

Introduction: Men always have something to say about Jesus. Often, what is said is untrue or is inaccurate Biblically.

E. Jehovah's Witness

JW's believe that Jesus Christ was a perfect man, and that He is a person distinct from God the Father. However, they also teach that before His earthly life, Jesus was a spirit creature, Michael the archangel, who was created by God and became the Messiah at His baptism. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus is a mighty one, although not almighty as Jehovah God is. According to John 1:1 in their Bible, The New World Translation, Christ is "a god," but not "the God." They teach that Jesus "was and is and always will be beneath Jehovah" and that "Christ and God are not coequal".

Does the Bible confirm their beliefs, or does it teach the orthodox Christian concept that Christ is God? This is an extremely important question. Consider the following points:

1. The Christ of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

* Isaiah wrote about seeing Jehovah in Isaiah 6:1-10.

* In John 12:31-42, we are told that Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of Him

* In Exodus 34:14 we are to worship no one but Jehovah.

* In Hebrews 1:6 the angels worship Christ.

* In Isaiah 44:6 Jehovah is called the first and the last (confirmed in Revelation 1:8),

* but in Revelation 22:13 Christ is the first and the last.

These verses demonstrate that the name "Jehovah" is used for both God the Father and of God the Son. Although they are distinct persons they are each called "Jehovah" because they each possess deity.

2. The deity of Christ is taught in Scripture.

In Matthew 1:23, Christ is called “Immanuel,” which means “God with us.”

When Thomas touched Jesus' wounds, after the resurrection, he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). There is no basis whatsoever for saying, as some JW’s say, that Thomas was referring to Christ when he said “my Lord,” but was referring to God (Jehovah) when he said “my God.” Instead, Thomas called Christ both his Lord and his God. And Christ did not correct him! Colossians 2:9 clearly confirms the deity of Christ when it states that in Him “all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily” (New World Translation). Stephen called Jesus “Lord” (Acts 7:59,60), and we are to confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9; I Cor. 12:3). “Lord” in these verses is Kurios, which is the Greek word for Jehovah in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. It is evident from this that Christ the Lord (kurios) is Jehovah God.

3. Attributes of Christ show that He is God

Jesus Christ knows all things (John 1:48; 2:25; 6:64; 14:30; 21:17). He is all-powerful (Matt. 28:18; Heb. 1:3), sinless (John 8:46), eternal (Mic. 5:2), and unchanging (Heb. 13:8). Since only God possesses these attributes, Christ must be God.

4. Certain works of Christ show that He is God.

Jesus Christ has the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-7; Eph. 1:7), give eternal life (John 10:28; 17:2), judge the world (John 5:22, 27), and control nature (Matt. 8:26). Since only God can do these things, Christ must be God.

5. Christ received worship as God.

Jesus is worshipped by the angels (Heb. 1:6) and by man (Matt. 14:33), and yet only God is to be worshipped (Ex. 34:14). Christ Himself said that worship is due to God alone (Matt. 4:10), and yet He accepted worship. If Jesus in His pre-existent state were the archangel Michael, how could He have received worship, since angels are not allowed to receive worship (Rev. 19:10)? If Christ were not God, then worshipping Him

6. Jesus Christ is called “the mighty God” in Isaiah 9:6.

JW’s have a ready answer for this verse. They explain that Christ is “the mighty god.” but not “the almighty.” They say that Christ is the mighty, never the almighty and that Jehovah is the almighty God, never the mighty. However, Jeremiah 32:18 shows that Jehovah is the mighty One. Therefore, since Christ is the mighty God (Isaiah 9:6) and Jehovah is the mighty God (Jer. 32:18), they are both God. They both possess full deity.

7. Christ is God, the Creator of all things according to Colossians 1:15-17.

JW’s refer to this passage to support their teaching that Christ was created by Jehovah (for example, Let God Be True, p.35). This is based primarily on the words, “the firstborn of all creation,” in verse 15. However, if this verse was teaching that Jesus Christ is the first created being made by God, the word “first-created” would have been used of Christ, not the word “firstborn.” These are two different words in the Greek, with two different meanings. “First-created” is protoktistos, and “firstborn” is protokos. Colossians 1:15 does not use the protoktistos, “first-created.” Instead it uses protokos, which means an heir, a begotten one, the first in rank. The teaching of Colossians 1:15 is that Christ is first in rank above all creation; He is the Heir of all things. He is prior to all creation and superior over it.

The JW’s New World Translation adds the word “other” four times in Colossians 1:15-17, so that the passage states that Christ created “all other things,” everything except Himself. However, there is no basis for adding “other.” It certainly does not occur in the Greek manuscripts. The translators of the New World Translation admit this by putting “other” in brackets. This “translation” attempts to comply with the assumption that firstborn means first-created. But, as shown, this is not the meaning of firstborn, and therefore it is also wrong to add the word “other.” There is no verse in the entire Bible that states that Christ was created by Jehovah!

8. Christ claimed to be equal with God in John 10:30.

JW's believe that this verse, "I and the Father are one," means that Christ was one with God the Father in purpose and not in nature and essence. However, if that was all Christ was saying, why did the Jews want to stone Him? They themselves thought His purpose was the same as God's. Verse 33 of John 10 explains that they wanted to stone Him because of blasphemy, because He claimed to be God!

The deity of Christ is the central point of the Scriptures. It clearly teaches that Christ is God. The teachings of the Jehovah's Witness' concerning Jesus Christ clearly contradict the teachings of the Bible. Passages such as Philippians 2:5-11 tell us that Jesus Christ, who existed as God, took the bodily form of a humble servant so that He could die on the cross in our place. "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (kurios), to the glory of God the Father."

