

# Jehovah Witnesses/Jesus, the God-Man

The key to all truth is *Who is Jesus*, something to which both Christians and Jehovah Witnesses can agree. The Jehovah Witnesses suppose Jesus to be an angel, someone who is great and wonderful, but not divine. One of the more obvious passages from whence we derive His divinity is from John 1:1–3, 14. **In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we behold His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.** In the Jehovah Witness translation (*The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*) of this verse, they say *the Word was a god*; and all **other** things came into being by Him. The word *other* does not occur in the verse in the original languages; it has been inserted by the JW's, because this insertion agrees with their doctrine.

Now bear with me on this next part, and this is what you should point out to the JW. They claim that this should read ***the word was a god*** in John 1:1 because *God* is not preceded by a definite article. They have decided that the rules should be that if there is no definite article, then it should be translated like our English with an indefinite article. We have a definite article, an indefinite article and no article when it comes to referring to someone. So, we can have *the man*, *a man*, or just *man*. The way we understand *man* in each case is different. In the Greek, a substantive is either preceded by a definite article or it is not. Without the definite article, it is called an anarthrous construction. In the Greek, the insertion of a definite article points to a particular person or thing; "ho theos" (ὁ θεός) means *the God*. Without the definite article, then what is being emphasized is the character or the essence of the thing. So, when we have the word *theos* all by itself, it refers to the quality, character or essence of God, not to a particular member of the Godhead. Now, this interpretation of having a definite article or not having a definite article is in accordance with any Greek grammar book. Furthermore, there are two words, *tus* (τὸς) and *heis* (ἓίς) whose use is similar to our indefinite articles. Now, a Jehovah's Witness may think that this is a conspiracy and that all Koine Greek scholars are fundamentalist Christians who must toe the party line; the Jehovah's Witness *knows* that their doctrine teaches them that John 1:1 should be read *a god* rather than *God* or *the God*. They allege that their interpretation is based upon good Greek scholarship. Here is the most important point: this interpretation is based upon very sloppy, very inconsistent and very self-serving scholarship. All Greek scholars and non-scholars will agree that John 1:1 does not have the definite article preceding *Theos*. The vast majority of them still favor translating that passage *God* and not *a god*. The following passage also have the anarthrous construction (no definite article): John 1:6, 18 3:2 (first reference), 21 5:44 6:45 8:54 9:16, 33 10:33, 35 (these represent a handful of passages out of hundreds). Now, in all the these passages, both JW's and non-JW's translate the word *theos* as *God*. If the JW's were going to be consistent, then **every** one of those passages should be translated *a god*. Also, we have the definite article used several times when *theos* is translated *a god* or *the gods* (Acts 14:11 19:26 II Cor. 4:4). Both JW's and normal translations of the Bible agree here as well. What it boils down to is there is no hidden Greek scholarship that they have uncovered which would cause us to render *theos* in John 1:1 as *a god*; the **only** reason they do that is it fits their theology. And they apply their private Greek scholarship **only** to this passage; because it fits their theology. When I was young and didn't know any better, I invited a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses into my house, hauled out my Greek Bible and hauled out their Bible, and I showed them what a definite

article looked like in the Greek; I showed them what *theos* looked like in the Greek; and I showed them how, as they correctly point out, the definite article is not found in John 1:1. Then, I went to passage after passage showing them where we have the exact same anarthrous construction and how their translation was inconsistent on this point. I thought that if you took a very basic doctrine, the heart of the difference between us and them; that was easy to substantiate, that they would go for it. They did the typical JW of trying to continually switch to another topic (if they find themselves losing the argument on one topic, then they will deftly move to another). I kept them on point. They left and I thought I had clearly convinced them. They came back with another couple of *experts*. I sat down with their *experts* and repeated the process. It's pretty clear-cut; the New World Translation disagrees with just about every other translation of the Bible at this point, the Jehovah's Witnesses make a big deal out of their point of view and interpretation of the Greek in their literature and doctrine; and yet they are totally inconsistent throughout the remainder of Scripture in their own translation. It is a rule they decide to invoke only at one point and one point only, because it agrees with their theology. I kept this guy on task (hard to do with a JW because they have been trained to change the subject when they are being out-argued). They would not admit defeat, of course, but left without having any sort of counter argument. Then they all returned with a much better *expert* and I figured this was worthless. It doesn't matter if you can clearly show them that their translation is inconsistent. They believe what they believe about Jesus Christ because they want to. They are no different than unbelievers and they are no different from any other cult member. They want to be convinced of a lie, and they allowed themselves to be so convinced. No matter how clear the truth is, they have convinced themselves to believe the lie.

