

# The Deity of Christ

## I. Introduction

A. One of the major doctrines which separate the Jehovah's Witnesses from the rest of Christianity is the deity of Christ. The Watchtower society teaches that Jesus Christ is "a god" but not God; that He is simply a created being, an angel but lacking the qualities of deity and divinity.

B. In this study, let's examine the deity of Christ. We will not only establish from the scriptures that Jesus Christ is God, but we will also consider many of the common arguments of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

C. NOTE: The Bible does not use the word "trinity" [a denominational term used in reference to the fact that there are three Gods in one (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)] but that doesn't mean that the concept is false. We might point out that words such as "Jehovah's Witness," "Watchtower Society," "theocracy," etc, cannot be found in the scriptures either.

## II. Plurality in One God

A. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

1. The word "God" is from the Hebrew word *Elohim* and it is in the plural form while the verb "created" is singular. In other words, this plurality joined in the singular creation of earth.

B. "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4).

1. Both appearances of the word "Lord" here are from the Tetragrammaton while the word "God" is from "Elohim" which again, is plural.

2. "One" is from "Echad" and indicates a united one, not an absolute one (Gesenius, p. 345).

a. Evening and morning together make FIRST day (Gen. 1:5).

b. Two become ONE flesh (Gen. 2:24).

C. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

1. We are not made in the image of angels, but in the image of God (vv. 27).

D. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us..." (Gen. 3:22).

E. "Go to, let us go down and there confound their language" (Gen. 11:7).

F. There is just ONE God, but the word "one" points to the unity that exists within the Godhead, not that there is just one person, Jehovah. Notice John 17:20-21. Just as the Son is ONE with the Father so also are we to be ONE with one another (as believers).

## III. Jesus Christ is God

A. Verses which attest to His deity.

1. "In the beginning was the Word...and the word was God" (Jn. 1:1).

a. The NWT of the Jehovah's Witnesses renders the verse, "...and the word was a god." We will consider this more later in the study.

2. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn. 8:58 → Ex. 3:14).

a. "I am" is from Greek *ego eimi* and is in the present tense (denotes continues action).

b. "The present tense is used to express timeless being. Jesus says 'before Abraham came to be (*genesthai*, aorist infinitive), I am' (*ego eimi*, present tense, and double nominative for emphasis). The aorist indicates a beginning for the existence of Abraham, but the present tense emphasizes the eternal pre-existence of Jesus." (*Light from the Greek New Testament*, p. 67)

c. The Septuagint rendering of Ex. 3:14 is "ego eimi ho on" or "I am the one that is."

3. "I and My Father are one" (Jn. 10:30-38).

a. When Jesus claimed to be the "Son of God" and "one" with the Father, He was claiming divinity for Himself, which is why the Jews wanted to stone him (for blasphemy). The word "one" here is very significant.

4. "My Lord and My God" (Jn. 20:28).
  - a. Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for making this assertion.
5. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Ph. 2:6).
6. "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).
  - a. Similar to words such as *manhood, womanhood, childhood*.
  - b. It is the "state of being God" (Thayer, p. 288).
7. "God was manifest in the flesh..." (1 Tim. 3:16).
  - a. This is in obvious reference to Jesus Christ who not only appeared in the flesh, but also was "received up into glory."
8. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13; also 2 Pet. 1:1).
  - a. "When the copulative kai connects two nouns of the same case, if the article o or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle; i.e., it denotes a farther description of the first named person." Dane & Mantey Grammar, p. 147
9. "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power..." (Heb. 1:3); Jesus is not an angel (Heb. 1:4-8).
  - a. Let's consider the phrase "express image of His person." The word "image" means "the exact expression (the image) of any person or thing, marked likeness, precise reproduction in every respect..." (Thayer, p 665) Regarding the word *person*, W.E. Vine says "it speaks of the Divine essence of God existent and expressed in the revelation of His Son." (W.E. Vine, Vol. 4, p. 88)

#### B. Jesus and the Father are equally divine.

1. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt. 28:19).
2. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 Jn. 5:7).

