a canonical overview: the one appearing on the clouds in the New Testament is not one of the heavenly beings, but the sovereign Son of Man before whom all peoples must give account.

Riding the clouds belongs to YHWH's self-presentation

In the Old Testament, coming or riding on the clouds is connected with YHWH:

> Sing to God, play to his name! Make a way for the one who rides through the deserts — Yah is his name.
>
> Psalm 68:5

> Who makes the clouds his chariot, who moves upon the wings of the wind.
>
> Psalm 104:3

> Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt.
>
> Isaiah 19:1

The clouds are connected with God's majesty, presence, judgment, and royal dominion. Coming on clouds in the Old Testament is therefore not an ordinary mode of travel for heavenly creatures. It belongs to YHWH's figurative self-presentation as divine King and Judge.

The Son of Man in Daniel 7

Daniel sees:

> And behold, with the clouds of heaven came one like a son of man. And he came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him before him.
>
> Daniel 7:13

This Son of Man receives:

- Dominion.
- Honor.
- Kingship.
- The service of all peoples, nations, and languages.
- An eternal and imperishable dominion.

The Son of Man is distinct from the "Ancient of Days." Nevertheless, he comes on the clouds and receives universal, eternal dominion.

Daniel 7 thus already contains the basic structure later unfolded in Trinitarian terms:

- Personal distinction.
- Divine dominion.
- Universal worship.
- Eternal kingship.

Jesus claims this identity for himself

Jesus expressly applies Daniel 7 to himself:

> And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory.
>
> Matthew 24:30

Before the high council he declares:

> From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.
>
> Matthew 26:64

Jesus here connects two Old Testament texts:

- Psalm 110:1: the Lord at God's right hand.
- Daniel 7:13: the Son of Man on the clouds.

He does not merely claim to return at some point as a human Messiah. He identifies himself as the heavenly ruler who shares in God's throne dominion and appears for judgment.

The high priest's response shows how immense this claim was. He tears his garments and raises the accusation of blasphemy. Jesus's words were not understood as a harmless claim to be some future prophet.

> **THE SOVEREIGN LORD**
> The one coming on the clouds does not stand in the "council of the holy ones" as one among many. He appears as their sovereign Lord and as Judge of the world.

7. Jesus comes in his Father's glory

Jesus says:

> For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man too will be ashamed when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.
>
> Mark 8:38

Matthew similarly formulates:

> For the Son of Man will come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will repay each person according to their deeds.
>
> Matthew 16:27

Several divine characteristics are connected here:

- Jesus comes in the Father's glory.
- The angels are called his angels.
- Jesus repays each human being according to their deeds.
- He thereby executes universal divine judgment.

"His Father's glory" must not be understood in isolation as though Jesus possessed merely an alien glory externally bestowed upon him. Other New Testament texts expressly speak of his own glory.

Luke writes:

> For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and the holy angels.
>
> Luke 9:26

Jesus therefore comes:

- In his glory.

- In the Father’s glory.
- Accompanied by the holy angels.

In Matthew 25 Jesus also speaks of his own glory:

> But when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.
>
> Matthew 25:31

The Son possesses:

- His glory.
- His throne.
- His angels.
- The authority to gather all nations.
- The authority to pronounce the final judgment.

Added to this is Jesus’s prayer:

> And now, Father, glorify me with yourself with the glory that I had with you before the world existed!
>
> John 17:5

Christ’s glory did not begin only with his resurrection. The Son possessed it with the Father before the world existed. His return therefore publicly reveals the glory that already belonged to him before creation.

> **ETERNAL GLORY**
> At his return, Jesus does not receive divine radiance for the first time. Rather, the eternal glory that he possessed with the Father before the world existed is revealed.

8. The Son stands above the angels and comes with them

Psalm 89 describes YHWH as the one surrounded by the heavenly assembly and standing above all heavenly beings:

> God is feared in the council of the holy ones; great and fearsome is he above all who surround him.
>
> Psalm 89:8

In the New Testament, Jesus appears in a strikingly similar position of majesty:

- He comes with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).
- The angels are called his angels (Matthew 13:41; 16:27).
- All angels accompany him at his return (Matthew 25:31).
- He sends the angels to gather the elect (Matthew 24:31).
- The angels worship him (Hebrews 1:6).

Hebrews 1 expressly excludes Jesus’s being merely the highest angel:

> For to which of the angels did he ever say: You are my Son?
>
> Hebrews 1:5

Of the Son, by contrast, it says:

> And all God’s angels are to worship him.
>
> Hebrews 1:6

> Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever.
>
> Hebrews 1:8

The words of Psalm 102 are also applied to the Son; in their original context they address YHWH as Creator:

> You, Lord, founded the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are works of your hands.
>
> Hebrews 1:10

The relationship is clear:

- Jesus does not belong to the worshiping angels.
- The angels worship him.
- Jesus does not belong to the created heavenly world.
- Heaven and earth are works of his hands.
- Jesus is not one of the “holy ones” around God’s throne.
- He himself sits on the throne and is accompanied by all angels.

