

USING THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION AGAINST JEHOVAH'S WITNESS THEOLOGY

By Andrew Foland, M.A.A.

That knock on my door had become a familiar sound. We had met together several times and I had been looking particularly forward to today's meeting. I felt the time was right, so I went for it. As I handed her a tract which outlines flaws in Watchtower theology, her words betrayed her expression. "Oh, thank you" she politely said. But she couldn't hide the look – a look that said, "Oh, Satanic propaganda . . . I'll file this under 'T' for trash."

I did not know then what I understand now; namely, that Jehovah's Witnesses are strictly forbidden to read any materials that challenge the Watchtower.¹ In fact, the Watchtower seems to have an almost Orwellian Big Brother persona over its members in that everything is to be seen through the organization's perspective. Therefore, in order to get a Jehovah's Witness (JW) to see a viewpoint different from his/her own, one needs to shake his/her faith in the Watchtower. One way this can be done is through the use of their translation of the Bible: The New World Translation.² Witnesses may be closed to anti-Watchtower materials but they are certainly open to their own bibles. They would be surprised to learn, however, that there are theological inconsistencies between the NWT and Watchtower theology.³ The hope is that by demonstrating such inconsistencies, a JW may begin to question whether the Watchtower Society is really the mouthpiece of God that it claims to be.

While there are numerous places in the NWT which indicate inconsistencies, we will try to simplify matters by working from our home base: Isaiah 40-48. By simply reading these eight chapters, or at least select passages from within them, and comparing them to other biblical teachings, major cracks in the foundation of the Watchtower's primary biblical translation emerge.

¹ I am in no way trying to suggest that tracts about JW's are not valuable. They can be excellent sources for equipping Christians as well as informing unbelievers but how they are used is important. One may have more success going through the tract with a JW rather than giving it to them and assuming they will read it on their own.

² In the remainder of the article, New World Translation will be abbreviated as NWT. As a further note, I have been told by ex-Jehovah's Witnesses that many of them spend much more time reading Watchtower literature than the NWT, or that the time is spent reading specific Watchtower selected portions of the NWT.

³ The Watchtower has attempted to translate their bible in such a way as to protect their theology. But God's Word is contrary to many of their views and they have not been able to consistently alter texts to fit their presuppositions.

The context of Isaiah 40-48 is extremely significant to our overall argument. In the eight chapters, God is trying to restore a bruised relationship with Israel. The Hebrews have repeatedly gone after false gods. In order to gain a healed relationship, the nation of Israel needs to have a proper understanding of who God is; consequently, Jehovah describes His identity, often in contrast to ideas of false gods. By doing this, Israel would once again be able to know God, respect His attributes and actions that distinguish Him, and would worship Him alone. By setting Himself apart from ideas of false gods, we can assume that the descriptions God gives of Himself are descriptions that should only rightly be attributed to Him. After all, He uses these portrayals as a way to recognize who He is. But Watchtower theology struggles with this since, even in their translation of the Bible, the descriptions of Jehovah are attributed to Jesus. This must mean that Jesus is Almighty God, something the Watchtower vehemently rejects.⁴ With this context in mind, let us begin in Isaiah 40.

A Special Announcement

As we begin in Chapter 40 we soon note an announcement proclaimed:

Isa. 40:3 NWT "Listen! Someone is calling out in the wilderness: 'Clear up the way of Jehovah, YOU people! MAKE the highway for our God through the desert plain straight.'"⁵

What is noteworthy for our purposes is that this is a proclamation in which someone announces the coming of Jehovah. As verse 9 says, "Do not be afraid. Say to the cities of Judah: 'Here is YOUR God.'"

It is fascinating that all four Gospel writers apply the Isaiah passage in such a way as to claim that John the Baptist is the announcer and that he is announcing the coming of Jesus.⁶

Matt. 3:3 NWT "Listen! Someone is crying out in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of Jehovah, YOU people! Make his roads straight.'"

