

DO YOU BELIEVE?
A BOOK SERIES FROM RATIO CHRISTI
- BOOK 3 -

IS JESUS GOD?

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 RATIO
CHRISTI

FAITH & REASON are at odds in our culture. For many, faith has come to mean little more than wishful thinking and blind belief. Such a concept is completely foreign to the pages of Scripture and historical Christianity. As Edward Feser notes, “In short, reason tells us that there is a God and that he has revealed such-and-such a truth; faith is then a matter of believing what reason has shown God to have revealed. In that sense faith is not only not at odds with reason but is grounded in reason.”

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A FUNDAMENTAL belief of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is God. To state the matter more completely, Christianity historically has taught that Jesus Christ is the eternal, divine Son, fully and completely God in nature and status, and that he humbled himself to become a man in order to die on the cross and rise from the dead for our redemption. This belief derived from the teachings of the New Testament, was affirmed explicitly in the Nicene Creed (4th century) and the Definition of Chalcedon (5th century), and is officially taught by the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, by all of the major branches of Protestantism (Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Reformed, Baptists, and Methodists), and by the largest Pentecostal and charismatic churches (Assemblies of God, Calvary Chapels).¹

Not all religious groups identifying themselves as Christians agree that Jesus is God. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many other such groups espouse different beliefs about who and what Jesus is. Islam, though not a Christian religion, recognizes Jesus as a great prophet but denies that he is divine. All of these religions challenge the traditional Christian view of Jesus Christ as God incarnate. In addition, skeptics consider the belief that Jesus was God to be myth.

Christians have nothing to fear from these challenges to what we believe about Christ. If Jesus is God as Christianity historically has taught, then we should find that the evidence supports this belief. On the other hand, if the evidence were to show that Jesus was not God, we would certainly want to know it. So then, let's take a careful look at this question.

¹ Official confessions and statements of faith from most of these branches of Christianity are found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols., rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984).

I. JESUS IS NOT GOD THE FATHER

We should begin by clarifying what Christianity does *not* mean when it affirms that Jesus is God. First, we do not mean that Jesus is the Father. Anyone who has even the most cursory knowledge of the Gospels knows that Jesus prayed to the Father (Matt. 11:25-26; 26:39, 42; Luke 10:21; 22:42; 23:34, 46; John 11:41; 12:27-28; 17:1-26). On the cross, Jesus addressed the Father with the words, “My God, my God” (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), and he referred to the Father as “my God” (John 20:17).² When he prayed to the Father on the night before his crucifixion, Jesus called the Father “the only true God” (John 17:3).

None of these things that Jesus said is inconsistent or incompatible with the traditional Christian belief in the deity of Christ. Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ is the divine Son, not that Jesus is God the Father. We do not think, as many critics of Christianity commonly claim, that Jesus prayed to himself. Jesus, the Son, prayed to the Father.

Again, in the Gospel of John, Jesus frequently says that the Father “sent” him, the Son (John 5:23, 36-37; 6:44, 57; 8:16, 18, 42; 10:36; 12:49; 17:21, 25; 20:21). This obviously does not mean that Jesus sent himself. These passages have always been part of the Christian Bible and are by no means a surprise to well-informed Christians.

If Jesus is not the Father, and if the Father is God—even “the only true God”—what do Christians mean when they say that Jesus is God? The short answer is that we mean that Jesus, as the eternal Son of God the Father, is just as much divine as the Father, sharing fully in his attributes and prerogatives. The Father and the Son are both deity by nature, co-existing eternally with the same unique and infinite power, knowledge, and glory. Their eternal unity and likeness are uniquely perfect in such a way that we can legitimately speak of them as one God. In other words, there is one transcendent, eternal Creator, who made and rules all things, and this Creator has revealed himself to exist eternally in the persons of the Father and the Son, as well as a third person called the Holy Spirit. In Christian theology this idea, which brings together everything the Bible teaches about God, is called the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Trinity is a complex concept, and the various groups that deny that Jesus is God also deny the doctrine of the Trinity. For now, the point to grasp is that this doctrine does not make the mistake of claiming that Jesus is God the Father.³ Jesus is one God with the Father, but he is someone personally distinct from the Father. As we get into the New Testament evidence that Jesus is God, we will find considerable support along the way for the doctrine of the Trinity as well.

² Biblical quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

³ Oneness Pentecostalism does teach that Jesus is God the Father, but this movement also rejects the doctrine of the Trinity.

II. JESUS IS A MAN

The other clarification we need to make is that when Christians affirm that Jesus is God, they are not ignoring the fact that Jesus was (and is) a man. The belief that Jesus is human is basic to Christianity. The creeds and confessions of the various major branches of Christianity are just as clear about the humanity of Christ as they are about his deity.

The New Testament is quite explicit about Jesus being fully and completely human (Acts 2:22; 17:31; Rom. 5:15, 17; 1 Cor. 15:47-49; 1 Tim. 2:5). He was born (Matt. 1:16; 2:1-4; Luke 1:35; 2:11; Gal. 4:4), grew up (Luke 2:40, 52), became hungry if he did not eat (Matt. 4:2; 21:18; Mark 11:12; Luke 4:2), became tired (John 4:6), slept (Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38; Luke 8:23), cried (John 11:35), and died (Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; Rom. 5:6, 8; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; etc.).

As a man, Jesus Christ partook of all of our normal experiences of life as finite, corporeal beings in the physical, space-time world. The Bible says that he was like us in every way as a human being except in one way: although he experienced temptation just as we do, he never sinned (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-15; see also 1 Peter 2:22).