#### C. Jesus is referred to as being "Jehovah."

1. The very name "Jesus" means "Jehovah the Savior."
2. "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense" (Is. 8:13-14).
  - a. The word "Lord" here is "Jehovah."
  - b. This verse is in reference to Jesus Christ, as seen in 1 Peter 2:8.
  - c. Witnesses agree that 1 Peter 2:8 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 8:13-14 as indicated in their book *Things in Which It is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 246-247.
3. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6).
  - a. This is in reference to Christ, and the Witnesses accept this as seen in their book *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 47.
  - b. The term "Mighty God" is from the Hebrew *el gibboor*. In the book of Isaiah it means JEHOVAH, except where it refers to idols. Isaiah 10:21 also uses the phrase "Mighty God" in the same way.
4. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Is. 40:3).
  - a. This is again in reference to Jesus (Mt. 3:3; Lk. 1:76; Jn. 3:28).
  - b. Even the NWT uses the term "Jehovah" here in reference to Jesus.

5. "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His redeemer the Lord of Hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God" (Is. 44:6; also 48:12).

a. Jesus made this statement as well in Rev. 1:17-18; 2:8; 22:13-16.

b. The word "first" is from the Greek word *protos* whereas the word "firstborn" is from the Greek word *prototokos*.

6. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" (Joel 2:32)

a. The word "Lord" is the word "Jehovah."

b. This was fulfilled in Christ (Ac. 2:21-22; Rom. 10:9-13).

7. Notice this quote from J.F. Rutherford, "The great Jehovah is The God. The Son, the Logos, is A God. The name god is applied to mighty ones, even to angels and to magistrates. The name god is therefore properly applied to the Son because He is a mighty one...The names of Jehovah, Almighty God, and the Most High are never in the Scriptures applied to Jesus, the Son of God..." (*Reconciliation*, p. 106)

#### D. Jesus received worship.

1. The only lawful receiver of worship (*proskuneo*) is God (Mt. 4:10; Jn. 4:24).

2. We must only worship God, but worship can be given to anything:

a. Satan (Mt. 4:9)

b. Man (Mt. 18:26)

c. The Beast (Rev. 14:9-11)

d. Peter (Ac. 10:25-26)

e. Angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:9)

3. Jesus received and accepted worship of Himself:

a. The wise men worshiped Him (Mt. 2:11).

b. A leper worshiped Him (Mt. 8:2).

c. A ruler worshiped Him (Mt. 9:18).

d. Those in a boat worshiped Him (Mt. 14:33).

e. A woman worshiped Him (Mt. 15:25).

f. The sons of Zebedee and their mother worshiped Him (Mt. 20:20).

g. The disciples worshiped Him (Mt. 28:17).

h. The healed man worshiped Him (Jn. 9:38).

i. The angels worship Him (Heb. 1:6).

4. We are to honor Jesus even as we honor the Father (Jn. 5:23).

5. If Jesus is to receive worship, then He must be God (Mt. 4:10).

#### IV. Arguments of the Watchtower Society

##### A. The NWT rendering of John 1:1.

1. "The word was a god" rather than "The word was God."

2. The Witnesses argue that because the term "god" is indefinite, it must take the indefinite article, hence the insertion of the word "a."

3. "The absence of the article (before *theos*) does not make the predicate indefinite or qualitative when it precedes the verb; it is indefinite in this position only when the context demands it. The context makes no such demand in the Gospel of John, for this statement cannot be regarded as strange in the prologue of the gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas (John 20:28, 'My Lord and my God')." From "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LII (1933), 13:21

4. "The Sanskrit and the Latin had no article of any kind (definite or indefinite) as the Greek has no indefinite article. Not even has the modern Greek taken up the indefinite article like that developed in the Romance and Teutonic languages." Robertson & Davis, p. 274

## B. Jesus Christ, the "Firstborn."

1. Jesus is referred to as being the "firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15-16). Jehovah's Witnesses claim based on this verse that Jesus was the first created being, not God.
2. But the word "firstborn" can be used in different ways:
  - a. Firstborn in time (Gen. 27:19; Lk. 2:7).
  - b. Firstborn in position (Ex. 4:22; Heb. 12:23).
3. Thus, the word "firstborn" in Col. 1:15 points to Jesus supremacy, hence Col. 2:9.
4. "...the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence" (vv. 18).
5. "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kinds of the earth" (Ps. 89:27).