The statements of Psalm 89 thus remain fully intact. No created heavenly being is like YHWH. Jesus, however, is not presented as such a created being.

9. The necessary Trinitarian distinction

The preceding statements must not be misunderstood modalistically. Jesus is not the Father. The Gospels clearly distinguish the Son who comes from the Father whose glory the Son possesses.

At the same time, this personal distinction does not mean difference of essence.

In Trinitarian terms one must say:

- The Father is YHWH.
- The Son is YHWH.
- The Holy Spirit is YHWH.
- The Son is not the Father.
- The Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son.
- Nevertheless, there is only the one God.

Jesus does not act as a second God independent of the Father. John 5 specifically shows the perfect unity of their activity:

> Whatever he does, the Son likewise also does.

The statement “The Son can do nothing of himself” therefore does not mean creaturely powerlessness. Rather, it describes the impossibility of activity separate from or contradicting the Father. Father and Son act inseparably in perfect unity.

The Son never does anything against the Father, independently of the Father, or disconnected from the Father. Yet everything the Father does, the Son likewise does.

> **INSEPARABLE DIVINE ACTIVITY**
> The Son’s inability to act independently of the Father is not a creature’s weakness, but an expression of the inseparable unity of divine activity.

10. The apologetic force of the overall picture

None of the texts discussed should be artificially overstretched:

- Psalm 89:7 by itself is not a direct proof text for Jesus’s deity.
- The wording “in the clouds” there does not yet expressly say that someone comes on the clouds.
- Not every miracle automatically proves its worker’s deity.
- In isolation, the Father’s glory could be understood as bestowed messianic glory.

The strength of the argument, however, lies in the cumulative overall picture. The same features through which the Old Testament distinguishes YHWH from all creatures are attributed to Jesus in the New Testament.

Psalm 89 and other YHWH texts	Jesus in the New Testament
No heavenly being is like YHWH.	Jesus stands categorically above all angels.
The heavenly holy ones surround YHWH.	Jesus comes with all the holy angels.
YHWH stills the sea’s waves.	Jesus rebukes the storm and stills the waves.
YHWH rides on the clouds.	Jesus comes on the clouds of heaven.
YHWH judges the world.	The Son executes all judgment.
YHWH gives life.	The Son makes alive whom he wills.
YHWH possesses eternal glory.	Jesus possessed glory with the Father before the world’s creation.
Divine honor belongs to YHWH.	All are to honor the Son as they honor the Father.
The heavenly beings serve YHWH.	The angels worship Jesus and are sent out by him.

Each individual line reinforces the others. The calming of the sea is therefore not only a nature miracle. Coming on the clouds is not only a majestic travel description. The angelic accompaniment is not only ceremonial decoration. Judgment is not only a delegated administrative task.

Together these statements show that Jesus acts within YHWH’s divine identity.

The decisive alternative

If Jesus were a created heavenly being, irresolvable tensions would arise:

- How can a creature do everything the Father does?
- How can a creature give life to whom it wills?

- How can a creature demand the same honor as the Father?
- How can a creature judge all humanity?
- How can a creature send out the angels as “its angels”?
- How can a creature claim the glory it possessed with the Father before the world’s creation?
- How can a creature perform YHWH’s Old Testament works?
- How can a creature receive the worship of all angels?

The category of a particularly exalted creature does not suffice to explain these statements.

> **THE ALTERNATIVE**
> Either Jesus belongs to the created heavenly world and is not like YHWH, or he belongs as eternal Son to the Creator’s unique identity. The New Testament clearly chooses the second possibility.

Conclusion

Psalm 89:7–10 declares that no one among heavenly beings is like YHWH. YHWH alone stands incomparably above the heavenly council of the holy ones and rules the raging sea.

The New Testament does not present Jesus as an exception within the created heavenly world. Rather, it shows:

- Jesus stills the waves by his authoritative word.
- He likewise does everything the Father does.
- He gives life to whom he wills.
- All are to honor him as they honor the Father.
- He comes as Son of Man on the clouds.
- He possesses the glory he had with the Father before the world’s creation.
- All holy angels accompany and worship him.
- He sits on his throne and judges all nations.

One should therefore not say that Jesus is another god or a particularly elevated “son of gods” comparable with YHWH.

More precisely:

> **PRECISE CONCLUSION**
> Jesus Christ is not the Father. As eternal Son, however, he belongs fully to the unique divine identity of the one YHWH. He does YHWH’s works, possesses YHWH’s glory, and comes on the clouds as divine Son of Man, accompanied by the hosts of heaven.

The “no one” of Psalm 89 remains unrestrictedly valid. Jesus’s deity does not contradict it. It shows that Jesus never belonged to the created beings with whom YHWH is compared there.