What Christianity teaches about Jesus, then, is not simply that he is God, but that he is God *incarnate*. If this seems difficult to understand, that shows you are paying attention. Jesus was a puzzling person during his earthly lifetime. Throughout the Gospels we find people asking: Who is this? Why does he speak this way? How is he able to do these things? and so on (e.g., Matt. 7:28-29; 8:27; 21:20, 23; Mark 2:7; 4:41; Luke 9:9; John 8:25). Jesus himself commented, “No one knows the Son except the Father” (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22; see also John 14:7-10). The passing centuries have not eliminated the sense of mystery about him. Any simple answer about Jesus is likely to be wrong, or at least incomplete.

In any case, the *apparent* contradictions that arise from affirming that Jesus is both God and man are not problems created by later theological speculation. These puzzles or difficulties arise from the teachings of the New Testament itself. The descriptions of Jesus as human appear in the same writings alongside statements expressing his divine powers and status. For example, even though Jesus had a body (John 2:21) and was located in one place at a time (John 11:21, 32), he could act from afar, healing someone without being physically present with him (John 4:46-54). We call such seemingly conflicting truths *paradoxes*. A paradox is a situation in which two apparently contradictory ideas are both true. There are paradoxes in nature, such as the fact that light behaves like a stream of particles but also like waves. When we encounter a paradox, the proper thing to do is not to reject one part of it but to accept that reality sometimes differs from our expectations.

III. THINGS JESUS NEVER SAID

As you may already know, the Gospels do not report Jesus ever making the statement, “I am God,” or any similar statement such as “I am Almighty God” or “I am the Lord your God.” Opponents of the doctrine that Jesus is God are naturally quick to point out that he never made any of these statements. Sometimes this fact is pointed out breathlessly as though it were some surprising discovery that all of Christendom has been trying hard to suppress. Nothing could be further from the truth. Christians are well aware that Jesus did not make such statements. Christians are the ones who have been copying and translating the Gospels for nearly two thousand years!

There are many other things that Jesus never said.

For example, Jesus never said, “I am Michael the archangel.” Yet, Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus was the archangel.

Jesus also never said, “I was conceived and born of a virgin,” or “My mother Mary was a virgin when she conceived me by the Holy Spirit.” Yet advocates of the position sometimes called Biblical Unitarianism believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, yet they deny that he was God. Muslims also affirm the virgin birth of Jesus but not his deity. Never does Jesus say, “I am not God, but only his prophet,” or, “I am only a man through whom God speaks.”

Jesus never said, “I am the firstborn spirit son of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother,” or “I am one of the three Gods who make up the Godhead.” Nor did Jesus ever say, “I am the only begotten son of God in the flesh” or “God is my literal father in the flesh and Mary is my mother.” Yet these statements express what Mormonism teaches about Jesus Christ.

The fact that the Gospels do not record Jesus making any of these statements does not prove that none of the ideas the statements express is true. Pointing out that Jesus did not make a particular statement, as though this fact counts against that statement being true, is a fallacious argument from silence. Such an argument is invalid whether it is being used to criticize the traditional Christian view of Jesus or it is being used to criticize someone else’s view of Jesus. Conclusions need to be based on the evidence we do have, not on the evidence we don’t have. The argument in this context implicitly amounts to saying, “I will not accept your view of Jesus Christ unless I am shown in the Gospels where Jesus affirmed the idea in the words that I specify he should have used.”

Another problem with objecting to the deity of Christ in this way is that the objection would be almost beyond answering no matter what the evidence. Suppose Jesus had said, “I am God.” If he had, Jehovah’s Witnesses might insist that the text has been mistranslated and that he meant only that he was a god, a divine or godlike person. We

know this is a likely response because it is exactly what Jehovah's Witnesses claim about John 1:1, in which Jesus is called "God." Another way of finessing the statement away, an approach taken by other groups as well, might be to claim that Jesus meant only that he functioned in God's place as God's agent or representative. Again, this way of handling texts in which the New Testament writers call Jesus "God" is quite common among critics of the traditional belief. So, it is unlikely that any explicit statement by Jesus, made in the vocabulary of his first-century Jewish culture, would satisfy everyone.

Of course, hypothetically Jesus could have made a statement explicitly anticipating and precluding all future misinterpretations, such as, "I am not merely an agent of God, but I myself am ontologically the Almighty God, the eternal divine Son, second person of the Trinity, a hypostatic union of deity and humanity, God in the flesh"! Had he done so, his Galilean disciples—along with the learned scribes and Pharisees—would most likely have responded, "Huh?" The absurdity of demanding that Jesus be recorded as having made such a statement should be obvious.

There are two points here of importance. First, we need to base our view about Jesus on the information we have, rather than complaining that the information doesn't come in the precise form we imagine it should. Second, those who criticize the traditional Christian belief that Jesus is God should bear at least a similar burden of proof as they wish to impose on us. There is no reason why the traditional view should be subject to a different set of rules than contrary views.

IV. THE HUMILITY OF JESUS

Jesus was less than explicit not only about his divine identity but also about his status as the Messiah (in Greek, *christos*, “Christ”). At one point, people complained that Jesus had not told them plainly whether he was the Christ (John 10:24). Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus ever say, “I am the Christ,” although on a few occasions he accepted that title when asked (Matt. 16:16-17; 26:63-64; Mark 14:61-62; John 4:25-26). On one of those occasions, after acknowledging Peter’s statement that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus actually instructed his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ (Matt. 16:16-20; Mark 8:29-30; Luke 9:20-21). Jesus also often instructed people to whom he had granted healing not to tell others about him (Matt. 8:4; 12:14-16; Mark 3:12). He even stopped demons from speaking because they knew he was the Christ (Luke 4:41)!