Of course the Watchtower recognizes that Matthew is quoting from Isaiah. Certainly the passage is calling for Israel to repent. But why repent? The answer is because someone is coming. The question is, Who is John the Baptist announcing? The NWT clearly says "Jehovah." But does the context not imply Jesus? Consider the rest of the Baptist narrative. For example, we read, "I, for my part, baptize YOU with water because of YOUR repentance; but the one coming after me is stronger than I am, whose sandals I am not fit to take off. That one will baptize YOU people with holy spirit and

⁴ While orthodox Christianity holds that Jesus is the Second Person of the Almighty, Eternal Triune God, JW theology claims that Jesus is not God but a created spirit creature.

⁵ All biblical quotes in this paper come from the Watchtower's NWT.

⁶ Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4; John 1:23.

with fire. His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will completely clean up his threshing floor, and will gather his wheat into the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with fire that cannot be put out.' Then Jesus came from Gal'i-lee to the Jordan to John, in order to be baptized by him."⁷

Isn't it curious, we can ask our JW friend, that all four New Testament writers used a passage that announces the coming of Jehovah and applied it to Jesus?

The Shepherd

Is the prior example merely a coincidental isolated incident? As will be shown, the type of textual treatment which compares Jesus to Jehovah is not an isolated incident, but rather a calculated occurrence. Just a few verses farther in Isaiah we find another description of Jehovah:

Isa. 40:11 NWT "Like *a shepherd* he will shepherd his own drove. With his arm he will collect together the lambs; and in his bosom he will carry [them]. Those giving suck he will conduct [with care]."⁸

The Old Testament concept of God as a shepherd is not isolated to Isaiah.⁹ Yet in the New Testament, Jesus takes this job description for Himself:

John 10:14 NWT "I am the fine *shepherd*, and I know my sheep and my sheep know me"

In this passage, Jesus is trying to teach us about his ministerial role and identity. Why would Jesus take a job title for God and apply it to Himself?

The First and the Last

Remember that in these Isaiah passages, Jehovah is distinguishing Himself as unique.¹⁰ One of the ways He does this is by claiming certain titles which describe His eternity. For example, Jehovah claims to be "the first" and "the last."

Isa. 44:6 NWT "This is what Jehovah has said, the King of Israel and the Repurchaser of him, Jehovah of armies, *I am the first and I am the last*"

⁷ Mt. 3:11-13a NWT.

⁸ All italic emphases in this paper are mine.

⁹ For example, see Gen. 48:15; Ps. 23:1 NWT.

¹⁰ See Isa. 44:7; 46:5.

Isa. 48:12a NWT "Listen to me, O Jacob, and you Israel my called one. I am the same One. *I am the first.* Moreover, *I am the last.*"

Two major points need emphasis. The obvious first is that Jehovah clearly claims to be the first and last. The second point is also obvious; there can only be one "first." These evident points are significant because in the book of Revelation Jesus repeatedly assumes this title for Himself:

Rev. 1:17-18 NWT "And when I saw him, I fell as dead at his feet. And he laid his right hand upon me and said: 'Do not be fearful. *I am the First and the Last*, and the living one; and I became dead, but, look! I am living forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Ha'des.'"

Rev. 22:12-13 NWT "Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me, to render to each one as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the first and the last*, the beginning and the end."

In Rev. 1:17-18, Jesus is clearly speaking because he "became dead" and is now "living forever." The same one who "became dead" is "the First and the Last." For Jesus to use for himself a title reserved for Almighty God would be blasphemy unless Jesus was Almighty God.

Some JW's may argue that Rev. 22:13 is not Jesus, but rather Jehovah, who is speaking. But note that this does not relieve them from the Rev. 1:17 dilemma. Additionally, consider the context of Rev. 22:13. It is clear that Jesus is speaking for at least two reasons. First, verse 16 indicates that Jesus is speaking, "I, Jesus, sent my angel to bear witness" Second, the one who is speaking in verses 12-13 is the same one who is "coming quickly." As verse 20 of the NWT makes clear, Jesus is the one coming quickly:

"He that bears witness of these things says, 'Yes; I am coming quickly.' Amen! Come, Lord Jesus."

