



Reachout Subject Guide

Is the Watchtower Jesus God?

The Watchtower Society has a very different understanding of the nature and person of Jesus. Here we look at several texts, regarded in the Christian world as evidence of Christ's Divinity, but dealt with very differently by the Watchtower Society to forward their view of Jesus as a created being. How do their arguments stand up, and how are we to understand what the Bible is telling us?

'The Word': John 1:1

I can do no better in dealing with this text than to quote fully [Awake to the Watchtower](#) by the late Doug Harris, Reachout's founder:

'No comparison of Jesus in the light of Watchtower teaching would be complete without a mention of John 1:1. This verse probably causes more problems than any other. To show that Jesus is not God the NWT translates it, "... and the Word was a god..." And appears to provide ample evidence to prove that this is the correct translation. Here we examine this evidence.

Between 1962 and 1983 the WBTS quoted Johannes Greber to support its rendering of John 1:1, even though they knew in 1956 that his wife acted as a spirit medium to produce the translation. We will look here at the article from Reasoning and an article in KIT, 1969, p.1139. Besides the attempt to find scholarly evidence, the Society's main defence for its translation is:

"John 1:18 says: 'No one has ever seen God.' Verse 14 clearly says that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... we have beheld his glory'. Also, verses 1, 2 say that in the beginning he was 'with God'. Can one be with someone and at the same time be that person? At John 17:3, Jesus addresses the Father as 'the only true God'; so, Jesus as 'a god' merely reflects his Father's divine qualities -Heb. 1:3."— Reasoning, p.416.

This sounds convincing but it is not backed up with the facts. The Watchtower argues that because the first 'God' in John 1:1 is preceded by the Greek definite article 'the' it must have a big 'G' and refer to Jehovah. However the second 'god' does not have the definite article and so is translated 'a god', and refers to the 'little god', Jesus. What most Jehovah's Witnesses have not seen, however, is that in John 1:18 there is no definite article connected with the first *theon* translated 'God', but the second *theos* is followed by the definite article 'the one' and yet it is translated 'god'.

Add to this the meaning of the term '*only begotten*' and this verse says no man has ever seen God but now God the unique Son, clothed in flesh, reveals God in a way that can be seen by men. The Society also uses an argument that speaks of Jesus being 'with' God and then asks 'how can He also be God?' This does not stand the test of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

The Father is God, and Jesus is God. Therefore, Jesus the Word was with God, but that does not make Him any less part of the Godhead. To check this out look at Heb.1:3. The NWT translates that Jesus is the 'reflection of' His Father and argues that you are not the same as your reflection!

The Greek word is *apaugasma*, literally translated in the KIT as '*beaming forth from*'. Joy beams forth from a face and that is not a reflection; it is what is in the person coming out. The AV uses 'effulgence', more modern translations 'radiance', and that is exactly what the word means: not looking at a reflection but a shining out from that which is within. Note the next phrase, '*the exact representation of his very being*'. Jesus is not a pale reflection but from His being shines forth that which He is; God."

God's Son: John 20:28

The argument concerning this text is that Jesus is correctly called God if what is meant is the same as what is meant in John 10:34-36; Ps.82:1-6:

'Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your Law, I have said you are gods'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came-and the Scripture cannot be broken-what about the one whom the Father has set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?''

The argument put by Jesus is, if men divinely appointed to be judges, rulers in Israel, could be called gods, then why was it blasphemy for Jesus, whom God '*set apart as his very own and sent into the world*' (cf Jn.3:16) to be called '*the Son of God*'?

The problem here is that Jehovah's Witnesses are comparing Jesus with men, but Jesus is contrasting himself with men. He is not saying, 'You call those men gods, why can't you call me god?' Let me illustrate. The writer of Hebrews wrote:

'Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.

Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.' (Heb.3:1-6)

Here we have the same thought. Men are called gods when divinely appointed to rule and judge. Moses falls into that category. Jesus falls into a greater category, '*worthy of greater honour*.' How much greater? '*... just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.*'

Follow the logic here:

Jesus has greater honour than the house (or household 'we are his house') in which Moses was a servant.

Moses was a faithful servant in God's house.

Jesus is a faithful Son over all God's house.

Jesus has the same honour as the builder of the house.

The builder of everything is God.