Jesus evidently did not want people publicly referring to him as the Messiah or Christ because most Jewish people in his time had certain preconceptions about what the Messiah was supposed to do. Specifically, many Jews were hoping the Messiah would be a military leader who would drive the Romans out of the land of Israel and establish a glorious, independent Jewish kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital city. Jesus’ own disciples held to this paradigm and did not overcome it right away even after Jesus’ resurrection (Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6).

If Jesus was this cautious about broadcasting that he was the Messiah, we should not be surprised at all that he was likewise cautious about identifying himself as God or describing himself as divine. We can find only one place where Jesus explicitly stated, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36), and even that statement apart from context could be taken in more than one way. In context, Jesus was making a number of statements that his Jewish audience considered blasphemous because they amounted implicitly to claims to be God (10:31-33, 39). Nevertheless, we find consistently throughout the Gospels that Jesus expressed all divine claims about himself in veiled, ambiguous, or indirect ways, especially in public. Why did he do that? Two reasons seem likely to have been factors.

A likely first reason is that if Jesus had stated explicitly that he was God, he would almost certainly have been misunderstood in his first-century Jewish context as claiming to be God the Father. As we have seen, the New Testament is quite clear that Jesus was not the Father. Nor would it have clarified matters adequately if Jesus had said something about being God but not the Father. Without sufficient context to make the distinction meaningful, it would likely have just sounded confusing. Indeed, to many people it still sounds confusing; the point is that such confusion would have been virtually unavoidable before Jesus’ resurrection. Instead of offering an abstract theological explanation of who he was, Jesus demonstrated who he was by his actions and the way

he spoke. He lived as someone who was distinct from God and yet as someone who did the things that only God could do and who spoke as though he had the same authority as God. Once he had lived, died, and risen from the dead, and the Holy Spirit had come upon the disciples in a new and powerful way, they began to understand Jesus was God in a way that did not confuse him with the Father.

The second reason that Jesus did not speak openly or explicitly about being God was that doing so would have run counter to his purpose. Jesus came to live as one of us, to die for us, and by doing so, to reconcile us to God the Father—to restore us to a good relationship with the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 14:6; 17:4). In a way, you could say that in Jesus, God came into the world *incognito*, somewhat like a king temporarily disguising himself as a peasant in order to mix with the people and help them in a way that he could not have done had he rode into the village with his army. In order to accomplish his mission, Jesus humbled himself by living among his people with no royal finery, no material wealth, and no ostentatious displays of power. Rather than exalting himself as God, Jesus came in gentle humility. He himself stated the principle by which he lived: “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). Instead of seeking his own honor, Jesus sought to honor and glorify the Father (Matt. 5:16; John 7:18; 8:49-50; 12:28; 17:4), trusting in the Father to honor and glorify him at the proper time and in a way that would further glorify the Father (John 8:54; 11:4; 13:31-32; 14:13; 16:14; 17:1, 5). Years later, the apostle Paul put it this way:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHIL. 2:5-11 NRSV

V. THE SON OF GOD

The Gospels report Jesus referring to the Father as someone distinct from himself about 175 times. Jesus' practice of constantly referring to the Father is perhaps the most basic way in which he implicitly revealed his divine identity while distinguishing himself from God the Father. Jesus referred to himself directly as "the Son of God" only once (John 10:36; cf. 5:25; 11:4; and see Matt. 27:43). On multiple occasions, he referred to himself indirectly or in the third person as "the Son." We find such statements reported in all four Gospels (Matt. 11:27 = Luke 10:22 [3x each]; Matt. 24:36 = Mark 13:32; Matt. 28:19; John 3:35-36 [3x]; 5:19-26 [9x]; 6:40; 8:36; 14:13; 17:1). Although Jesus used the name "God" about 194 times in the Gospels (including 48 references to "the kingdom of God"), he addressed the Father as "God" only once. When he was dying on the cross, Jesus quoted the first line of Psalm 22 as a prayer expressing his feeling of abandonment at that moment (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

The Bible speaks of God's "son" or "sons" in a variety of contexts. Biblical texts refer to Adam, Israel, Israelites, Solomon, the Davidic king, angels, Christian believers, and future perfected human beings as God's "son" or "sons."⁴ Many of these uses have overlapping meanings or senses, but one must be careful not to draw direct equivalencies that may obscure differing nuances or connotations. Obviously, all of these uses suggest some sort of significant or special relationship with God, but within this generalization there is much room for diversity as to just what that significance is.

In several places, the New Testament refers to Jesus as "the Son of God" in a way that at least closely associates that title with the title Messiah or Christ (Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Mark 1:1; 14:61; Luke 4:41; John 11:27; 20:31). Some people think that the title "Son of God" is simply another title for the Messiah and conclude that it does not connote his deity. We should take a close look at this interpretation.

All four Gospels report that the Sanhedrin—the Jewish council of priests, teachers, and other religious leaders in Jerusalem—judged Jesus worthy of death because of his claim to be the Son of God (Matt. 26:63-66; Mark 14:61-64; Luke 22:70-71; John 19:7). Matthew and Mark quote the Sanhedrin as condemning Jesus' claim as "blasphemy" and therefore as deserving death (Matt. 26:65-66; Mark 14:64). Some religious groups claim that when Jesus agreed he was the Son of God he was only acknowledging that he was the Messiah, but the Jews would not have regarded claiming to be the Messiah as blasphemy. So, what did they think was Jesus' blasphemy?

