

Did Jesus Claim to Be God?

Author: Larry W. Wilson

"Dear Mr. Wilson:

I have been studying with Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) for several weeks and I am confused. I am not a good Bible student even though I have attended various Pentecostal churches for about 20 years. As you probably know, JW prefer to use their own Bible because they say other versions of the Bible have been tampered with. Is this true? They say there is no Trinity. They believe there is only one God and that God is Jehovah (the Father). They say that Jesus was created by Jehovah as a separate and distinct being.

When Jesus came to Earth, they say He came as "a perfect human," not as God in the flesh. They say that Jesus Himself never claims to be God in the Bible. They also say that Jesus is not the Alpha and the Omega, but instead, Jehovah is the Alpha and the Omega. Since one of your books is titled *Jesus, The Alpha and The Omega*, I was wondering if you would respond to my questions. Please include the Bible texts.

Thank you,
Sharon"

Dear Sharon:

Thank you for your e-mail. I will do my best to respond to your questions. But first, I would like to write how happy I am to see that after twenty years of attending a particular church, you are still willing to search for Bible truth. It is never too late to get started studying the Bible.

I also appreciate the dedication of Jehovah's Witnesses and other evangelicals who respectfully and kindly engage people in Bible study, even though I personally disagree with their teachings. The apostle Paul wrote, "**For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.**" (2 Corinthians 13:8)

In your case, the JW have moved you out of spiritual complacency to actually search the Scriptures. This is good! It may seem strange to consider at first, but no religion on Earth has all the truth about God. Every religion on Earth is theologically corrupt in one way or another. This does not mean that religion is inherently evil.

It just means that people need to understand that religion is not a destination. It is only a means to an end and that end is "a beautiful reflection of God's love" in every believer. Unfortunately, all kinds of false doctrines are floating around and the only way we can separate truth from error is to closely test everything according to God's Word. Paul wrote, "**Test everything. Hold on to the good.**" (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Jehovah's Witnesses have created their own Bible which they believe is superior to all other

versions. Their Bible is called the "New World Translation" (NWT). Their Bible is not regarded as a legitimate translation by most Hebrew and Greek scholars because (a) it does not stay within accepted rules regarding the use of vocabulary and syntax, and (b) JW created it to support their unusual beliefs.

In other words, it is a self-serving translation, and no other religious organization uses it. (For further discussion on their version of Scripture, see Dr. Walter Martin's book, *The Kingdom of the Cults*.) As far as I am concerned, willfully altering Bible text and calling it "God's Word" in order to accommodate parochial presuppositions shows a complete disregard for God's authority.

This is why I also reject the use of external authority. No rabbi, priest, pope, bishop, apostle or prophet can change or alter God's Word. *It is what it is* and it remains unchanged through all ages even though people may think to change it. The Bible is all that we have to test claims about God and His will. If all religious organizations manipulated the Bible to favor their parochial views as JW have done, then in a few generations no one would be able to determine truth from error! God's Word would disappear.

This may surprise you, but Jehovah's Witnesses were not the first denomination to insist that their version of the Bible is superior to all others. The Catholic Church did the same thing. Catholics maintain the "Douay-Rheims Version" of the Bible is the only authentic English version of the Bible. In A.D. 382, Pope Damasus (A.D. 366 to 384) commissioned his personal secretary, Jerome, to gather up all of the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible and translate them into Latin (the official language of the Roman Empire at that time).

This translation became known as the Latin Vulgate or the *Versio Vulgata*, which means "the published translation." Jerome's tedious efforts and thorough scholarship had few rivals for a long time. As centuries passed, the use of Latin all but disappeared as the Roman Empire faded into a consortium of nations and languages called Europe.

In the sixteenth century, Protestants translated and distributed Bibles in various European languages because (a) they were demanding a reformation of the Church based on Bible truth, and (b) very few people could read or understand Latin. As various translations of the Bible circulated (and lay people discerned the errors of the Church), the Catholic Church finally responded in 1546. (This was 29 years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg.) To keep the laity from reading conflicting Protestant Bibles, the Church declared Jerome's Latin Vulgate to be *the only authentic and official* version of the Bible.