Jesus here is equated with the builder of the house himself, with God.

This is a different category altogether than the men who are called gods. It is also a different category than angels. Earlier in Hebrews God commands, '*Let all God's angels worship him.*' (Heb.1:6) This echoes the words of Deuteronomy 32:43 in the Masoretic Text and the Dead Sea Scrolls:

'Rejoice, O nations, with his people, and let all the angels worship him, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.'

The 'he' in mind here is Jehovah. The same worship offered to Jehovah is to be offered by angels to Jesus. I know they insist on translating Hebrews 1:6 'do obeisance' but this does not do justice to the fact that worship is in mind here.

The Watchtower of 1 May 1989, p.22 tells us:

"When the Gentile Cornelius bowed reverently to the apostle Peter, note what happened: 'As Peter entered Cornelius met him fell down at his feet and did obeisance to him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Rise; I myself am also a man".' (Acts 10:25,26). Bowing worshipfully to a human was improper, and Peter would not accept it." – WT, 1 May 1989, p.22.

In Hebrews the Father says of the Son:

'Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom...' (Hebrews 1:6)

Jesus is not to be compared with men, even if you call him 'The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived.' Jesus is more than of a greater magnitude than men, he is in a different category than men, God the Son who became a man.

When Thomas exclaimed, 'My Lord and my God!' in John 20:28 he was literally calling Jesus God. Their own Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures has Thomas declaring, 'The Lord of me and the God of me.' The Greek is *ho theos*, a phrase the Watchtower Society uses exclusively of Jehovah God. Jesus is called not just 'a god' but 'the God.' The translation given in the side bar of the KIT gives, 'My Lord and my God!' *Ho Theos-the God of me.*

In verse 29 Jesus fails to rebuke Thomas for declaring Jesus *ho theos*, the God of me. Indeed, he says that all who believe as Thomas believed would be blessed. Believed what? That Jesus is *ho theos*, the God of me.

'Before Abraham': John 8:58

One of the most familiar Bible texts is Jesus' striking claim to be the eternal I AM of the Old Testament:

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"" (John 8:58)

The Witnesses make much of the grammar here in order to give Jesus a beginning as a created being. Remember, they believe him to be the archangel Michael. Again, if we go to their own Interlinear Translation we find the literal translation of the Greek, *ego eimi*, is I am. The Society insists this means 'I have been' and that is what it says in their Bibles. Other translations, they say, only give I am because of a Trinitarian bias. They will often bring this charge, but it is they who have, in their Bible, turned *ego eimi* into I have been. In other words, they are the ones who have made the text mean what they want it to mean. And in this they have form.

Another text that speaks clearly of Christ's divinity is the majestic passage from Colossians:

'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together...For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.' (Col.1:15-20)

The New World Translation says, *'For by means of him all other things were created...'* The adjective 'other' doesn't belong in the text but they put it in to make Christ a creature, created by God, who then *'created all other things.'* They have brought what they believe to the text instead of getting what they believe from the text.

Consider the list of what Christ created and ask yourself, is there anything he did not create?

'...things in heaven and on
earth, visible and invisible,
whether thrones or
powers or rulers or
authorities;
all things were created by him and for
him.' How much is 'all?'

When Christ is described as *'the firstborn over all creation,'* the Greek word is *prototokos*. If Paul had meant to write the first to be born, or the first created being, he would have used *protoktistos*, meaning first to be born. Firstborn here cannot mean the first to be born but means the pre-eminent one, the one with priority over creation because he created all things.

Interestingly, their own New World Translation (2013) gives John 1:3:

'All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence.'

The NIV reads:

'Through him all things were made; without him nothing has been made that has been made.'

How much is *'all things'* and how must we understand *'apart from him not even one thing came into existence?'*

Life in Him: John 1:4

Again we find them adding words to the text in John 1:4. The NIV reads, *'In him was life'* as do other translations. The Interlinear gives us *en autos ēn zōē* which literally translates *'In him life was...'* The New World Translation gives us, *'By means of him was life.'* This makes him a conduit for life (by means of him was life) where the text describes him as the source of life (in him was life). They cannot allow what the text gives us, that Jesus is the source of life, God. This is profoundly dishonest and the product of a *prior* loyalty to an Arian view of Christ.