We get some help answering this question from an earlier incident in which Jewish leaders made the same accusation against Jesus. Early in his ministry, some scribes ac-

4 D. A. Carson, *Jesus the Son of God: A Christological Title Often Overlooked, Sometimes Misunderstood, and Currently Disputed* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13, 15, 28–34.

cused Jesus of blasphemy when he forgave a paralyzed man's sins (Matt. 9:3; Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21). Mark and Luke both report that the scribes viewed Jesus' act as blasphemy because, as they asked, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" In this instance, it is clear that Jesus' alleged "blasphemy" consisted of *claiming to exercise a prerogative belonging only to God*. The scribes' rhetorical question echoes the Shema, which was the Jewish confession that the Lord was God alone (Deut. 6:4), and thus indicates that they saw Jesus' act as contravening the Jewish commitment to monotheism.

The scribes' opinion that Jesus had committed blasphemy by claiming to do what God alone can do (by forgiving sins) assumes the same kind of blasphemy as the high priest's formal accusation at Jesus' trial. In the structure of Mark's Gospel, the two scenes are the first and last confrontations between Jesus and his religious critics (Mark 2:1-12; 14:53-65). Scribes play a role in both confrontations (2:6; 14:53). On both occasions, Jesus responds to his critics by referring to himself as the Son of Man (2:10; 14:62). So, when his critics accuse him in both instances of blasphemy (2:7; 14:64), it seems likely that both accusations have the same sort of offense in mind. Jesus' critics think he has committed blasphemy by claiming prerogatives belonging only to God. The divine prerogative that Jesus claimed in response to the Sanhedrin was sitting at God's right hand in heaven (14:62).⁵

There is an interesting story in the Babylonian Talmud that probably typifies Jewish opinion on this subject. According to the Talmud, Rabbi Akiba (a rabbi of the early second century AD) floated the idea that Daniel 7:9 meant that the Davidic Messiah would sit on a throne alongside God. Even this interpretive suggestion from a respected rabbi was met with a sharp warning not to "profane" God. The account goes on to report that Akiba accepted an alternate interpretation, according to which the thrones represented God's attributes of justice and mercy. Even this explanation was unacceptable to some rabbis.

There is another comment attributed in the Jerusalem Talmud to Rabbi Abbahu (ca. AD 300) of interest: "If a man says, 'I am God,' he lieth, and if he say, 'I am the son of man,' he will have to repent, and if he say, 'I shall go up to heaven,' he will not do it, nor achieve what he promises" (*Ta'anit* 2.65b). The three parts of Abbahu's saying, which were made in the context of criticizing Christianity,⁶ correspond to the three parts of Jesus' response to the high priest at his trial: "I am"; "and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power"; "and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

This rabbinical saying (admittedly dating from over 250 years after the fact) suggests that the Jewish leaders also construed Jesus' words "I am" as a claim to be God. In context, those words "I am" could mean simply an affirmative re-

⁵ An important study of this passage is Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism: The Charge against Jesus in Mark 14:53-65* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

⁶ Kaufmann Kohler, "Abbahu," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906), 1:37.

sponse to the high priest's question, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" (v. 61). This is clearly how Matthew understands it (Matt. 26:64; cf. Luke 22:70). However, Jesus' words "I am" in the context of claiming the right to rule from the throne of God are a claim to a status on the same level as God.

In John's Gospel, opponents of Jesus threatened to stone him, as they explained, "for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God" (John 10:33). Jesus' opponents here stated explicitly what they meant in this instance by blasphemy was that Jesus was in some way claiming to be God. In context, Jesus had just claimed to do his works in the name of the Father (v. 25), to be the Shepherd of the sheep (v. 26), to give eternal life to them (v. 27), and to prevent anyone from snatching them out of his hand, just as the Father does (vv. 28-29; cf. Deut. 32:39). He then concluded that in asserting these divine prerogatives, he is claiming, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Here again there is an allusion to the *Shema*, the Jewish confession of monotheism. Instead of simply saying that God is one, Jesus said that he and the Father are one. It is not hard to see how Jesus' opponents drew the conclusion they did. Clearly, they understood Jesus to be claiming to do things that only God can do—just as in the incident when he forgave the sins of the paralyzed man. His statement including himself in the oneness of God confirmed that he was in fact claiming to be God. The Jews had already tried twice to kill Jesus for making such statements (John 5:17-18; 8:58-59), and now they tried a third time (10:31-39).

The evidence from the Gospels, then, shows that Jesus' claim to be the Son of God could be understood in two ways. On one level, his claim could generally be understood as a claim to be the Davidic royal Messiah. On another level, however, the way Jesus spoke about himself as the Son of God implied something far greater about himself. He was implicitly claiming to be a divine person with the same power and authority as God.

VI. EXPLICIT REFERENCES TO JESUS AS GOD

Although Jesus did not explicitly call himself God, for reasons we have explained, the apostles did refer to him directly as God. Let's look at some of these references.

“The Word Was God” (John 1:1)

John's Gospel begins, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This is the opening statement of a passage commonly called the Johannine Prologue (1:1-18). It introduces Jesus Christ as the divine Word (in Greek, *Logos*) come into the world for our salvation. The apex of the passage is John's statement, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). Here John equates the Word with the Son, who of course is Jesus Christ. Hence John goes on to say that “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (1:17).

The opening sentence of the Prologue tells us three things about the Word. First, it tells us that the Word existed “in the beginning.” These words, the very first words of the Gospel, echo the first words of the Old Testament, “*In the beginning* God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). What John is saying is that when God created the world, the Word was already existing. The Word was not something God made, or John would have written, “In the beginning the Word came to be.” Rather, the Word already “was,” existing without beginning. In short, the Word was eternal.