To overcome a growing number of Protestant translations which people could read, the Church finally translated the Vulgate's New Testament and it was first published in English in Rheims (France) in 1582 and the Old Testament was subsequently published in Douay (France) in 1609. In 1604, Protestants realized their need for one authorized Bible, instead of many different translations, so they created the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible which they published in 1611.

Both the original KJV and the Douay-Rheims Version of the Vulgate contained 73 books. Both

versions originally included seven extra books which are called the Apocrypha. Jerome did not believe God inspired the apocryphal books, but Pope Damasus believed they were, so naturally, Jerome's Bible included the apocryphal books. Today, Catholic scholars generally believe that Pope Damasus was right because the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1946, confirmed that the apocryphal books were included in a version of the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the original Hebrew writings which did not include the apocryphal books.

Even though I have about twenty Bible translations in my personal library, I favor the New International Version (NIV) for investigative study and the KJV for poetic language and literary style. For me, the strengths of the New International Version are (a) it's a conservative [as literal as possible] translation using contemporary English, and (b) during its preparation, every humanly possible effort was put forth to reduce religious bias. One hundred scholars were selected from diverse religious backgrounds to produce the NIV.

Of course, no translation is perfect, including the NIV. The work of translation and editorial review was divided in a way that religiously diverse scholars had to edit and review each other's work. As a student of biblical Greek and realizing the challenges that go with translation, I sincerely appreciate the unusual effort which the NIV committee took to produce "a neutral translation of the Bible."

I must hasten to write that I also love the King James Version. I find the use of Old English in the KJV to be eloquent and poetic even though the king's English is very difficult to understand in places. Approximately sixty translators at Oxford (England) who wanted to put God's Word in the king's English translated the KJV over a period of seven years.

These translators basically appended William Tyndale's 1524 version of the English New Testament to their work and this is how the King James Version came to be. Ironically, this so-called "authorized" version of the English Bible was never authorized. King James approved the translation of this Bible, but neither he nor parliament "authorized" it once it was completed.

Through the years, the KJV has undergone more than 500 changes. While some people may dislike these next words, I must say that the KJV is not perfect, either. The original publication of the KJV included the seven apocryphal books, but they were not included in subsequent printings because Protestants eventually rejected the apocryphal books as uninspired. However, the KJV remains one of my favorite English translations.

Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity

I find that Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a view of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ([the Trinity](#)) that does not align with *all that Scripture has say on the topic*. To support their conclusions, a certain amount of Scriptural distortion is necessary (hence their need for a Bible that favors their views). JW often say, "The word 'Trinity' is not used in the Bible." This is true, but neither are the words "Saturday" and "millennium" found in the Bible. Does this mean that Saturday or the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20 doesn't exist? Of course not.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe the Roman Catholic Church corrupted the truth about God during the first centuries of Christian development and they are convinced that they have been "raised up" by Jehovah God to exclusively restore His unvarnished truth.

When it comes to the [doctrine of the Trinity](#), JW interpret verses from the Bible like, "**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one**" (Deuteronomy 6:4), and "**Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? . . .**" (Malachi 2:10) to mean there is only one God. They naturally reject the Catholic view of the Trinity which teaches that there is one God who is manifested in three different ways, as in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(Note: I also reject the Catholic version of the Trinity because I believe the Bible teaches there are three separate, distinct, and co-eternal Gods. These Gods are **one** in purpose, plan and action. Even though these Gods are separate and distinct, they can be regarded as **one God** as a husband and wife are regarded as **one flesh**. "**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.**" (Genesis 2:24) As you will learn, my understanding of the Trinity is also unacceptable to JW.)

Their "one Almighty God who is Jehovah" supposition logically forces Jesus into a position lower than that of Jehovah. They reason that if there were two or more co-eternal Gods in Heaven, having the same substance in knowledge, authority, and power, then this would constitute polytheism (the worship of Gods). Incidentally, this is why Orthodox Jews and Muslims consider Christians to be polytheists. This also explains why early Christians favored the one God with three different manifestations instead of three Gods.

