“Putting Jesus in His Place” is a meticulously researched and brilliant book on a subject that continues to remain significant even after two thousand years. Robert Bowman and Ed Komoszewski have given readers a unique and unparalleled resource—and one with life-changing implications. I commend this volume to you with much appreciation for their work.”

—Ravi Zacharias
Author and speaker

“Bowman and Komoszewski do a splendid job of showing that the divine identity of Jesus is not confined to a few key texts, but presented throughout the New Testament in a wide variety of ways. Their arguments are fully based on the best of recent scholarship, and explained in a way that all serious readers of the New Testament will appreciate.”

—Richard Bauckham
Professor of New Testament Studies and Bishop Wardlaw Professor
St. Mary’s College, University of St. Andrews

“An exciting, compelling, and user-friendly investigation of the full range of New Testament evidence for the unique divine identity of Jesus Christ, admirably suitable for the non-specialist reader, yet with detailed up-to-date specialist notes.”

—Murray J. Harris
Professor Emeritus of New Testament
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL

“The deity of Jesus Christ is central and foundational to the gospel. Those who have eyes to see will find it everywhere, and if your eyes are deficient this book is just the corrective you need. The work is convincing, clear, and scholarly. Most of all, the book is glorious, reminding us that Jesus is to be worshiped as our Lord, Savior, and God.”

—Thomas R. Schreiner
James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This is one of the finest pieces of readable scholarship ever written on the subject.”

—Gary DeMar
Author, speaker, and editor of Biblical Worldview magazine
“The authors have provided a readable and well-informed summary of a large body of scholarly work that shows a very early and very ‘high’ view of Jesus, not as something emerging by slow evolution, but as an explosively quick and remarkable phenomenon.”

—LARRY W. HURTADO
Professor of New Testament Language, Literature, and Theology
University of Edinburgh, Scotland

“Putting Jesus in His Place is a comprehensive apologetic from the Scriptures for the person and work of Jesus Christ. From his names to his nature, from his works to his worship, this book will lead you from the descriptive affirmations to the well-deserved adoration owed to our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This book should be in every home and library.”

—MARK L. BAILEY
President, Dallas Theological Seminary

“Putting Jesus in His Place is the finest and most comprehensive apologetic for the deity of Christ that I have yet encountered. It is my hope that this book will become a standard resource for educational institutions and for people who desire a clearer vision of the Lord Jesus.”

—KENNETH BOA
President, Reflections Ministries, Atlanta, GA
President, Trinity House Publishers, Atlanta, GA

“An exceedingly readable and intelligible book on a central—and hotly debated—theme of the Christian message. It gives not only rich biblical information to the reader but also practical pastoral guidance.”

—MARTIN HENGEL
Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Ancient Judaism
University of Tübingen, Germany

“Putting Jesus in His Place is a clearly written and carefully reasoned defense of the deity of Christ. Bowman and Komozewski present a virtually comprehensive case for embracing Jesus’ full and unqualified divinity. This book should be required reading in every church study group and in college and seminary classes.”

—KENNETH SAMPLES
Vice President for Theological and Philosophical Apologetics, Reasons to Believe
Author, A World of Difference
“I’m always looking for books that address pressing topics in a way that is academically solid yet available to a wide audience. *Putting Jesus in His Place* is just such a book. *Putting Jesus in His Place* will reassure Christians of the truth and prepare them to be articulate, well-informed defenders of this truth in the wider world.”

—MARK D. ROBERTS
Senior Pastor, Irvine Presbyterian Church
Author, *Can We Trust the Gospels?* and *Jesus Revealed*

“This book is a comprehensive study of all the material in the New Testament that testifies to or is consistent with the full deity of Jesus Christ, the sheer quantity of which may come as a surprise to some readers. There is helpful detailed discussion of many controversial passages that will be useful to students who want to go more deeply into the problems.”

—I. HOWARD MARSHALL
Professor Emeritus in New Testament
University of Aberdeen, Scotland

“*Putting Jesus in His Place* is a reader-friendly treatment of a difficult topic, one that is often neglected in New Testament scholarship. Bowman and Komoszewski clarify the issues, focus on the key passages, and mount an impressive defense of a cardinal Christian doctrine. Anyone who wonders about the divinity of Jesus should read this book.”