Second, John says, “the Word was with God.” This phrase in Greek, *pros ton theon*, means “with God” or “to God” depending on context. It indicates that the Word existed in close association with or relationship to God. In John's usage, this key phrase expresses the idea that the Word was a divine person existing with God. Thus, later in the Gospel, John says that Jesus “had come from God and was going to God [*pros ton theon*]” (John 13:3). Christ was the divine Word who had existed before creation with God, who had come in the flesh to bring us grace and truth, and who was returning to be with God after his death and resurrection.

Third, John says, “the Word was God.” There is a subtlety in John's wording here that has been the focal point of a great deal of controversy. In the second clause of John 1:1, John says that the Word was with “God,” using the Greek article (*ton theon*). (It is sometimes called the definite article, but this term is a bit misleading, since ancient Greek did not have an indefinite article.) If we translated the article woodenly in English, John's statement would be translated, “and the Word was with the God.” In English, we usually do not translate the article when used with names, including the name God. In the third clause, John says that the Word was “God,” without using the

article. The omission of the article has been discussed almost endlessly in modern debates about the meaning of John 1:1. It is doubtful that much should be read into this grammatical feature. The Greek word for God, *theos*, occurs eight times in the Prologue, and it has the article only in the expression “with God” (*pros ton theon*, John 1:1, 2). Yet everyone agrees that it means “God” in those places where it refers to the Father (John 1:6, 12, 13, 18a), even though the article is not used in those occurrences.

There are other places in John’s writings where the word *theos* occurs both with and without the article in the same sentence, yet everyone agrees it means “God” in both occurrences:

- “...we know that you are a teacher come from God [theou], for no one can do these signs that you do unless God [ho theos] is with him” (John 3:2).
- “...be had come from God [theou] and was going back to God [ton theon]” (John 13:3).
- “No one has ever seen God [theon]; if we love one another, God [ho theos] abides in us...” (1 John 4:12).

John’s omission of the article in John 1:1, if it has any significance at all, may signal two things. First, it may distinguish “the Word” as the subject of the clause rather than “God,” so that in English we should translate it “the Word was God” rather than “God was the Word.” Second, omitting the article may indicate we should not understand John to mean the Word was identical to the person called “God” with whom the Word existed in the beginning. That is, John does not mean that the Word was God the Father. As we saw earlier, the New Testament consistently distinguishes between Jesus Christ the Son and God the Father, even while it teaches the Son is just as much divine as the Father.

“My Lord and My God” (John 20:28)

Unlike John 1:1, there is no significant debate about the grammar or translation of John 20:28. The apostle Thomas, upon seeing the risen Christ, responds, “My Lord and my God!” Nor has there been much dispute among scholars that the text means Thomas was calling Jesus his Lord and God.

The wording of the Greek text is as explicit and emphatic as it could be. John writes, “Thomas answered and said to him [i.e., to Jesus], ‘My Lord and my God!’” The Greek wording of Thomas’s confession is *ho kurios mou kai ho theos mou*, “The Lord of me and the God of me.” Thomas’s words echo statements addressed in the Psalms to the LORD (Jehovah), especially the following: “Wake up! Bestir yourself for my defense, for my cause, my God and my Lord [*ho theos mou kai ho kurios mou*]!” (Ps. 35:23 [34:23 LXX]).⁷

⁷ The abbreviation LXX stands for Septuagint, a term used somewhat loosely to refer to the ancient Greek translation or translations of the Hebrew Old Testament in use at the time the New Testament was written. The standard chapter and verse numbers for some passages in the LXX (especially in Psalms and Jeremiah) differ somewhat from the English Bible.

These words parallel those in John 20:28 exactly except for reversing “God” and “Lord.”

John goes on to say that he wrote the Gospel so that its readers might believe “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). It is illegitimate to pit verse 31 against verse 28 or to pit verse 28 against verse 31. John clearly intends for us to understand that Jesus is both “God” and “the Son of God.” In his theology, these are complementary (even if paradoxical) truths.

It is no accident these two references to Christ as God come at the very beginning of the Gospel of John (1:1) and at the climax of the Gospel’s narrative (20:28).⁸ These two statements speak of Christ as God before creation and after his resurrection. John thus forcefully emphasizes that Jesus Christ is truly God.

“Our Great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13)

In his epistle to Titus, the apostle Paul⁹ states that Christians are “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Although a minority of modern commentators disagree, the evidence strongly supports the view Paul calls Jesus God here. This evidence is both grammatical and contextual.

Grammatically, Paul’s statement has a feature first analyzed formally by the Christian abolitionist Granville Sharp over two centuries ago. For that reason, this grammatical feature is often discussed as Sharp’s rule (though Sharp actually discussed six different rules). Without getting too technical, the idea is that when an ancient Greek writer connected two singular personal nouns (father, king, brother, etc.) with “and” (Greek, *καί*), using the article (“the”) in front of the first noun but not the second, the two nouns refer to the same person. Here are just some of the many examples of this construction elsewhere in the New Testament:

- *Jesus is called “the son of Mary and brother of James” (Mark 6:3)*
- *“Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord” (Eph. 6:21)*
- *“Timothy, our brother [lit., “the brother of us] and God’s servant” (1 Thess. 3:2)*
- *“The King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15)*
- *Jesus is called “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (Heb. 3:1)*
- *Jesus is called “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2)*
- *James calls God “the Lord and Father” (James 3:9)*
- *Jesus is called “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25)*

⁸ John 20:30-31 looks like a conclusion to the Gospel, with John 21 reading like an appendix.

⁹ Most non-conservative scholars today dispute that Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy or Titus. For an excellent defense of Paul as the author, see Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 9-88.