## C. Jesus Christ, the "Son of God."

1. Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the Son of God (Mt. 8:29; 14:23; 27:54), but what does the phrase "son of God" mean? Jehovah's Witnesses use this to teach that Jesus is a "created being" inferior to the Father, but we will show the fallacy of this understanding.
2. Eastern people used the term "son" to denote sameness:
  - a. Sons of thunder (Mk. 3:17)
  - b. Son of peace (Lk. 10:6)
  - c. Sons of the world (Lk. 20:34)
  - d. Son of perdition (Jn. 17:12)
  - e. Jesus in Jn. 5:18 "called God His own Father, making himself equal with God."
3. The phrase "Son of God" is used as a title:
  - a. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Mt. 16:16).
  - b. "Tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (Mt. 26:63).
  - c. "Thou art the Son of god; thou art the King of Israel (Jn. 1:49).
4. Jesus' sonship began at a certain point (Ph. 2:8, the aorist denotes a beginning). He is not referred to as the Son before His incarnation, except in prophecy.
5. Thus, the phrase "Son of God" does not lessen the deity of Christ in any way!

## D. The beginning of the creation of God.

1. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14)
2. The NWT of the Jehovah's Witnesses changes this verse to "the beginning of the creation by God" so as to uphold their concept of Jesus being a created being.
3. The word "beginning" comes from the Greek word "arche" which means, "a commencement...magistrate, power." In other words, Jesus is the power behind God's creation, the beginning (source) of God's creation (Col. 1:16-17).
4. "Jehovah Himself produced me as the beginning of the way, the earliest of His achievements of long ago. From time indefinite I was installed, from the start, from times earlier than the earth" (Prov. 8:22-23). This passage is discussing wisdom, not Jesus!

## E. Jesus Christ is subject to the Father.

1. Witnesses often point to texts such as 1 Cor. 11:3 to teach that because Jesus is subject to the Father, He cannot be God. But the fact that the Father and Son have different roles says nothing about Jesus' deity!
2. The same passage (1 Cor. 11:3) says that woman is subject to man...yet both are human!
3. It is the same with John 13:16 and 14:28. The Father is "greater" than the Son in the sense that they have different roles. But this says nothing about the deity of Christ!

## F. There is just one God.

1. "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" (Deut. 6:4).
2. The term "one" points to composite unity, not to one person. Again, notice Jn. 17:20-22.
3. There is "one faith" (Eph. 4:5) yet many books and verses make up this "one faith." There is "one body" yet it is made up of "many members" (1 Cor. 12:12).

#### G. Jesus is just an angel.

1. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (1 Thess. 4:16). BUT, notice that it says His descent would be "with the voice," not that it would be His voice. Connect to 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
2. Witnesses also try to connect Rev. 20:1 with Rev. 12:7 in an attempt to prove that Jesus (the one supposedly binding Satan) is an angel. But this is an assumption.
3. They also connect Exodus 23:20-23, which says that an angel went before Israel, with 1 Cor. 10:1-4 which says that Jesus followed Israel. But notice the difference between "before" and "after." Also, the word "angel" simply means "messenger" and is in fact used in reference to God in the Old Testament (Gen. 31:11-13; 32:24; Ex. 3:1-14).

#### V. Conclusion

- A. We have conclusively established the deity of Christ *from the scriptures* and we have also addressed the common arguments of the Jehovah's Witnesses (who say that Jesus is NOT God).
- B. This is a crucial point because if we deny the deity of Christ, we cannot be saved:
  1. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Yet men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth..." (Ac. 2:21-22)
  2. "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Ac. 8:37).
  3. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in Him and he in God...He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 Jn. 4:14; 5:12)
- C. Which will you choose- the teachings of the Bible or the teachings of the Watchtower Society?