—CRAIG A. EVANS
Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament
Acadia Divinity College, Nova Scotia, Canada
Author, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*

“Finally, here is a book that lays out the case for the deity of Christ in clear, compelling, memorable language. *Putting Jesus in His Place* fills a huge gap by converting the best of biblical scholarship on the subject into language that anyone can understand. I thank God that Bowman and Komoszewski have combined their talents on this supremely important topic and well-written book. The church of the twenty-first century is in their debt.”

—DANIEL B. WALLACE
Executive Director, Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts
“You might be surprised to learn that the case for Christ’s deity has actually become stronger during the past couple of decades. If you graduated from seminary twenty years ago, you need to know that your notes are out of date. *Putting Jesus in His Place* puts together the best recent scholarship in one readable, memorable, and engaging volume.”

—FRED SANDERS
Associate Professor of Theology
Torrey Honors Institute, Biola University

“The authors make a convincing case as they discuss biblical texts, interact with important recent literature, and present the striking significance and entailments of Jesus’ divinity. A remarkable work!”

—PAUL COPAN
Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics
Palm Beach Atlantic University

“*Putting Jesus in His Place* is remarkably clear and uncluttered, but detailed end-notes interact with almost all of the significant, recent, relevant scholarship as well. Warmly to be commended.”

—CRAIG L. BLOMBERG
Distinguished Professor of New Testament
Denver Seminary

“Anyone who claims to believe the Bible or respect Jesus as a great prophet and yet denies the deity of Jesus Christ will be compelled by this book to give up one of those assertions. I recommend this book to everyone who doubts the deity of Jesus Christ or engages such a doubter in dialogue or debate.”

—ROGER E. OLSON
Professor of Theology
George W. Truett Theological Seminary

“Rarely have I seen such a comprehensive and deeply scholarly presentation in theology at such an accessible level—and on one of the most important topics anyone can study: the deity of Christ. I predict this will be a standard textbook on the subject and a much-used resource for anyone who wants to make the case for Jesus’ deity.”

—CRAIG J. HAZEN
Professor of Comparative Religion and Apologetics
Director, M.A. Program in Christian Apologetics
Biola University
Editor, *Philosophia Christi*
PUTTING JESUS IN HIS PLACE
THE CASE FOR THE DEITY OF CHRIST

ROBERT M. BOWMAN JR.
J. ED KOMOSZEWSKI
Robert M. Bowman Jr. (M.A., Fuller Theological Seminary) is the manager of Apologetics and Interfaith Evangelism for the North American Mission Board (http://www.4truth.net). For five years he was a lecturer in the M.A. in Christian Apologetics program at Biola University. He is the author of eleven other books, including Why You Should Believe in the Trinity and the Gold Medallion Award-winning book Faith Has Its Reasons (with Kenneth D. Boa).

J. Ed Komoszewski (Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary) is the founder of Christus Nexus (http://www.christusnexus.org), a non-profit organization devoted to researching, writing, and teaching on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He has taught biblical and theological studies at Northwestern College and currently serves as a director for Reclaiming the Mind Ministries. He is the coauthor of Reinventing Jesus.


For additional resources on the subject of this book, please visit us online at http://www.deityofchrist.com.
Contents

Tables ........................................................................................................ 13
Foreword by Darrell L. Bock ................................................................. 15
Introduction: Knowing Jesus as God ................................................. 17
Abbreviations ........................................................................................ 25

Part 1: The Devotion Revolution: Jesus Shares the Honors Due to God
1. All Glory, Laud, and Honor .......................................................... 29
2. The Worship of the Carpenter ...................................................... 37
3. What a Friend We Have in Jesus .................................................. 47
4. Sing to the Lord ............................................................................ 55
5. The Ultimate Reverence Package ............................................... 61

Part 2: Like Father, Like Son: Jesus Shares the Attributes of God
6. Beyond Resemblance ................................................................. 73
7. Jesus Existed Before He Was Born! ........................................... 81
8. Jesus Has Always Been There .................................................... 93
9. Jesus: The Right Stuff ............................................................... 103
10. He’s Got What It Takes ............................................................. 113

Part 3: Name Above All Names: Jesus Shares the Names of God
11. Name One .................................................................................. 127
12. Immanuel: God with Us ............................................................ 135
13. He Is Lord ................................................................................. 157
14. Jesus Is It from A to Z ............................................................... 171
Part 4: Infinitely Qualified: Jesus Shares in the Deeds That God Does
15. Meet Your Maker .................................................. 185
16. He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands .......................... 195
17. The Way, the Truth, and the Life ................................. 207
18. Here Comes the Judge ............................................. 223