- “Blessed be...the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3)
- Paul refers to Jesus’ Father as “our God and Father” (lit., “the God and Father of us,” Gal. 1:4; Phil. 4:20; 1 Thess. 1:3; 3:11, 13; see also Rom. 15:6; 1 Cor. 15:24; 2 Cor. 1:3a)

Examples could be multiplied. The point is not that this is some absolute rule that no ancient Greek writer could ever violate (although genuine exceptions are rare).¹⁰ Rather, the point is that the most grammatically natural way to read all of these texts is to understand the two nouns joined in this way as referring to the same person. So, when Paul refers to “**the great God and Savior** of us Jesus Christ” (*tou megalou theou kai sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou*), the most grammatically natural way to understand Paul is that Jesus Christ is both God and Savior.

There are also contextual indications confirming this interpretation. Perhaps the simplest point here is Paul says that what Christians are awaiting is his “appearing” (*epiphaneia*). This word occurs in the New Testament only in the Pauline epistles and only in reference to Jesus Christ, unless Titus 2:13 is the sole exception (see 2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 8). So then, if Paul says that Christians are waiting for “the appearing of...Jesus Christ,” then the titles “God” and “Savior” must also be titles of Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that Paul fails to distinguish Jesus from the Father. A few verses later, he says that “God our Savior... saved us” and that he poured out the Holy Spirit “on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6). By “God our Savior” in this context (see also Titus 1:3-4; 2:10) Paul clearly means God the Father.

“Your Throne, O God” (Hebrews 1:8)

The book of Hebrews begins with an extended argument for the superiority of the Son to the angels. His title “Son” marks him as superior (1:4-5). God commands all of the angels to worship the Son (1:6). The angels are mere servants while the Son is God (1:7-9). The Son is the Lord who made heaven and earth (1:10-12). The Son sits at the right hand of God in heaven, ruling with him from his very throne (1:13). The author supports each of these points with quotations from the Old Testament, especially from the Psalms. He supports his point that the Son is God by quoting from Psalm 45:

“But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.’”

HEB. 1:8-9

The writer’s quotation comes from Psalm 45:6-7, which reads essentially the same

¹⁰ The most thorough study of the rule is Daniel B. Wallace, *Granville Sharp’s Canon and Its Kin: Semantics and Significance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

way in the Old Testament Hebrew text and in the Greek translation (44:6-7 LXX). In the original context, the Psalmist is addressing the King of Israel (Ps. 45:1-5). Of course, the Israelite king was not literally God. The Jerusalem king in the Psalmist's era prefigured the Messiah, the ultimate descendant of David and the true eternal King. Language about the king that would be hyperbolic in reference to any of Israel's merely human kings ultimately applies to the Messiah (compare Acts 2:25-31). Thus, although those ancient, earthly Jerusalem kings were not God, "the Son," Jesus Christ, really is God.

Here again, the author speaks of the Son as God without confusing him with the Father. Hebrews 1:9, quoting Psalm 45:7, can even call the Father "your God," that is, Christ's God, because the Son had become a man and therefore become part of the creation he had made (Heb. 1:10). As a man, the incarnate Son honors the Father as his God (see also John 20:17; Rev. 3:12), while remaining God himself in both nature and status.

"Our God and Savior" (2 Peter 1:1)

The epistle of 2 Peter opens by speaking of its Christian readers as "those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). This verse uses the same construction in Greek that we saw in Titus 2:13. It literally reads, "the God of us and Savior Jesus Christ" (*tou theou hēmōn kai sōtēros Iēsou Christou*). In this same epistle, Jesus is four times called "our Lord and Savior" or "the Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18), again using the same construction. No one doubts that in all four of these texts Jesus is called both "Lord" and "Savior."

Some people object to the conclusion that 2 Peter 1:1 calls Jesus God by pointing out that in verse 2 "Jesus our Lord" is distinguished from "God." But we have already seen several times that the New Testament writers call Jesus "God" while also distinguishing him from God the Father:

- *John 1:1 says that the Word (the preincarnate Christ) was "with God" and yet "was God."*
- *John quotes Thomas calling Jesus "my God" and then states that Jesus is "the Son of God" (John 20:28, 31).*
- *Paul refers both to "God our Savior," meaning the Father, and "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:10, 13; 3:4-6).*
- *Hebrews addresses the Son as "O God" and refers to the Father as "your God," that is, the Son's God (Heb. 1:8-9).*
- *2 Peter refers to "our God and Savior Jesus Christ" and then distinguishes "Jesus our Lord" from "God" (2 Peter 1:1-2).*

These passages exhibit a pattern in which the title God refers to the Father (as it usually does in the New Testament) yet is also applied in the immediate context to the Son. A sound Christian doctrine must take this pattern into account.

VII. JESUS IS THE LORD JEHOVAH

In addition to calling Jesus “God,” the New Testament also frequently speaks of him as “Lord” in contexts in which this title stands for *Yahweh*, the Old Testament Hebrew name of God. The Hebrew name *Yahweh* (YHWH) is commonly represented in English as *Jehovah*, and in the KJV and most English versions is translated as “the LORD” (with all capital letters). In the Old Testament, Yahweh is the one God who created all things. “I am the LORD [*Yahweh*], who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself” (Is. 44:24). Yahweh was not simply the architect of creation, but its only creator and maker. In contrast to the popular pagan religions of the time that credited a group of deities with making the world, the Biblical prophets in Israel clearly taught that one God had made everything (see also Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 102:25; Isa. 37:16; 40:25-26; 42:5; Jer. 10:16; 51:19). The New Testament affirms this basic Biblical doctrine that one God “created all things” (Rev. 4:11; see also Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24).