The trinity is not just a New Testament doctrine; it is found in the Old Testament, although few if any Jewish theologians were able to grasp it. The Hebrew word for God, <sup>1</sup>ʿĒlōhîm (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced *el-oh-HEEM*], is in the plural and is sometimes translated *God* and sometimes it is translated *gods*; context determines which. But the fact that there was some sort of a trinity was clear, even from the first chapter of the Bible: **In the beginning, God [Elohim—plural] created [a singular verb] the heavens and the earth....then God [Elohim] said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing which creeps along the earth."** (Gen. 1:1, 26). **And Jehovah [singular noun, generally a reference to a particular member of the trinity] said to him, "...But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and I will deliver them by Jehovah their God."** (Hosea 1:4a, 7a). **"Listen to me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I have called; I am He; I am the first, I am also the last. Certainly My hand founded the earth and My right hand spread out the heavens...Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now **the Lord Jehovah has sent Me and [He has sent] His Spirit.**"** (Isa. 48:12–13a, 16). Remember, Jehovah is speaking here.

Jewish theologians (and other non-trinitarians) often go to Deut. 6:4, and proclaim **"Hear, O Israel! Jehovah [singular] is our God [plural], Jehovah is **One!**"** Some feel that when they quote this verse, it is so clear, that there need not be any more discussion. Kind of like the discussion of the man and the woman. **For this cause a man will leave his father and his mother, and he will hold fast to his wife, and they will become **one** flesh** (Gen. 2:25). Interestingly enough, the word *one*,

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<sup>1</sup> Since this is so commonly referred to in reference books, we will use the designation *Elohim* as well.

found in both passages, is a word which means *one in unity* not *one in number*. Jesus said much that same thing in John 10:30: “**I and the Father are One.**” We can rationalize what He said in any way that we want, but the Jews understood what He had said. **Then Jews took up stones again to stone Him** (John 10:31). Stoning was how they Jews dealt with a man who blasphemed. We can make any intellectual argument we want, 2000 years later, but the Jews understood what Jesus said, and acted accordingly.

One of the problems that Jehovah Witnesses have with the New Testament is that there are times when Jesus says things that we would not think that God should say. In one passage, he cries out, “**I thirst.**” Here we enter into a realm of theology which is a bit more difficult to grasp. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. When He speaks, He does not always reveal every facet of His character. Sometimes He speaks from His humanity (“**The Father is greater than I.**” John 14:28b); sometimes from His deity, (**Jesus said to them, “Point of doctrine, I say to you: before Abraham was, I existed eternally.”** John 8:58<sup>2</sup>); and sometimes He speaks from His hypostatic union<sup>3</sup> (“**I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man comes to the Father but by Me.**” John 14:6). To give a simple analogy, we all have many character traits and flaws. We don’t reveal every bit of our character and personality each time we speak. In fact, there are some things about ourselves that we intentionally keep hidden when we speak. So it should not be surprising that the God-man, the Creator of the Universe, Jehovah of the Old Testament and Jesus of the New, does not reveal every aspect and detail of His character with every sentence that He speaks.

“**You are My witnesses,**” declares Jehovah, “**And My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me, there was no god formed and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am Jehovah; and there is no one saving besides Me.**” (Isa. 43:10–11). **Jesus said to him, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me...You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life...I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live, even if he dies; and everyone who lives and believe in Me will never die; Do you believe this?”** An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “**Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son and you will call His name Jesus for it is He who will save His people from their sins.**” Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “**Behold the virgin will be with child and she shall bear a Son and they will call His name ‘Immanuel,’ which translated, means ‘God with us.’**” (John 14:6 5:39–40 11:25–26 Matt. 1:20b, 21–23 Isa. 7:14).

And for those Jehovah Witnesses who still feel that they must work for their salvation, recall the men who came to Jesus. **They said therefore to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent.”** (John 6:28–29).

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<sup>2</sup> We can, in retrospect, think that this only means that Jesus had some sort of an existence prior to Abraham. However, the Jews of that time period fully understood what Jesus was saying, and that, if He was not God, then this was a blasphemous statement. Their response: **Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus was hidden, and went out of the temple** (John 8:59).

<sup>3</sup> The Hypostatic Union means the Jesus is fully God and He is fully man.