

# **“Defending the Deity of Christ”**

**A ready defense against the false claims of Jehovah’s Witness’**

In **Matthew 16:15**, at a crucial part in His ministry Jesus asked the disciples, **“...who do you say that I am?”** The answer to this question is more important than anything else. Nevertheless, today, just as in Jesus’ day, when Christians ask people the question **“who do you say Jesus is?”** there are various answers given concerning his identity. Understanding the deity of Jesus is very vital in defending the truth of the Christian faith. You can find out very quickly what a cult believes when you ask them this first question and that is **“who do you say Jesus is?”** Jesus identity will tell you if that person believes Christ is God or not.

One of the most prominent false cults is Jehovah’s Witness’, which also is known in part as the Watchtower Society. In New York they print many publications and tracts, called The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, (WTBTS). Gotquestions.com explains their beginnings this way, “The sect known today as the Jehovah’s Witnesses started out in Pennsylvania in 1870 as a Bible class led by Charles Taze Russell. Russell named his group the “Millennial Dawn Bible Study,” and those who followed him were called “Bible students.” Charles T. Russell began writing a series of books he called “The Millennial Dawn,” which stretched to six volumes before his death and contained much of the theology Jehovah’s Witnesses now hold. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was founded in 1886 and quickly became the vehicle through which the “Millennial Dawn” movement began distributing their views. Group members were sometimes disparagingly called “Russellites.” After Russell’s death in 1916, Judge J. F. Rutherford, Russell’s friend and successor, wrote the seventh and final volume of the “Millennial Dawn” series, “The Finished Mystery,” in 1917. That was also the year that the organization split. Those who followed Rutherford began calling themselves “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” They go on to explain why they hold this false doctrine even though the bible refutes their teachings, “First, they claim that the church has corrupted the Bible over the centuries; thus, they have re-translated the Bible into what they call the New World Translation. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society altered the text of the Bible to make it fit their false doctrine, rather than basing their doctrine on what the Bible actually teaches. The New World Translation has gone through numerous editions, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses discover more and more Scriptures that contradict their doctrines.” Though the Bible has many good translations, the **NEW WORLD TRANSLATION** (NWT), is the WTBTS perverted corrupt translation that should be avoided at all costs.

The Watchtower bases its beliefs and doctrines on the original and expanded teachings of Charles Taze Russell, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford, and their successors. The governing body of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is the only body in the cult that claims authority to interpret Scripture. In other words, what the governing body says concerning any scriptural passage is viewed as the last word, and independent thinking is

strongly discouraged. But the Bible actually says something different than what they teach, in **2 Timothy 2:15, NLT** “**Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.**” Even Paul commended the folks in Berea for their careful interpretation of scripture, **Acts 17:11, NLT** “**And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.**” Never are we to take man at his word we are to take God at His!!!

The Hypostatic Union in Christ is a conundrum for sure, which simply put, Jesus is 100% man but also 100% God. Since that is the case we have some hard ideas that take a little more effort to defend. Robert Bowman characterize the Incarnation something like this: IF Jesus were fully God and fully man, would you expect the alloy to be a straightforward and uncomplicated personage, or would you expect to find some contradictions in the admixture? IF Jesus were both man and God, he would indeed be a paradox! You would find him easily capable of feeding 5000 from a basket of bread and fish, yet also capable of experiencing hunger and thirst. You would see Him exercising power over death by raising Lazarus, yet dying Himself. He would obey God’s law perfectly, and yet identify Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath— putting Himself above the Law! He would foretell the future, yet claim not to know the day and hour of His return to Earth. Some other interesting paradoxes are these:

- **James 1:13** teaches that God cannot be tempted, and yet, Jesus was tempted.
- **Habakkuk 1:12** states that God cannot die, yet, Jesus died.
- **John 1:18** says that no man has seen God at any time, and yet, Jesus was certainly seen and handled by the people of His day.