Let us conclude this logically: Jesus is the one who is "coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20). The one who is "coming quickly" is "the first and the last" (Rev. 22:12-13). "The first and the last" is Jehovah (Isa. 48:12). Therefore, Jesus is Jehovah.

Also worth pointing out, our conclusion is in harmony with the rest of Rev. 22:12-13 which indicates that the one who is "the first and the last" is also "the Alpha and the Omega." This is particularly sticky for the JW because in Rev. 1:8 NWT the title of Alpha and Omega is identified with Jehovah: "'I am the Al'pha and the O-me'ga,' says Jehovah God, 'the One who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty.'"

The Creator and Sustainer

After reading Isaiah chapters 40-48 of the NWT, one can hardly miss the claim that Jehovah establishes His uniqueness from other gods with His claim to be the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.¹¹ But how can this harmonize with all the New Testament

¹¹ See Isa. 40:22b; 40:25-6; 40:28; 42:5; 43:15; 44:24; 45:11-2; 45:18; 48:12 NWT.

verses that seem to indicate that Jesus had a role in creation?¹² According to Watchtower theology, Jehovah made everything through Jesus, but Jesus is in no way Jehovah.¹³ One Jehovah's Witness gave me the following analogy: Jehovah is the architect and Jesus is the builder. Evidently, the Watchtower has two beings involved in creation.

The Watchtower theology, however, cannot be adequately harmonized with some passages in Isaiah, which clearly indicate that Jehovah was *the lone* creator and builder of the heavens and the earth.

Isa. 44:24 NWT: "This is what Jehovah has said, your Repurchaser and the Former of you from the belly: "*I, Jehovah, am doing everything, stretching out the heavens by myself, laying out the earth. Who was with me?"*"

This verse alone completely destroys Watchtower theology because it obliterates any notion that Jehovah used a junior partner in the act of creation. Clearly, the implication of the rhetorical question "Who was with me?" is "No one." This is what sets Jehovah apart. Regarding creation, Jehovah claimed, "I, Jehovah, am doing everything . . . by myself." Jehovah is creating and building alone. Clearly, God is distinguishing that He alone, and not created things, creates.

Isa. 45:12 NWT "*I myself [Jehovah] have made the earth and have created even man upon it. I—my own hands have stretched out the heavens, and all the army of them I have commanded.*"

Again, Jehovah emphasizes "I myself" used "my own hands." Jehovah was the lone craftsman.

Isa. 48:13 NWT "*Moreover, my own hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my own right hand extended out the heavens. I am calling to them, that they may keep standing together.*"

This verse not only indicates that Jehovah's "own hand" created heaven and earth, but that Jehovah, "I", is sustaining his creation as well.

When one examines New Testament verses regarding Jesus, one can see that Jesus is also credited as Creator and Sustainer. For example:

John 1:3 NWT "*All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence.*"

Col. 1:16-17 NWT ". . . because *by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things*

¹² See John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2.

¹³ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower and Tract Society of New York, 2005), 41.

invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. *All [other] things have been created through him and for him.* Also, he is before all [other] things *and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist . . .*"¹⁴

Heb. 1:2 "God, who long ago spoke on many occasions and in many ways to our forefathers by means of the prophets, has at the end of these days spoken to us by means of a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and *through whom he made the systems of things.* He is the reflection of [his] glory and the exact representation of his very being, and *he sustains all things* by the word of his power;"

As Trinitarians, we don't deny that the Father made the world through the Son.¹⁵ But with Scripture, we affirm that only Jehovah created. Therefore, the Father and Son must be Jehovah. Given the strength of these comparisons, the JW ought to give serious reflection as to what the author of Hebrews meant when he called Jesus "the *exact* representation of his [Jehovah's] very being."

It is particularly interesting to compare Isa. 45:12 (which is a quote from Jehovah) with Heb. 1:10 (in which the Father is speaking about the Son):

Isa. 45:12 NWT "*I myself* have made the earth and have created even man upon it. *I—my own hands have stretched out the heavens,* and all the army of them I have commanded."