Part 5: The Best Seat in the House: Jesus Shares the Seat of God’s Throne
19. Jesus Takes the Stand ............................................. 235
20. God’s Right-hand Man ............................................ 243
21. Jesus Takes His Seat .............................................. 255

Conclusion: The Case for the Deity of Christ ................. 267
Appendix: HANDS Review Tables ................................. 281
Notes ................................................................. 289
Recommended Resources ....................................... 365
Scripture Index .................................................. 367
# Tables

Doxologies to God and the Lamb in Revelation .......................................................... 35
Worship of Jesus vs. Worship of an Angel in Revelation ............................................. 44
Paul’s Contrast of the Lord’s Supper with Pagan Ritual Meals ................................. 67
The Paradoxical Person ................................................................................................. 122
Examples of Sharp’s Rule ......................................................................................... 151
“Our God/Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” in 2 Peter .................................................. 155
Confessing Jesus as “Lord” in Philippians 2 .............................................................. 167
Revering Christ as “Lord” in 1 Peter 3 ........................................................................ 169
“King of Kings and Lord of Lords” as a Divine Title ................................................. 174
God and Christ as “Our Savior” in Titus ................................................................. 175
“I Am” in Isaiah and John ......................................................................................... 178
“I Am the One Who Is” .............................................................................................. 181
The Roles of the Father and the Son in Creation ......................................................... 191
Affirmation and Proof in Hebrews 1 ........................................................................... 192
Jesus’ Trial Statement in Light of the Old Testament ............................................... 243
Believers and Christ in Revelation .............................................................................. 265
Jesus the Highly Exalted Lord ..................................................................................... 279
Honors ....................................................................................................................... 281
Attributes .................................................................................................................. 283
Names ......................................................................................................................... 284
Deeds ......................................................................................................................... 286
Seat ............................................................................................................................. 288
FOREWORD

Putting Jesus in His Place is not a typical book. After all, it deals with a complex subject in a manner that is academically responsible as well as clear and memorable. Many treatments of Jesus’ identity are detailed and informative, but they tend to leave a rather dry taste in one’s mouth. Rarely does one get to work through the meat of biblical teaching about who Jesus was and is in the pleasant-tasting way afforded by this book. This combination of intellectual rigor and eminent readability qualifies Putting Jesus in His Place for a pastor’s library, a sermon series, a Sunday school text, or even a required class on Christology.

The chefs for this dinner, Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, have prepared a five-course meal for us. Indeed, they have presented to us five different elements in the recipe that lead to a hearty appreciation of the biblical Jesus. The savory and idiomatic manner of the meal’s presentation makes the mixture of assorted and diverse—even potentially confusing—ingredients a success.

Once you’ve looked at this book’s presentation of the honors Jesus receives, the attributes he possesses, the names by which he is identified, the deeds he performs, and the seat he occupies in heaven, you’ll have a basic grasp of who Jesus is and what God has done through him. And if you’re so inclined, the notes and bibliography will take you even further, all the way to the most scholarly levels of the debate.

There are many works of theology and/or apologetics on the market that are sensitive to a popular audience yet fail to reflect the state of current discussions. That is not the case here. Putting Jesus in His Place looks at the
biblical witness to Jesus’ uniqueness from a variety of well-informed angles. In a world that often tries to domesticate Jesus or bring him down to our level, it is refreshing to have a book that sets forth in a direct and appealing manner who Jesus truly is.

This is a book you should devour and digest. It will give you a deeper understanding of Jesus’ true place at the center of all that exists and, most importantly, draw you closer to him. The table is set; the meal is fixed. Take a seat and enjoy a satisfying serving of the biblical witness to our unique Lord. Eat and be filled. My compliments to the chefs.

—Darrell L. Bock
Research Professor of New Testament Studies
Dallas Theological Seminary
INTRODUCTION

KNOWING JESUS AS GOD

There’s no denying it: Jesus is one of a kind. He is the central figure of the world’s largest religion (Christianity) and viewed as a major prophet in the world’s second largest religion (Islam). Most people, in fact, regard Jesus as one of the greatest human beings who ever lived. But this remarkable consensus begs the question: Why are there so many conflicting interpretations of Jesus?

Your Own Personal Jesus

Interpretations of Jesus are fraught with bias. He’s a powerful figure whom people want on their sides—and they’re willing to re-create him in their image to enlist his support. Animal-rights activists imagine a vegetarian Jesus. New Agers make him an example of finding the god within. And radical feminists strip him of divinity so that Christianity doesn’t appear sexist. “Frankly, it’s hard to escape the feeling that our culture has taken Jesus’ question ‘Who do you say that I am?’ and changed it to ‘Who do you want me to be?’”