Although the Hebrew name *Yahweh* does not appear in the New Testament, the Greek text commonly uses the word *kurios* (“Lord”) in place of *Yahweh* in quotations using the divine name in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. In numerous places, the New Testament calls Jesus Christ “Lord” in contexts that clearly identify him as the Lord Yahweh of the Old Testament. Paul does so three times just in the opening ten verses of 1 Corinthians:

- *Christians are “all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:2). The Old Testament taught that one should call on the name of the Yahweh (Joel 2:32; see also Rom. 10:9-13).*
- *Christians hope to be found “blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8; see also 5:5), whereas the Old Testament spoke of that judgment day as “the day of Yahweh” (e.g., Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31). The allusion to “the day of the Lord” (cf. Joel 2:31) in the same context as “calling on the name of the Lord” (cf. Joel 2:32) makes it all the more likely that Paul’s language alludes directly to Joel (see also 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:18).*
- *Paul exhorts his readers “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:10), placing the focus on the name of the Lord Jesus that the Old Testament placed on the name of Yahweh (Exod. 3:15; 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 28:58; Ps. 8:1, 9; etc.).*

Paul identifies or equates Jesus with the Lord Yahweh several more times in 1

Corinthians (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:31, cf. Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 2:16, cf. Isa. 40:3; 1 Cor. 6:11, cf. Isa. 45:23; 1 Cor. 8:6, cf. Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 10:20-21, cf. Deut. 32:21-22; Mal. 1:7, 12).

Paul identifies Jesus as Lord (Yahweh) in other epistles. For example, Paul writes in Philippians:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHIL. 2:9-11

Many modern readers of the English text mistakenly think Paul is saying that at Jesus' resurrection, God the Father literally gave to Jesus a name he did not have previously. This understanding of God "bestowing" on Jesus a "name" simply will not work here. If we look in this passage for a specific "name" that might be meant, the only names we find are "Jesus" (v. 10) and "Lord" (v. 11). Yet Jesus had both of these names while still a humble mortal on earth (Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:11; John 13:13; etc.). Paul's point is not that Jesus received a new name he did not previously have, but that God the Father generously bestowed the highest possible honor on his Son, presenting Jesus to the world as Lord. Having humbled himself to become a man and die on the cross, Christ voluntarily depended on the Father to exalt and honor him.

For Jews, the name Yahweh was indeed "the name that is above every name." Thus, in Paul's Jewish religious context, his use of the term "Lord" for Jesus here would clearly be understood as standing for the name *Yahweh*. Moreover, Paul's wording here is drawn from an exclusive monotheistic passage in which Yahweh asserts that he alone is God and there is no other: "Turn to me and you shall be saved, those from the end of the earth. I am God and there is no other.... To me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God" (Isa. 45:22, 23 LXX).

As we saw in the passages that call Jesus "God," Paul refers to Jesus as "Lord" (meaning Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament) while distinguishing Jesus from the Father. Thus, Paul closes this passage by making clear that honoring Jesus as Lord does not detract from the honor that is properly due to the Father; rather, Paul insists, when we confess Jesus as Lord, we do so "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).

VIII. FIVE WAYS THE NEWTESTAMENT REVEALS JESUS AS GOD

We have examined a small number of famous passages in the New Testament in which Jesus is called “God” and “Lord.” These are key divine titles of Jesus and it is natural to start with such references to Christ. However, it is important to understand the deity of Christ pervades the New Testament, which presents Jesus as divine in a rich variety of ways. Most, if not all, of what the New Testament says on the subject can be analyzed into five basic concepts:

- **Honor:** Jesus receives the honors due to God.
- **Attributes:** Jesus possesses the attributes of God.
- **Names:** Jesus has the names of God.
- **Deeds:** Jesus performs the deeds of God.
- **Seat:** Jesus sits on the throne of God.

The acrostic **HANDS** (honor, attributes, names, deeds, seat) provides a convenient outline for remembering these five ways in which the New Testament reveals that Jesus is God.¹¹

Honors

Although Jesus did not explicitly call himself God, he tacitly claimed the status of God by expecting and accepting honors due to God alone. He expected people to honor him just as they honor the Father (John 5:23). He accepted worship in contexts that connoted religious devotion (Matt. 14:33; 28:17). He invited his followers to pray to him and expect him to answer their prayers (John 14:14). He encouraged them to place their faith or trust in him just as they had faith in God (Matt. 9:28; John 14:1). He demanded that they love him even more than their blood relatives (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26; John 14:15, 21; 15:10).

The New Testament writers confirm in many ways that Jesus is deserving of all divine honors. Christians, along with all of the angels, are to worship Christ (Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:14). They are to pray to Christ (Rom. 10:12-13; 2 Cor. 12:8-9; Rev. 22:20-21). They are to show him the same “fear of the Lord” as the Old Testament says we should show toward Yahweh (Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:14-16; see Prov. 1:7; Isa. 8:12-13). This is just a sampling of the divine honors accorded to the Lord Jesus.

¹¹ This acronym provides the outline in Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007).

Attributes

Jesus Christ made many statements either explicitly or implicitly claiming to possess divine attributes—characteristics that are true only of God. He claimed to be so like the Father that if you saw him you had seen the Father (John 14:7-10). He claimed to be omnipresent when he asserted that he would be present with his disciples wherever they gathered in his name (Matt. 18:20; see also Matt. 28:20). He claimed to be pre-existent even before creation, implying that he was eternal or without beginning (John 8:58-59; 17:5).

The New Testament recognizes Jesus Christ as fully divine in nature. Paul stated that the fullness of the divine nature dwells in Christ in bodily form (Col. 2:9). Other New Testament texts affirm the full, complete likeness of the Son to the Father (e.g., Col. 1:15a; Heb. 1:3). Christ is without beginning, existing before all things, or eternal (Col. 1:17; Heb. 7:3). He knows every thought of every human being (Acts 1:24; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 2:23). He is immutable or unchanging in his divine nature (Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8).