Heb. 1:10 NWT "And: "You at [the] beginning, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth itself, and *the heavens are [the] works of your hands.*"

The same language is used of the Father and the Son. Creation is the work of both their hands, both have stretched out the heavens, and both sustain all things. But if only Jehovah's hands created, and the Father and the Son's hands created, is not the only logical conclusion that both the Father and the Son are Jehovah?

By now the dilemma should be clear and is worthy of asking your JW friend. If Jehovah created everything by Himself, how is it possible that He did so through a separate being? The force of the argument is that the Watchtower is forced to admit that Jesus created and sustains all things and yet, Isaiah is clear that Jehovah alone created and sustains everything. If Jehovah alone created and sustains everything, and Jesus created and sustains all things, then Jesus must be of the same nature as Jehovah.

¹⁴ Italics are mine. The word "[other]" is inserted by the Watchtower and is not in any known Greek manuscript. Unlike the insertions of the word "other" in some places of the Bible, the insertions in Colossians 1 are totally unacceptable because they change the meaning of the text; it doesn't clarify the present context; it transforms the entire theology. Nevertheless, our point remains valid; Jesus is credited as Creator and Sustainer which is a job Jehovah has insisted is solely His.

¹⁵ See Heb. 1:2.

How Many Gods?

For God, the thought of being compared to any created being is repugnant: "'But to whom can YOU people liken me so that I should be made his equal?' says the Holy One."¹⁶ As a result, God uses at least two arguments to distinguish Himself from created beings. First, God argues that there are certain divine attributes that only He possesses.¹⁷ Second, God argues that He is, in fact, the only God. In other words, no created beings are truly Divine. Regarding the latter, consider:

Isa. 45:5 NWT "I am Jehovah, and there is no one else. With the exception of me there is no God."

Isa. 45:21 NWT "Is it not I, Jehovah, besides whom there is no other God"

Isa. 46:9 NWT "I am the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me"

Importantly, notice that He doesn't merely say He is the only Jehovah, or the only Almighty; rather He says He is the only God. There are no other beings worthy of that title; there are no other beings possessing Deity.

Though clear claims of monotheism are presented above, the Bible, nevertheless, repeatedly refers to Jesus as God. Therefore, either the JW must reject monotheism, or he must deny that the term god refers to deity, or he must accept that Jesus is Jehovah.

Isa. 9:6 "For there has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, *Mighty God*, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

The Watchtower tries to argue that this verse only claims Jesus is a "Mighty God," not Almighty God. They emphasize that the messiah is also referred to as "Prince," not King. Regarding this passage, the Watchtower publication *Awake!* remarks, "So, as the 'Prince'—the son of the Great King, Jehovah—Jesus will serve as Ruler of the heavenly government of 'God Almighty.'"¹⁸

The Watchtower interpretation is unconvincing for several reasons. First, when all of the descriptions of the Messiah are considered from Isa. 9:6, "Mighty God" is clearly a reference to Deity. For example, the Messiah is referred to as "Eternal Father," which means Father of Eternity or possessor of Eternity.¹⁹ Who but God is Eternal? Certainly no

¹⁶ Isa. 40:25 NWT. See also Isa. 44:7; 46:5.

¹⁷ For example, God declares omniscience in Isa. 42:9; 44:7; 46:10-11.

¹⁸ "Is Jesus Christ God?" *Awake!* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, April 22, 2005) [Online], available: http://www.watchtower.org/e/20050422/article_03.htm. [5 June 2008].

temporal, created creature could be considered the Father of Eternity. Furthermore, the reference to the "Prince of Peace" in no way demeans the Messiah's Deity; rather, as verse 7 indicates, the Messiah's rule will be a reign of unending peace: "there will be no end." Additionally, if the Watchtower requires a "King" reference in order to indicate Almighty Sovereignty for the Messiah, they can have it. Rev. 19:16 of their NWT refers to Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Additional evidence that the Watchtower misinterprets "Mighty God" is the fact that the same name is used in reference to Jehovah in the very next chapter.²⁰ It would be most incongruous of Isaiah to use the title "Mighty God" for a mere creature in one chapter and of Jehovah in the very next chapter.