Yet, Jesus was called God by the disciples (**John 1:1, John 20:28, 2 Peter 1:1**), the Apostle Paul (**Colossians 2:9**), and Isaiah (**Isaiah 9:6**). He identified Himself as the “**I AM**” of **Exodus 3:14 (John 8:58)**, was worshipped by His disciples (**Matthew 28:17**) and all of the angels (**Hebrews 1:6**), was identified as the Creator of everything (**John 1:2, Colossians 1:15-18**), and is given all of the titles of Jehovah God in the Old Testament—**Savior (Isaiah 43:11, Titus 1:4), Shepherd (Psalm 23:1, John 10:11), King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 17:14)**, and so on. Though there are many problems with the WTBTs theology concerning the trinity, the bible, etc. I will just address the issue of Jesus and that fact that He is God, in this resource.

To show you how they have twisted the scriptures let me give a good verse to defend our position but explain how they refute, this is taken from Midwest Christian Outreach and organization that builds a defense against false cults. They state as follows, “Most Christians, when discussing (or attempting to discuss) the Deity of Christ with a JW will first bring up **John 1:1**. which, in their minds, should settle the matter all by itself After all, **John 1:1** clearly states: “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**” (NASB)

Where the Bible is extremely clear about the Deity of Christ, the Bible must be changed; and in the WTBT's New World Translation (NWT), **it is!** **John 1:1** in the **NWT** states: In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God and the Word **was a god** (NWT). Jesus isn't the true God but is merely a god. Not the true God—not really a false god either—but something in between. They justify this monumental alteration of the text by claiming to use the following principle: The first instance of *theos* (the Greek word for God) used in **John 1:1** has the definite article *ho* (or the) in front of it, so it must be translated as big “G” God; while the second instance of *theos* is *anarthrous* (does not have the definite article the), which indicates, they claim, that this is not THE God but merely a god. The WTBT's translation of the verse is untenable on several grounds. The most serious problem with their rendering, aside from the fact that it robs Christ of His full deity, is the fact that it makes the Apostle John a **polytheist!** (which he was NOT)

There is only ONE God! (**Deuteronomy 4:35, 39, 6:4, 32:39, 2 Samuel 7:22, 1 Kings 8:60, 2 Kings 5:15, 19:15, 1 Chronicles 17:20, Nehemiah 9:6, Psalm 18:31, 86:10, Isaiah 37:16, 20, 43:10-11, 44:6, 8, 45:21, 46:9, Hosea 13:4, Joel 2:27, Zechariah 14:9, Mark 12:29-34, John 17:3, Romans 3:30, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, Galatians 3:20, Ephesians 4:6, 1 Timothy 1:17, 2:5, James 2:19**) Robert M. Bowman Jr. writes: ...by translating “**a god**” the JW's have made the Bible contradict itself ... the Bible flatly denies over and over that there are any other real, true gods besides the one true God. Since the Word is clearly not a false god, he must be a true God—that is, the only true God, Jehovah. ...the context actually supports very strongly the conclusion that the Word was God, not a secondary, inferior god. The verse begins by saying that the Word was existing “**in the beginning,**” meaning that the Word was already in existence when time itself began. Thus, the Word was not a creature, but was in fact eternal.

There are numerous good books available that explain all of the whys and wherefores, grammatically and theologically, about the proper way to translate this verse, and I strongly recommend that you do pick up and read what knowledgeable and learned men have to say about this and other pertinent issues from a scholarly perspective. The more you learn, the more confident you will feel to discuss the issue with a JW. Additionally, you can and should point out to the JW that the vast majority of Biblical scholars disagree with the WTBT's rendering of **John 1:1** in their NWT and translate the verse as “**the Word was God.**” But one obstacle you will encounter is this: JW's are very accustomed to disputing **John 1:1** and generally speaking, have very little respect for scholars anyway—unless their words can somehow be twisted to make them appear to support the NWT's position (as the WTBT has done with Dr. Julius Mantey and so many others). So rather than go round and round on that point, I like to get them off their game plan a little bit in the hope of actually causing them to think rather than just regurgitate their usual, well-practiced spiel. And, being a simple person, I like a simple plan. So I generally direct their attention to **John 1:6** in the WTBT's own Kingdom Interlinear Translation (KIT), *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* where the definite article *ho* is likewise absent preceding *theos*: and yet, this verse is translated correctly to say that