JW believe that the Holy Spirit is a "spiritual force" that emanates from Jehovah as He directs. JW believe that Jehovah created Jesus, and they reject the idea that when Jesus was on Earth, God was actually living among man in the form of a man. They also believe that Jesus was a perfect man (the second Adam) who died to redeem the first Adam and his offspring. Because the curse of sin came on mankind through the failure of the first Adam, salvation comes to us through the redemption of the first Adam.

In other words, the death of Jesus – the perfect man – was "an atonement death" to satisfy Jehovah's demand for justice. As I said, JW believe that Jesus is a separate and distinct being from Jehovah and that He is a servant of Jehovah. If you wish to review a summary of their views, here is their official website: <http://www.watchtower.org>

Getting Acquainted with the Jehovah's Witnesses' Paradigm

I would like to demonstrate how JW can stay within their belief that Jehovah is God alone and Jesus is not God. Keep in mind that I am not an authority on their views. I am relaying information that I have read in their literature and taken from discussions. My intent is not to denigrate, but to factually represent their position:

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) Since the name Immanuel means "God with

us," most Christians interpret this verse to mean that God would come to Earth in the form of a baby boy, born of a virgin.

Since Jesus is the only child ever born of a virgin, Jesus must be God. On the other hand, JW interpret this verse to mean that the virgin birth of Immanuel was a sign that Jehovah deeply cared for His people; in other words, the presence of this miracle child should be interpreted to mean that "God has not forgotten us" instead of "God, in the form of a human being, is among us."

"Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' " (John 20:27,28) In this passage, Thomas called Jesus, "My Lord and my God." Notice that Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for calling Him "my God."

How could Thomas escape censure unless Jesus was truly God? In other words, how could Jesus receive adoration that belonged only to God if Jesus isn't God? JW claim that Thomas was referring to Jesus as "my lord and my god," that is, Thomas humbly regarded Jesus as a superior being sent from God (something like an angel). JW have an understanding of the term "God" that is different than that of most Christians and this brings us to the following text:

"But Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' 'We are not stoning you for any of these,' replied the Jews, 'but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.' 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 [integrity of] **Scripture cannot be broken – what about the one whom the Father 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'?" (John 10:32-36, insertion mine) Many Christians do not understand the depth or nature of this exchange. The Jews were about to stone Jesus for blasphemy. They watched Jesus perform miracles and that was fine.

But they also understood Jesus to say that He was, in fact, God, and this aroused their anger. JW respond by saying, "True, the Jews made the claim that Jesus claimed to be God, but Jesus did not, in fact, utter those words!" JW then proceed to use this text to show that the term "god" does not necessarily have to mean God, having the substance of Jehovah God.

Here is an explanation of what happened in John 10. **"I and the Father are one [equals]."** (John 10:30) When Jesus said these words, the Jews became outraged because this statement *equates* Jesus with the Father in substance. The Jews' actions prove this is what they understood Jesus to say by picking up stones to stone Him *for blasphemy*. They said, ". . . **you, a mere man, claim to be God.**" Considering the behavior of the Jews, it is reasonable to say that their actions were consistent with their understanding of Jesus' words.

Jesus momentarily diffused their anger by bringing up a subject that requires some explanation. Jesus said, [why are you so angry at My words, that I am One with the Father? Isn't this

privilege also yours?] **'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 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'?"** [insertion mine]

These words resonated among those hostile Jews (even though they do not make much sense to most Christians today). This is the background: When Moses wrote the book of Genesis, he used the term "sons of God" to differentiate between born-again believers in God and non-believers.

The term, "sons of God" or "gods," was used to trace the trustees of the Edenic covenant which was given to Adam when he was expelled from Eden. Noah's flood became necessary because **"The sons of God [the trustees of the Edenic covenant] saw that the daughters of [carnal] men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose** [that is, believers in God (the sons of God) exchanged their spiritual birthright for sensual women]." (Genesis 6:2, insertions mine) These mixed marriages (believers with non-believers) brought ruin upon the world, and consequently, Noah's flood is history.