It is an interesting irony, though, that the Jesus Seminar, a group of radically liberal scholars, warned, “Beware of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to you.” If only they had followed their own advice! From the start, the seminar was intent on finding a merely human Jesus who was concerned with radical equality and refused to make exclusive religious claims. In other words, they sought a Jesus who was, by today’s standards, politically correct. The seminar has been extraordinarily successful in getting publicity. In fact, their “findings” have been the cornerstone of several cover stories for Time magazine.
and the thread holding together two prime-time ABC News documentaries hosted by the late Peter Jennings.\textsuperscript{6}

Dan Brown excited interest in another way of looking at Jesus with his book-turned-movie \textit{The Da Vinci Code}.\textsuperscript{7} Although a novel, the book popularized a variety of misconceptions about the origins of Christianity. One especially troublesome bit of disinformation promulgated in the book is the claim that the deity of Jesus was not something embraced by his earliest followers but was, in fact, the invention of a council that convened nearly three hundred years after Jesus’ time. More than one scholar has demonstrated that \textit{The Da Vinci Code} shares more in common with conspiracy theories than with sober historical analysis,\textsuperscript{8} yet its message continues to resonate with contemporary culture.

\begin{quote}
Beware of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to you.
—\textsc{The Jesus Seminar}
\end{quote}

These are just a few examples of the many self-serving interpretations of Jesus that circulate today. What do they share in common? An aversion to the New Testament view of Jesus as God. As attracted to Jesus as a lot of people seem to be, many are looking for a merely human Jesus—or at least a Jesus who is entirely on their side of the line between Creator and creature. Why is this?

One scholar put his finger on the problem when he explained that belief in the deity of Jesus—his unique status among human beings as God in the flesh—implies that Jesus is the only way for people to be properly related to God.

Traditional orthodoxy says that Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate . . . who became man to die for the sins of the world and who founded the church to proclaim this to the ends of the earth, so that all who sincerely take Jesus as their Lord and Savior are justified by his atoning death and will inherit eternal life. It follows from this that Christianity, alone among the world religions, was founded by
God in person. God came down from heaven to earth and launched the salvific movement that came to be known as Christianity. From this premise it seems obvious that God must wish all human beings to enter this stream of saved life, so that Christianity shall supersede all the other world faiths. They may perhaps have some good in them and be able to function to some extent as a preparation for the gospel, but nevertheless Christianity alone is God’s own religion. . . . It is therefore divinely intended for all men and women without exception. All this follows logically from the central dogma of the deity of Jesus.  

It is remarkable, however, that the person who made this observation doesn’t believe in the deity of Jesus. He is, in fact, a well-known opponent of that doctrine. Among his many accomplishments, John Hick served as editor for the 1977 book titled The Myth of God Incarnate. (By “God incarnate” is meant that God came “in the flesh” as a human being.) Hick has seen more clearly than most that if Jesus was uniquely God incarnate, then he is also uniquely the way to God. And that is what really offends people today. Almost no one minds a strong affirmation of belief in Jesus. To suggest, however, that without Jesus people of other religions are missing something of eternal importance is regarded by many as an attack on the right of people to believe whatever they want. In an age when so many reject the idea that any one viewpoint is superior to another, that Jesus is regarded as uniquely God incarnate is the epitome of intolerance.

Back to the Sources

It’s easy to be tempted to focus our efforts on making Jesus “relevant” to today’s cosmopolitan, postmodern tastes. Non-Christians are becoming increasingly guarded—if not hostile—toward traditional Christian beliefs. By emphasizing Jesus’ humanity, some Christians are, indeed, bending over backward to make Christianity—and Christ himself—more “approachable.” They may not deny the deity of Jesus, but in practical terms his humanity overpowers his deity. In the end, though, a lack of appreciation of Jesus’ identity as God makes him less approachable. As New Testament scholar Grant Osborne warns, some of us have lost the holy reverence and awe that we should have toward Jesus:
Christians are guilty of the syndrome “Your Jesus is too small.” We have made Jesus our “big brother” and “friend” to such an extent that we have lost the sense that he is also our sovereign Lord. We must re-capture the realization that he too is our God and worthy of worship at the deepest level.11

If we are to experience a healthy relationship with God, we need to be intimately acquainted with the biblical teaching about the divine identity of Jesus. This involves more than merely knowing about, and agreeing with, the doctrine of the deity of Christ, though that is certainly essential. It must become more to us than a line we say in a creed. We need to know what it means to say that Jesus is God and why it matters. We need to see Jesus as God. We need to think about Jesus and relate to him in the full light of the truth of his identity. We need to appreciate the significance of his divine identity for our relationships with God and others.