John the Baptist was “... a man that was sent forth as a representative of God ...,” not sent as a representative of “a god.” Why didn’t the WTBS translating committee (none of whom is a Greek Scholar, by the way) remain faithful to their **John 1:1** principle here in this verse? The answer is simple, of course. They make and break “rules” based on what they are trying to prove at the moment. About this issue, Robert H. Countess observes in his book, *The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ New Testament: In the New Testament there are 282 occurrences of the *anarthrous theos*. At sixteen places the NWT has either a god, god, gods, or godly. Sixteen out of 282 means that the translators were faithful to their translation principle only six percent of the time. To be 94 percent unfaithful hardly commends a translation to careful readers!*

At this point, the JW will likely try to change the subject by asking you just how it is possible for the Word to be the person whom he is with. Always keep in mind, when they begin their bobbing and weaving, that **John 1:1** is teaching that Jesus was with God the Father, not with Himself! And even though the Person Jesus is not the Person of the Father, He possesses the very nature of God! To say that you are “human” does not mean that you are a particular human, but that you possess human nature.

Another contextual problem is found in **Colossians 1:15**, “**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.**” Why is Jesus referred to as the “**firstborn of all creation**”? Doesn’t this prove that Jesus was a created being? Firstborn does not mean first-created. It is a title, a station, a position. Let’s look at some other passages of Scripture where the term firstborn is used.

- In **Exodus 4:22**, the nation of Israel is called by God the firstborn [though it was hardly the first nation in existence (**Genesis 10:32**)], because it was the pre-eminent nation as far as God was concerned—God’s chosen one.
- In **Psalms 89:27**, David is called the firstborn, although he was the youngest—the last born son of Jesse (**1 Samuel 17:13-14**).
- **First Chronicles 5:1** and **Hebrews 12:16** show us that firstborn is a title, a birthright, which can be lost or forfeited. Reuben forfeited his rightful place for evil behavior, and Esau sold his birthright as “**the firstborn**” to Jacob.
- In **Genesis 41:51-52** and **Jeremiah 31:9**, Ephraim is called the firstborn, although Manasseh was Joseph’s firstborn son.

If Paul had wanted to call Jesus the “**first-created one**,” he could have done so, because there is a Greek word for first-create—*protoktisis*, but instead Paul used the word *prototokos*, Paul did not teach that Jesus was created at all! The firstborn is the Heir of Creation (**Hebrews 1:2**), the One with the right to rule, which fits exactly with the context. Jesus has the right to rule over all because, as the text goes on to say, “**He created all things.**”

One of the biggest problems a JW has is that they believe Jesus was Michael the angel, “The WTBS teaching is that Jesus is a created angel—Michael the Archangel, to be exact—although Jesus is not identified as Michael in the Trinity booklet (put out by the

WTBTS). Isn't it rather odd that this publication spends 31 pages to tell us who Jesus is not and does not mention who they believe He is? It's not as if they had no opportunity in the booklet to identify Jesus as Michael, but instead, they slither around the issue like the sneaky serpents they are. On page 14 of the Trinity booklet under the heading "Jesus a Separate Creation," they say; While on earth, Jesus was a human, although a perfect one because it was God who transferred the life-force of Jesus to the womb of Mary. Now this is very devious. Because you see, according to WTBTS dogma, it was not the life-force of Jesus that was transferred—it was the life-force of Michael the Archangel that was transferred into the womb of Mary. (See THE WATCHTOWER, March 1, 1960, page 133.) The person Jesus, in their teaching, did not exist in a pre-human state to be transferred anywhere! The WTBTS's Michael/Jesus doctrine is as strange as it is illogical. Although the WTBTS teaches that Michael became Jesus, who became Michael again after his crucifixion, their dogma will not logically support this.