The Jews also called Adam "the son of God." (Luke 3:38) If Adam was "the son of God," then his offspring can be called "gods" if they are one in the Spirit with God. Paul well understood this ancient use of language because he wrote, **". . . because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."** (Romans 8:14) John underscores this beautiful relationship, **"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."** (1 John 3:1, KJV)

The point is that when the Jews accosted Jesus for claiming to be the Son of God, Jesus responded by effectively saying, "Why be angry at my claim that my Father and I are one? Aren't you sons of God, too?" Paraphrasing, Jesus continued, "Even in your own law, whose integrity cannot be broken, the sons of Israel are called 'gods.'" Jesus is referring to Psalm 82. **"A psalm of Asaph. God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the 'gods' . . . 'I said, 'You are 'gods'; you are all sons of the Most High.'"** (Psalm 82:1,6)

Jesus paralyzed His accusers for a few moments with a thoughtful response. How could they accuse Him of saying "I am one with God" when they were *lawfully entitled* to say the same thing? Jesus was very clever! Then, He said, "[Since my Father and I are one,] **'Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles [are of divine origin], that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.'** Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp." (John 10:37-39, insertions mine)

So, considering John 10 and Thomas' declaration he made in John 20 from the supposition that there is only one God, JW do not interpret the words of Jesus **"I and the Father are one"** as the Jews did. Instead, they interpret these texts to mean that Jesus was no different than human beings in substance. In this sense, Jesus was a "son of God" just like we can be "sons

of God." This interpretation protects their position and it keeps Jesus *less than equal* with Jehovah.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. . . . He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." (John 1:1,2,10,11) Christians claim that John left no room for debate on the divinity of Jesus.

Here, John simply said that Jesus, the Word [*Logos*] was God. JW distort this verse to change John's declaration. They do this by inserting the article [a] so that the text reads, ". . . **and the Word was with God, and the Word was [a] god.**" Since we have already read from Scripture that human beings can be "sons of God," JW insist that Jesus is not Jehovah, but a creation of God, a lesser god, like Adam, a perfect man (at least for a while) who was the son of God. The end result, they claim, is that John did not declare that Jesus was in fact a God like Jehovah.

Jesus Himself Claims to be God!

In terms of human warfare, David was no match for Goliath, but the giant had a vulnerable spot right in the middle of his forehead and one tiny stone brought him to the ground. When the Philistine army saw their leader beheaded, they fled. In a similar way, I believe JW have a vulnerable spot right in the middle of their theology.

A day is coming when "The Stone," The Rock of Ages, will hit this vulnerable spot and JW will run for cover. Currently, I do not expect JW (or any other religious body) to admit error in their teachings. When the Great Tribulation begins and the revelation of Jesus Christ unfolds, errors and false teachings will be exposed for what they are.

Until then, we have to search the Scriptures to test every doctrine. If we can demonstrate from Scripture that [Jesus Himself claims to be God](#) (equal with the Father), the doctrine of an inferior Jesus promoted by Jehovah's Witnesses can be declared baseless.

The following statement is made on the JW website: "Jesus never claimed to be God. Everything he said about himself indicates that he did not consider himself equal to God in any way – not in power, not in knowledge, not in age." Let us see if their statement is true:

"This is what the Lord [Hebrew: Jehovah] **says – Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord [Hebrew: Jehovah] Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.**" (Isaiah 44:6, underlining mine) This verse is a self-declaration by Jehovah that He is the first and the last. Remember this declaration as we proceed and also remember, the integrity of Scripture cannot be broken.

"When I saw him [Jesus], **I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I [Jesus] am the Living One;**

I [Jesus] was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." (Revelation 1:17-18, insertions mine)

These two verses leave no wiggle room. John saw Jesus. "The First and the Last" says that He was dead, but is now alive for evermore. Contrary to what JW may say, we know that John could not see the Father in these two verses because no one has ever seen the Father! (1 Timothy 6:16, John 6:46) Going back to Isaiah 44:6, Jehovah declared, "I am the first and the last," so how can Jesus make the same claim if Jehovah created Him?