In our quest to know who Jesus was and is, we must give careful attention to the understanding of Jesus presented in the sources closest to him: the New Testament writings. We recognize that in the early centuries of Christianity people wrote other books representing views of Jesus that differed greatly from that presented in the New Testament. In recent years much has been made of these “lost scriptures” and of the “lost Christianities” that they represent.12 These “scriptures” all originated, however, after the New Testament writings, and none of them was written by a first-generation believer in Jesus. Even in the case of the much-heralded Gospel of Thomas, biblical scholars of all stripes agree that the apostle Thomas did not write it. In fact, almost all scholars agree that it was written at least one or two generations after the apostles.13

We also recognize that the New Testament writings have different ways of talking about Jesus. Several different individuals wrote the New Testament books, and they had different ways of expressing what they thought about Jesus. Nevertheless, all of them stand in that earliest stream of Christian belief that started with the original apostles. These are the writings that later came to be recognized as the primary sources of orthodox Christian teaching. Moreover, as we shall make clear, a “high” view of Jesus as deity is evident throughout the New Testament.14
Laying the Foundation

In this book, then, we will be examining what the New Testament writings say about Jesus’ identity as God. In doing so, we will take certain things for granted.

First, we will assume that Christians should base their beliefs about Jesus on the teachings of the New Testament. For the most part, we will assume that the passages on which we are commenting are true. Only in some key instances will we seek to establish their historical accuracy. Also, we will generally not debate the inspiration of the New Testament authors’ explanations of who Jesus is and what his words and deeds mean. We ourselves affirm that the New Testament is historically accurate and its teachings divinely inspired. Even if some readers do not share our convictions about the New Testament’s accuracy and inspiration, those interested in what the New Testament has to say about Jesus will, nevertheless, find help here.

Second, we will take as given certain historical claims about Jesus that are basic to the New Testament. We will assume that Jesus was a real human being, that he died on the cross, and that he rose bodily from the grave. Our focus in this book, of course, is on the deity of Jesus. To understand all that the New Testament says on that subject, however, we also must recognize that Jesus was human—and that in the resurrection he remains a human, albeit a glorified, immortal one.

Third, we take for granted that Jesus is not God the Father. Rather, Jesus is “the Son of the Father” (2 John 3 NASB). The New Testament makes a distinction between the two, sometimes as the Father and the Son and sometimes as God and the Son of God. Although it’s hard to understand, the New Testament both distinguishes Jesus from God and identifies him as God—sometimes in the same breath (e.g., John 1:1; 20:28–31; Heb. 1:8–9; 2 Peter 1:1–2). It is this fact about New Testament teaching—paralleled in what it also teaches about the Holy Spirit—that led Christian theologians to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity. We will not be discussing the Trinity in this book, although Jesus’ identity as God is a key part of that doctrine.

What to Expect

Our aim is to provide a comprehensive case from the New Testament for the deity of Jesus Christ. Many of us were taught that the deity of Jesus can be proved using one or two verses—say, John 1:1 (“and the Word was God”) or John 20:28 (where Thomas calls Jesus, “My Lord and my God”). To be
sure, we will say something about these important texts. But there is much more biblical evidence for Jesus’ deity. It is not limited to a few verses but includes both explicit statements that say he is “God” and implicit indications of his deity. The evidence covers a wide range of closely related truths about Jesus that are taught repeatedly in one biblical book after another. The deity of Christ is, therefore, a major theme throughout the New Testament. Recognizing that theme in all of its many expressions will not only help you in your faith in Jesus as God but also make your understanding of Scripture much richer.

Throughout this book, we will not only cite biblical passages in support of the deity of Jesus but also discuss their interpretation. Along the way, we will interact with a wide range of contemporary biblical scholarship. The endnotes provide a wealth of references to recent scholarly literature—commentaries, published doctoral dissertations, periodical articles, and specialized studies—of relevance to the subject matter. Many of the endnotes also comment on some of the more technical issues that come up in these academic discussions. Since the main points you need to know are in the body of the book, you can skip these endnotes if you wish, but the information is there if you want it.