So instead of going on and on about them, let me try to give you a ready defense with God's truth. The fact is Jesus deity is important to salvation and doctrine, other issues need to be dealt with as well, like the trinity, which they believe in, but not as the bible describes. This will be a good defense for the deity of Jesus, with scripture after scripture after scripture to defend He is God:

- **John 1:1-3**, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." And **Verse 14**, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."
- **John 10:30**, "I and My Father are one." And **Verse 33**, "The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."
- **Colossians 1:19**, NLT "For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,"
- **Colossians 2:9**, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;"
- **Colossians 1:15-18**, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

- **Hebrews 1:8**, “But to the Son He says: “Your throne, **O God**, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.” God calls His Son “**God**”
- **Hebrews 1:6**, “But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” God the Father also says that all the angels should worship God the Son. Worship can only be rightly applied to God, **Exodus 34:14**, “(for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),” and also **Deuteronomy 8:19**, “Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.” Yet Jesus accepted worship of Himself on many occasions, such as: **Matthew 14:33**, “Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.” **Matthew 28:9**, “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.” and stated that He should be honored equally with the Father **John 5:23**, “that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him..” In **Revelation 5:12-13**, “saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” and **Colossians 2:6-7**, we find that Jesus is worshiped in every way that the Bible specifically describes worship of God the Father, with all the same words used (see: **Rev 4:9-11, 5:13; 7:11-12, and Rom 11:33**).
- **Isaiah 43:11**, “I, even I, am the Lord, And besides Me there is no **savior**.” God the Father said, “besides me there is no savior”, yet Jesus is called the “**savior**” **1 Timothy 4:10**, “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”
- **2 Peter 1:1**, “To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:”
- **Titus 2:13**, “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”
- **Luke 2:11**, “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”
- God the Father stated in, **Isaiah 45:23**, “I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.” The same exact description is also applied to

Jesus, Philippians 2:10-11, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- The Bible teaches that “**God**” is judge 1 Samuel 2:10, “...From heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth...”, Psalms 50:6, “Let the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself is Judge. Selah” Ecclesiastes 12:14, “For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.” **But so is Jesus** John 5:22, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,” Verse 27, “and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” John 9:39, “And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”, Acts 10:42, “And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.”, 2 Timothy 4:1, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:” Therefore Jesus is God.
- John 20:28, “And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”
- One of the clearest evidences of the deity of Jesus is the Jewish leaders’ reaction to Jesus’ words and actions. In Mark 2, Jesus not only heals a paralytic but also forgives his sins, Mark 2:5, “When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” This is the reason that the scribes cry blasphemy, for it is God alone who can forgive sins, Mark 2:7, “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”
- It is often pointed out that the words “**Son of God**” are not an exclusive title for Jesus. For example, in the Old Testament Israel was called God’s son (Exodus 4:22–23; Hosea 11:1), the king was called God’s son (Psalms 2:7), and the angels were called God’s sons (Job 38:7). Even in the New Testament, Adam and believers are referred to as son/s of God (Luke 3:38; Romans 8:14). There is, however, a difference between an adopted son and a relational Son of God, the latter being a deity by nature. More than anyone else who has walked this earth, Jesus the Messiah is uniquely entitled to be called the Son of God, John 1:49, 11:27, – John 1:18, NLT “No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.”

Although there may be many objections to Jesus’ deity, the New Testament clearly provides eye-witness testimony to the words, actions, and teachings of Jesus that prove his deity. A false Jesus cannot save you. If we do not get the identity of Jesus right, we will die in our sin, John 8:24, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do

**not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”** Though it is sad many people are led astray by false teachers and their doctrine, we still need to give them the truth. As the Apostle Paul states in **Ephesians 4:15, “Speak the truth in love...”** Out of love, Christians need to learn how to defend their faith from attacks, and hopefully even to bring the battle to the false teachers, making them defend their own indefensible beliefs. It takes time and effort to prepare oneself to witness to anyone, let alone a Jehovah’s Witness. And it will take patience and much prayer to use the knowledge effectively when you are sitting across the table from a person who probably will not wish to hear what you have to say. Hopefully some of the arguments presented here, are a little more in depth to a JW you may encounter. In which they have not been trained to counter and that hopefully will cause him or her to have to do a little thinking on his own. Prayerfully that thinking on their own will be rooted in God’s word that will bring them to salvation in Christ. May God bless our loving witness to the lost.