If Jesus was created, that would make Him second, not first! The only way to align Isaiah 44:6 with Revelation 1:17,18 is this: Jesus was present at the beginning of everything with the Father! John is right: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."** (John 1:1) In other words, these two Gods have to be co-eternal. Both are "the First and the Last."

I [Jesus] am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. - (Revelation 22:13) Keeping "the First and the Last" declarations of Jesus in mind, we find in Revelation 22:13 that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, as well as the Beginning and the End! There is no wiggle room left for a created Jesus who is less in substance than the Father. Zero! Jesus is Jehovah. Jesus is the First and Last. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. Jesus is the Beginning and the End. Now, consider the following verses:

"He [Jesus] said to me: 'It is done. I [Jesus] am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I [Jesus] will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I [Jesus] will be his God and he will be my son.'" (Revelation 21:6-7, insertions mine)

We know that Jesus is the [Alpha and the Omega](#), the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. As you can see, when the JW teach that "Jesus Himself never claimed to be God," it is a false premise. This one tiny stone, found in Revelation 21:7, kills the entire argument. Jesus calls Himself God. Jesus is Almighty Jehovah just like the Father! Further, the Father Himself calls Jesus, "God" [Greek: *Theos*: Supreme Divinity].

"But about the Son [Jesus] he [the Father] says, 'Your throne, O [Jesus] God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You [Jesus] have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore [Jesus] God, your God [your Father], has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.'

He [the Father] also says, 'In the beginning, O Lord [Jesus], you [are the God who] laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.'" (Hebrews 1:8-10, insertions mine) The Father calls Jesus "God" because Jesus is also Jehovah God. To further demonstrate the equality, consider the following verses. Jesus said that He is to be honored (worshiped) as the Father is honored (worshiped).

"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor

the Father, who sent him." (John 5:22,23) If Jesus was not equal to the Father in every way, substance, knowledge, authority, and power, Jesus would be robbing the Father of the honor that He is due (which is blasphemy). By making Himself equal in honor with the Father, Jesus and the Father must be one in substance even though they are separate and distinct Gods! Paul agrees:

"[Jesus] **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God [the Father] something to be grasped. . . .**" (Philippians 2:6, insertions mine) How much clearer can this get? From this short study we find at a minimum, there are two equal, co-eternal Gods in Heaven. (There are three, but this is not a study on the Holy Spirit.) These Gods are separate and distinct beings. They were together in the beginning and Jesus is the Creative Agent. That is, He is the Creator of everything that exists!

"For by him [Jesus] **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.**" (Colossians 1:16, insertion mine)

"But in these last days he [the Father] **has spoken to us by his Son [Jesus], whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. - (Hebrews 1:2, insertions mine)**

There is absolutely no evidence in the Bible that the Father created Jesus. In fact, there is no evidence in the Bible indicating the Father has created anything. John plainly declares the opposite, "**Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.**" (John 1:3) Bottom line, "nothing has been made that Jesus did not make" and we know that Jesus did not create Himself.

Sharon, you have asked some good questions and even though I did not address all of them in this e-mail, I hope you have enough information to help you see that the JW are misleading people about the deity of Jesus. The irony with the JW is that the Jehovah they worship is not the Father. The Jehovah they worship is the One they deny, Jesus Christ Himself, The Rock of Ages!

Note: I believe about 90% of the references to Jehovah in the Old Testament pertain to Jesus. Jesus and the Father are both called Jehovah. For example, in Psalm 2:7-11, Jehovah (the Father) speaks to Jehovah (the Son). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are so closely united, and so tight in purpose, plan, and action, that it is sometimes difficult to precisely determine which member of the Trinity is speaking in the Old Testament, but 90% of the time, it is Jesus.

"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." -Deuteronomy 32:4

". . . For they[Israel] **drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.**" (1 Corinthians 10:4, insertion mine)

I hope this helps,

Larry Wilson