Finally on this point, the Watchtower Society likes to quote scholars who praise their translation work. They have a reputation, however, for selectively quoting those scholars and this particular text is a case in point. They quote Robert McCoy who holds the degrees of Bachelor of Divinity (1955) from the Boston University School of Theology, and Master of Sacred Theology from Andover Newton:

"The translation of the New Testament is evidence of the presence in the movement of scholars qualified to deal intelligently with the many problems of Biblical translation..."

A fuller quotation reads:

"In not a few instances the New World Translation contains passages which must be considered as 'theological translations'...John 8:58...On grammatical grounds alone...cannot be justified. It cannot be called a historical present, since the words are not narrative...The translation of the New Testament is evidence of the presence in the movement of scholars qualified to deal intelligently with the many problems of Biblical translation." (Emphasis added)

‘Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ’: Titus 2:13

This text reads in the English Standard Version:

‘For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ...’
(Titus 3:11-13)

The question raised is, does Paul here refer to one person, ‘our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,’ or does he refer to two people, ‘the great God and...our Saviour Jesus Christ’? (NWT 2013)

It is worth noting that the overwhelming, almost universal understanding of this text is that it is a clear expression of the deity of Christ, that one person is in mind here. ‘our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,’ It is also significant that, in support of their contrary view, the Watchtower Society cannot cite one major Bible translation that agrees with them. One thing that is striking, in fact, is that the translations they do cite are obscure and have been picked for no other reason than that they agree, or appear to agree with the Society. (See our free PDF, The Version List)

A case in point is the Weymouth New Testament (1934). The Weymouth Translation appears to give, ‘...of the great God and of our Saviour Christ Jesus.’ But wait a moment. Richard Francis Weymouth, who translated it, died in 1902 and his translation was published posthumously by his secretary in 1903. I have that 1903 translation and can assure you that Weymouth gave us, ‘...in expectation of the fulfilment of our blessed hope—the Appearing in glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ;’

The version the Watchtower Society quote was published in London in 1908 and was the work of the Unitarians ([see here](#)) The Watchtower Society are not quoting Archbishop Newcome but the Unitarians who we would expect to agree with them as they also deny the deity of Christ.

So much might be said about how we select evidence to support our cause. It isn’t clever to find someone who agrees with you. Unitarians are bound to agree with Jehovah’s Witnesses, as are Christadelphians, Christian Scientists, and some individual translators. It isn’t hard to find someone to agree with you on almost anything. I have a friend who denies the moon landings ever happened and I know he isn’t alone. It doesn’t make him right.

Unitarians have taken Weymouth’s translation and decided on a contrary understanding of Titus 2:13, but Weymouth himself agrees Jesus is ‘our great God and Saviour.’ The question is, what does the text give us, and have the Watchtower Society dealt honestly with that text? All the evidence says they have not.

One final thought. At the end of the treatment of Titus 2:13 they write, ‘Throughout the Holy Scriptures it is not possible to identify Jehovah and Jesus as being the same individual.’ This betrays a common misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus and Jehovah are not the same individual, they are the same God. God is not an individual, but one God in three persons. There are not three Gods, neither is there one individual.

The problem arises with the use of the English ‘persons’ to describe Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The objection is that this is a mathematical impossibility. But we are not dealing with mathematics, we are submitting to what the Bible tells us. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe they submit to the authority of Scripture but, as we have seen, they really submit to what the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society tells them.

Interestingly, the Study edition of the February 2017 Watchtower tells us: ‘The Governing Body is neither inspired nor infallible. Therefore, it can err in doctrinal matters or in organizational direction.’

That is an alarming admission. Perhaps this is a signal for Jehovah’s Witnesses to consult for themselves the sources and authorities the Society relies upon. If the Society is, after all, right they have nothing to fear, if the Society is wrong surely the sooner they know it the better.

Is the Watchtower Jesus God?

Keep in touch with us. Reachout is always ready to come and speak to groups and churches, ready to sit down with cult-members prepared at last to listen, ready to advise those who have finally taken that step away from error and don't know, perhaps, what comes next.



Reachout Trust

Website: www.reachouttrust.org

Office

Email: office@reachouttrust.org

Tel: 0203 196 2391

Michael Thomas

Email: reachouttrust1@gmail.com

Tel: 01792 709 470