Although biblical scholarship informs every part of the book, our subject matter is not merely the object of academic research. We try to make it clear that relating to Jesus as to God is important for every aspect of the Christian life. We hope it is obvious that understanding Jesus’ identity as God is extremely relevant to how we relate to Jesus. Knowing that he is God incarnate is the only sound foundation for approaching Jesus, for coming to him in prayer, and for trusting in him for salvation. Relating to Jesus as God is also crucial to the message we take to the rest of the world. We must know whom we represent if we are to represent him faithfully. Our Christian walk, witness, and worship all must reflect a sound understanding of the identity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our purpose in this book is not limited to presenting the big picture of the New Testament evidence for the deity of Jesus and explaining its relevance to the Christian life. We also want to equip you to remember this information and be able to present it to others. To that end, we organize the biblical teaching on the deity of Jesus into five categories that will be both memorable and easy to explain. We summarize these five categories using an acronym based on the word HANDS. This acronym recalls the dramatic experience
of Thomas told in John 20:24–29. Despite what the other disciples told him, Thomas doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead. But when he saw the marks in Jesus’ hands left by the nails of the crucifixion, Thomas was persuaded of more than the resurrection! Amazingly, he called Jesus his Lord and his God (John 20:28). Just as an examination of the nail prints convinced Thomas he was beholding the hands of deity, a closer look at the Bible reveals that Jesus shares the HANDS of God:

| Honors: | Jesus shares the honors due to God. |
| Attributes: | Jesus shares the attributes of God. |
| Names: | Jesus shares the names of God. |
| Deeds: | Jesus shares in the deeds that God does. |
| Seat: | Jesus shares the seat of God’s throne. |

This acronym is not a gimmick. It is a tested and proven device for enabling people of different backgrounds to remember and explain the biblical evidence for identifying Jesus as God. Each chapter will go into detail on the biblical teaching relating to one aspect of the five-point outline. We think this method will help you much better understand the biblical teaching on the deity of Christ, as well as remember the essential elements of that teaching, so that you will be able to explain them to others.

The biblical teaching about Jesus found in his HANDS constitutes a powerful cumulative case for regarding Jesus as our Lord and God. If you do not yet believe in Jesus as God, consider the evidence presented here. If you do believe in the deity of Christ, the biblical teaching reviewed here will enrich your understanding of that truth and equip you to share it with others. After you have read this book, we invite you to find additional resources and to participate in discussions on this subject by visiting our Web site: http://www.deityofchrist.com.

Wherever you are now in your understanding of Jesus, our heartfelt prayer is that your life will be revolutionized by the realization that Jesus Christ is indeed “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13).
# Abbreviations

## Bibles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASV</td>
<td>American Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESV</td>
<td>English Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCSB</td>
<td>Holman Christian Standard Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>King James Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Masoretic Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>New American Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>New American Standard Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEB</td>
<td>New English Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET</td>
<td>New English Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKJV</td>
<td>New King James Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLT</td>
<td>New Living Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWT</td>
<td>New World Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REB</td>
<td>Revised English Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
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## Standard Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGJU</td>
<td>Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>BECNT</td>
<td>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOSCS</td>
<td>Bulletin for the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSac</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGGNT</td>
<td>Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExpTim</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBS</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JJS</td>
<td>Journal of Jewish Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSJ</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNT</td>
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<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
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### Part 1

**The Devotion Revolution**

*Jesus Shares the Honors Due to God*

| Honors | Attributes | Names | Deeds | Seat |
Chapter 1

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

The Christian belief that Jesus Christ is God incarnate has been around so long that many people familiar with Christianity do not realize just how astonishing such a claim was and still is. Jesus was very much a real human being. He grew up in a dusty village as the son of a carpenter. He lived during a time of political turmoil for his people. He experienced the full range of human emotions, from unbridled joy to deep sorrow. He had friends and enemies. He perspired and got tired; he slept and awoke; he got hungry and thirsty; he bled and died. Indeed, by some measures, he was not a particularly remarkable man. He led no army, held no political office, wrote no books, had no wife or children, left no estate, and never traveled even a hundred miles from home. Yet billions of people during the past two millennia all over the world have worshiped him as their Lord and their God. How did that happen?