And it came about that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?" And they answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." (Luke 9:18-19).

There comes a turning point in your life which brings a chain reaction that changes your entire life. Marriage is like that. It changes your whole life. Priorities change. You reorient your entire approach to life as you become one with another person.

The disciples had gone through such a change. They had come to know Jesus. They had followed Him and had heard Him and had ministered with Him. And now they are brought to a climactic conclusion. Things will never be the same after this. It all begins with a question.

Who is Jesus? I'm not talking about His address and social security number (Jesus of Nazareth, SS: 777-03-0001). The question that the author is presenting is who is Jesus REALLY?

Men in that day had come up with a number of theories to explain this miracle-working rabbi from Nazareth. Three such views are mentioned by the disciples.

And they answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." (Luke 9:19).

All three of these views have already been reported by Luke earlier in this chapter. We saw in Luke 9:7-8 that Herod Antipas had heard these same three views.

- . This first theory was that Jesus was John the Baptist. John the Baptist had come before Jesus. And as the ministry of Jesus had grown, the ministry of John the Baptist had waned until he was finally arrested by Herod Antipas and murdered. Driven by pangs of guilt, Herod Antipas had lately begun to wonder whether Jesus was really John the Baptist come back to life to haunt him.
- . Another theory was that Jesus was Elijah come back from heaven. After all, Elijah had not died and it had been promised that Elijah would return prior to the coming of the Lord.
- . Other theories looked to other prophets as the identity of Jesus.

These were favorable responses. Public opinion was favorable toward Jesus. But it fell short of eternal truth. And to fall short in such a manner is an insult to God.

A CONFESSION OF THE CHRIST

And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." (Luke 9:20).

The first question was merely introductory. It was to get them thinking. But now Jesus asks of them the key question. It matters not what other people think. What do YOU think?

Jesus does not allow them to sit on the fence. He forces them to a decision. Have you made that decision? There comes a time when you have to get off the fence. To make no decision is to make a decision.

That fact that Jesus asks this question of His disciples at THIS point in His ministry is significant. This was a time of growing pressure. Antipas was seeking out Jesus. The religious leaders were beginning to mobilize against Jesus. This would naturally cause His disciples to wonder whether they had made the right decision in following Him. After all, they were going against the religious experts of the day.

I think that I will scream the next time I hear some well-meaning saint say, "I don't think that we should focus on theology; we ought to just love Jesus." But which Jesus do you love? Peter loved Jesus and that was good. But what made it especially significant was the CONTENT of that love.

When Peter says, "The CHRIST" he is using the Greek word for the Hebrew term "Messiah." This is significant, especially in light of the fact that for all of the miracles and for all of the teaching of Jesus that we have heard up to this point, He had never yet publicly announced Himself to be the promised Messiah of Israel.

Why not? It was because He determined not to be a self-proclaimed Messiah. It was His actions and His person that made this proclamation on His behalf. For three years, the disciples lived with Him, ate with Him, traveled with Him and their conclusion at the end of that time is recorded here.

Christ - Messiah!!

There is a principle here. It is that intimacy and knowledge go together. If you can get people next to Jesus, then Jesus will get them to the truth. Intimacy and knowledge go together.

I have heard of a person that rubs people the wrong way. He can walk into a group and immediately make 10 enemies. He is abrasive. He is like the fingernail scratching on the chalkboard. But I know him. And it is because I know him and understand him that I can be a close friend to him. I used to spend a lot of time explaining him to others. But I

found a better way. I found that, if others will just get to know him, they will usually come to like him, too.

A PROMISE OF THE CROSS

But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, 22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." (Luke 9:21-22).

Jesus warns them to silence. Why did Jesus give such a warning? I think that there are two reasons.

- . Jesus was not a self-proclaimed Messiah.
- . _You can count on one hand the times that Jesus announced Himself as being the promised Messiah from the Old Testament Scriptures. Nearly all of those times that He did so announce Himself, it was in a private setting and to a very small audience._This made it all the more significant when others recognized Him as Messiah. Even at His trial before Caiaphas, it would be the Council of elders, the high court of Israel who would ask the unbidden question:

"If You are the Christ, tell us." (Luke 22:67a)._But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."_And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." (Luke 22:67b-69)._This was the only occasion where Jesus publicly affirmed that He was both Messiah and the Son of God. It was an affirmation that led to His crucifixion._

It was not yet time for Peter and the disciples to proclaim the Messiahship of Jesus because they had not yet learned what being "Messiah" was all about. Peter knew nothing about the cross. But he is about to find out.

This is the first of three times that Jesus tells His disciples of His impending death. All three of the Synoptic Gospels record all three instances where Jesus revealed this to His disciples.

After each of these revelations, the disciples will demonstrate a lack of understanding. And each time, Jesus will summon them and teach them of how they should live in light of the cross.

THE DISCIPLES OF THE CROSS

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:23-27).

The call to discipleship is a call to follow Jesus. We read that in the last two words of verse 23 where Jesus says, "*Follow Me.*" The good news is that, if you follow Jesus you will never walk alone. The fact that you are following Him indicates that He is with you and is leading the way. He is no armchair general. He never called men to go where He did not first go Himself.

This call is to death. When Jesus calls a man, He calls for him to come and to die. His words concerning a cross had no implications of salvation to the ears of the disciples that day. To them, a cross was simply the instrument of execution. It was like saying, "He who wishes to follow Me must bring his own hangman's noose."

The only way to save your life is to lose it for the sake of Jesus and for the sake of His message. Does this mean that only martyrs are saved? In a sense, it does. It does not mean that you must be nailed to a literal cross. But it DOES mean that you must be willing to renounce all that was your former life to become all that God has called you to be.