Names

As we have emphasized, Jesus avoided ever calling himself “God.” He let his disciples honor him with divine names as they came to recognize who he really was. We see this when Jesus accepted the designation “my Lord and my God” from Thomas (John 20:28), a confession that came only after Thomas had become convinced Jesus had indeed raised himself from the dead. The fact that such an explicit confession came only after Jesus’ resurrection confirms our view that Jesus sought to glorify and reveal the Father and waited for the Father to exalt him.

In addition to the titles “Lord” and “God,” the New Testament gives Jesus other notable divine names. Jesus referred to himself as the “bridegroom” of God’s people (Matt. 22:2; 25:1-13; Mark 2:19; cf. John 3:29), a title also applied to Jesus by the apostles (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9). The Book of Revelation calls Christ “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). It also calls him “the first and the last” and “the beginning and the end” (Rev. 1:7-8, 17b-18; 2:8; 22:12-13), synonymous titles that echo statements of Yahweh in the Book of Isaiah (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).

Deeds

Perhaps the main way in which Jesus presented himself as God was by his actions. Jesus let his actions, as it were, speak for themselves. He demonstrated mastery over the forces of nature in ways that recall Old Testament descriptions of God’s lordship over nature (e.g., Matt. 8:23-27; 14:13-33; see Ps. 77:16-20; 104:4-9; 107:23-30). He spoke as if his every word was God’s word, yet never used the language of prophets (“Thus says the Lord”), but instead often prefaced his remarks with “Amen I tell you” (Matt. 5:18, 26; Mark 3:28; Luke 4:24; John 1:51; etc.). He claimed the right to forgive people of all their sins (Matt. 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26), to raise the dead (John 5:28-29; 11:25-

26), to give life to whomever he chooses (John 5:21-26), and to be the final judge of all humanity (Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; John 5:22-23). He claimed the prerogative of sending the divine Holy Spirit from heaven (John 15:26; 16:7-14).

The apostolic writers likewise described Jesus Christ as doing the kinds of things that in Judaism were understood to be the works of God. Perhaps most notably, several New Testament texts affirm that the divine Son was actively involved in creating and even sustaining all things (John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2-3, 10). This is a crucial point because, as we saw earlier, it was a basic belief of Judaism taught in the Old Testament that Yahweh, the Lord God, was the sole creator and sustainer of all things. Jesus Christ is the source, along with the Father, of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:2-3; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2 John 2; Rev. 1:4; etc.; 2 Thess. 2:16-17). At the end of the age, the Lord Jesus will be the judge on the Day of Judgment (Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; John 5:22-23; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:23).

Seat

Finally, Jesus claimed divine status by asserting that he had all authority in the entire universe (Matt. 28:18), that he would sit on God's highest possible throne (Matt. 25:31; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43), ruling over absolutely everything (Matt. 11:25-27; Luke 10:21-22; John 3:35; 13:3; 16:15). As we saw earlier, it was Jesus' claim that he would share God's throne in heaven that provoked the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem to convict him of being a blasphemer and seeking to have him put to death (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69).

The New Testament writers strongly emphasize this aspect of the divine status of Jesus Christ. They affirm repeatedly that he shares God's throne at the Father's right hand (Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 1:20; 2:6; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21; 7:17; 22:1, 3). From that highest of all possible positions, Christ rules over all things (Acts 10:36; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; Phil. 2:10; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 1:2; 2:8; Rev. 5:13) forever (Eph. 1:19b-21; Heb. 1:8; Rev 11:15; cf. Eph. 5:5; Rev. 22:1, 3).

CONCLUSION

When all of these aspects of New Testament teaching are considered together, the conclusion that the authors considered Jesus Christ to be God is overwhelming. Moreover, there is extensive evidence throughout the Gospels that the apostles' view of Jesus as deity was rooted in what Jesus himself said and did. The belief that Jesus was God did not arise centuries later as a myth or legend but was based on Jesus' own teachings and actions. Within one generation after Jesus' death and resurrection, the apostles and their associates had produced over two dozen writings in which they expressed their belief in the deity of Christ in a rich variety of ways. The best explanation for this explosion of devotion to Jesus as God is that his actions, words, death, and resurrection had convinced his disciples that Jesus was in fact God incarnate.

IF YOU CONFESS...

The apostle Paul summed up the message he and the other apostles proclaimed as centered on who Jesus is—“that Jesus is Lord”—and what he has done for us—“that God raised him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9 – see the *Ratio Christi* booklet on the resurrection). Christ is the center of the Christian faith. Why is this important for us today?

First, we should examine ourselves to see if Christ is the center of *our* faith. To confess that Jesus is Lord means to honor him as the divine Son worthy of our complete trust and love. The deity of Christ is not a doctrine some Christians added to their religion to make it more mysterious. It is a recognition that the one who died and rose for us is our Creator and eternal King. The New Testament’s teaching about who Jesus is should move us both to worship him and to live for him.

Second, knowing that Jesus is eternal God in the flesh should give us confidence in telling others he is the only way of salvation. If Jesus had been simply a great prophet or teacher, he might have been just one among many. However, Jesus was and is those things and much more. He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) because he is God, the source of all life, come into our world to bring life from death. Frankly, this is something the founders of the other major world religions did not even claim to do. Muhammad, for example, claimed only to be a prophet calling on the world to submit to God’s will. In a sense, Jesus has no “competition” because he alone conquered death for us. Moses, Muhammad, the Buddha—they are all dead. Jesus, however, rose from the dead because he was Life incarnate. Knowing the truth about who Jesus is and what he has done for us should help us to proclaim boldly that people everywhere need to believe in him.

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