One popular answer today among those who do not believe in Jesus as God is that the belief evolved over a period of centuries. They suggest that the earliest Christians, who were Jews, thought of Jesus as simply a rabbi or a prophet, a holy and wise man. They theorize that as Christianity spread outward and became more and more dominated by Gentile (that is, non-Jewish) believers, those Gentiles, accustomed to assigning divine honors to their heroes, did the same for Jesus. Eventually, a form of Christianity emerged that explained the divinity of Jesus as a unique incarnation of God and dismissed all alternative views of Jesus as heresy. Some critics of the
doctrine that Jesus is God claim that this belief did not appear until well after all of the apostles had died—perhaps, some say, as late as the fourth-century Council of Nicea.

The facts are very much otherwise. The practice of giving Jesus divine honors—of religious, spiritual devotion to Jesus—was an established, characteristic feature of the Christian movement within the first two decades of its existence. Larry Hurtado, professor of New Testament at the University of Edinburgh, described the emergence of devotion to Jesus as “a veritable ‘big bang,’ an explosively rapid and impressively substantial development in the earliest stage of the Christian movement.” According to Martin Hengel, a New Testament scholar at Tübingen University in Germany, more happened in the development of Christian beliefs about Jesus in the twenty years between his death and Paul’s earliest epistles “than in the whole subsequent seven hundred years of church history.”

The apostles and other early Jewish Christians did not just lavish high praises on Jesus. They accorded him honors that in Jewish teaching, as authoritatively set forth in their Scriptures, were due to the Lord God of Israel and no one else. In the first of the Ten Commandments, Israel’s God told them, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:2–3; Deut. 5:6–7). Through Moses, God told the Israelites, “You shall worship no other god, because the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exod. 34:14). The description of God as “jealous” may sound strange, but it was a forceful way of telling the Israelites that he would not “share” them with any other deity.

It was in this context of exclusive religious devotion to one God, the Lord, that the early Jewish followers of Jesus were expressing the same sort of devotion to Jesus. They worshiped him, sang hymns to him, prayed to him, and revered him in a way that believers in Judaism insisted was reserved for the Lord God alone. To make matters worse, the Christians agreed that such honors were rightly given only to God—and then proceeded to give them to Jesus anyway!

In the first part of this book, we will show that the New Testament teaches us not merely to think about Jesus as God in an abstract, theological way, but to respond to him as our God. We are to honor him by submitting to him as our God in worship and spiritual service. We are to honor him by our words, by speaking to him as our God in praise and prayer. Moreover, we are
to honor him as God with our whole lives, living for him in faith, reverence, love, and obedience.

**An Honor Roll of One**

We have already repeatedly used the word *honor* in reference to how the Bible teaches us to respond to Jesus Christ. Honor was an important cultural value in the ancient Mediterranean world, including the Jewish culture. To give people honor was to acknowledge their place in the scheme of things—to speak about them and to behave toward them in a manner appropriate to their status and position. In the monotheistic Jewish culture, to honor God meant to confess and live in the light of his exclusive status as the maker, sustainer, and sovereign King of all creation. To honor any creature, no matter how wonderful, as a deity was to detract from the honor due to God. As Philo of Alexandria, a first-century Jewish philosopher, put it, “They who deify mortal things neglect the honour due to God.”

New Testament scholar Jerome Neyrey explains, “When someone achieved honor, it was thought to be at the expense of others. Philo, for example, condemns polytheism, because in honoring others as deities, the honor due to the true God is diminished.”

It is in this cultural setting that Jesus asserted that it was God the Father’s purpose “that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.” By “the Son,” of course, Jesus meant himself. Jesus went on to say that anyone failing to accord him such honor actually dishonors the Father: “Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him” (John 5:23). Linking the honor due God with the honor due anyone else in this way was unprecedented in the Jewish Scriptures. That Jesus is here claiming *divine* honor is evident from the immediate context. Jesus has just claimed that he does whatever the Father does (v. 19) and that he “gives life to whomever he wishes” (v. 21). The Father even has entrusted to the Son (v. 22) the responsibility of rendering eternal judgment over all people. According to Jesus, the Father did so precisely so that everyone would honor him, the Son, as they honor the Father (v. 23). In short, we are to honor Jesus as the one who holds our eternal future in his hands—as the one who has the power of life and death. We can assign no higher honor or status to someone than that of our ultimate, final Judge.

Just how much honor should we give to Jesus? There really is no limit. The book of Hebrews asserts that Jesus “is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself” (3:3). Think
about what the author is saying. Moses is to Jesus as a house is to the builder of the house! In other words, Moses is part of the creation, the “house,” and Jesus is being described as the “builder of the house,” or the one responsible for the creation. “For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God” (v. 4). Hebrews is telling us to honor Jesus as we would the “builder” of creation—God.

To Him Be the Glory

Hebrews 3:3 uses another term that expresses a concept closely related to that of honor: “glory.” The word glory in the Bible (Hebrew, k-bôd; Greek, doxa) has two related meanings. As an attribute of God, glory refers to God’s beautiful, shining nature—the bright, overpowering light in which God appears when he manifests his presence to human beings (e.g., Exod. 33:18–23; Luke 2:9). Glory is also the proper response of praise and adulation to God’s dazzling nature (not just the bright light, but all aspects of his nature) and in this sense is a synonym for honor. One of the proper responses to God, then, is to glorify him (Ps. 29:1–3; Matt. 5:16; Rom. 15:6–9).

A typical way in which the biblical writers summon God’s people to glorify him is in a liturgical form called a doxology (from doxa, the Greek word for “glory”). Doxologies are stylized prayers of praise to God, acknowledging the glory and honor that God deserves. Sometimes a biblical writer will burst into a spontaneous doxology, but most often one finds them at the beginning or the end of a psalm, or at the end of a sermon or letter. Here are some examples of doxologies directing glory to God:

Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. (1 Chron. 29:10–11)

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.
Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may his glory fill the whole earth.
Amen and Amen.

(Ps. 72:18–19)
For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen. (Rom. 11:36)

. . . according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Gal. 1:4b–5)

Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20 NASB)

What is surprising is that the New Testament contains doxologies just like these in which the glory goes to Jesus Christ:

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20–21)

. . . so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:11b NASB)

These doxologies clearly are not ascribing glory to Jesus Christ instead of to God. First Peter 4:11 explicitly states that God is to be glorified through Jesus Christ, so that glorifying Christ is done in a way that glorifies God (see also Rom. 16:27; Jude 25). Nevertheless, both of these passages ascribe glory forever to Jesus Christ in language identical to other biblical doxologies assigning eternal glory to God. One later New Testament book even contains a doxology assigning eternal glory to Christ with no direct mention of God or the Father:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

The book of Revelation also contains doxological songs or hymns in praise
of Jesus Christ, there represented by the Lamb, paralleling its own doxological hymns to God. These doxologies show that “the Lamb is appropriately worshipped on equal terms with God.”

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created. (Rev. 4:11 NASB)

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” . . . “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” (Rev. 5:12–13 NASB)

Here again, the doxology does not praise Jesus to the exclusion of God, but includes the giving of eternal honor and glory to Jesus Christ within the monotheistic Jewish practice of ascribing such glory to God (note the similarity of these doxologies to the one in 1 Chron. 29:10–11). We should not “underestimate the boldness that was necessary to alter these traditional Jewish forms.”

If we go through the entire book of Revelation and examine all of its doxological material, we find an almost complete overlap in the honorific language directed to God and that directed to the Lamb (see table). The overlap is not artificially perfect—“wealth” is directed to the Lamb and not to God, “thanksgiving” to God and not to the Lamb—but these differences seem inconsequential in light of the big picture. Matthias Hoffmann, in his dissertation on the Lamb in the book of Revelation, rightly concludes, “Most of the predicates within the doxologies do not seem to distinguish God and the Lamb from each other, but rather express an equal status of both of them in general.”

By constructing such doxologies to God and Christ together, or even to Christ alone, the New Testament writers were exalting Jesus Christ to the very level of God.
## DOXOLOGIES TO GOD AND THE LAMB IN REVELATION

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<th>God/One on the Throne</th>
<th>The Lamb</th>
<th>1 Chron. 29:11–12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worthy (axios)</td>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>5:9, 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blessing/Praise (eulogia)</td>
<td>5:13; 7:12</td>
<td>5:12, 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honor (timē)</td>
<td>4:9, 11; 5:13; 7:12</td>
<td>5:12, 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glory (doxa)</td>
<td>4:9, 11; 5:13; 7:12; 19:1b</td>
<td>1:6; 5:12, 13</td>
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<td>Dominion (kratos)</td>
<td>5:13</td>
<td>1:6; 5:13</td>
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<td>Power (dunamis)</td>
<td>4:11; 7:12; 19:1b</td>
<td>5:12</td>
<td>1 Chron. 29:11</td>
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<td>7:12</td>
<td>5:12</td>
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<td>4:9; 7:12</td>
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