Finally, even if "Mighty God" did refer to a lesser "God," this does not alleviate the Watchtower's dilemma because Jehovah has clearly, repeatedly stated that he is the only God. The only reasonable conclusion from this passage is that the Messiah is Deity.

The New Testament also testifies that Jesus is God.

John 1:1 "In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

A lot of good material has been written demonstrating that the Watchtower translation "a god" is unwarranted. For the purposes of this article, we simply add that even the Watchtower translation does not get them off the hook. Their theology is still henotheistic (one main god with lesser god(s) existing), while Isaiah clearly teaches monotheism.²¹ Incidentally, that Isaiah is actually teaching monotheism is supported by 1 Cor. 8:4 NWT which states, ". . . we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one." The NWT is simply not consistent.

The Watchtower response to this dilemma is to argue that "Jesus is a god in the sense of being divine, but he is not the Father."²² Further, the Watchtower argues that the term "god" is used elsewhere in the Bible with reference to human judges and even Satan. Therefore, they reason, surely Jesus can be called a god.²³

Christians quite agree that Jesus is divine, and yet not the Father; however, this is not the issue. The point is that Jehovah has already made it clear that there is only one

¹⁹ Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Book of Bible Answers: Answering the Tough Questions* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1997), 127. As Rhodes points out, even the ancient Jews, in writing the Targum, held this interpretation: "His name has been called from of old, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, He who lives forever . . ." J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (London: Oxford Press, 1949), 32; quoted in Rhodes, 127.

²⁰ Isa. 10:21 NWT.

²¹ At times the Watchtower claims to embrace monotheism such as in *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 12. But they are inconsistent when they are forced to acknowledge that even their own texts assure that the Word was "'divine,' 'godlike,' 'a god,'" in quality (Ibid., 27). The Watchtower can't have it both ways. If Jesus is divine, either He is Almighty God and monotheism is true, or he is a lesser god and henotheism is true.

²² *Awake!*, Ibid.

²³ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, 28.

divine – only one God! While the term "god" is used of other beings in the Bible, it is never used of created beings when describing a supreme act of God's identity, such as creation. To do so would be to obliterate the arguments Jehovah presents in Isaiah. If Witnesses want to define divine so as to remove the character of Deity, they might remember that they are drawing their characterization of Jesus' divinity from John 1:1-3 in which Jesus is called "god" and credited with the work that Jehovah alone accomplished, namely creation.

John's Gospel is filled with references to Jesus' Deity. One of the most outright is:

John 20:28 NWT "In answer Thomas said to him: 'My Lord and my God!'"

In response to this verse, the Watchtower once again recognizes the divinity of Jesus but only as a lesser God. And once again, we respond that the Bible clearly teaches that there is only one true God, only one Divine. Furthermore, according to Thomas, his God is Jesus for in Greek, the verse reads, "*ho kurios mou kai ho theos mou*," which translates to "the Lord of me and the God of me." Either Thomas is blaspheming or Jesus is God.

Dilemma:

If there is only one God, then Jesus must be Jehovah, the one God. If there is more than one God, then the NWT is wrong when it teaches monotheism.

Either there is only one God or there is more than one God.

Therefore, either Jesus must be Jehovah, or the NWT is wrong when teaching monotheism.

One way or the other the Watchtower Society must be wrong for either their theology is wrong or their bible is mistaken. Therefore, they cannot be the prophetic organization that they claim to be.²⁴

Glory for Whom?

For Christians, it is clear that the glory of God belongs to Him alone. As even the NWT teaches:

Isa. 42:8 NWT "I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory, neither my praise to graven images."

Yet, in John 17 Jesus claims to possess the glory of God.

John 17:5 NWT "So now you, Father, glorify me alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was."

²⁴ Prophets who are wrong are false prophets and should not be followed (see Deut. 18:20-22.) For examples of Watchtower claims to be a prophetic organization as well as numerous false prophecies by the Watchtower see John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1999), 175-183.

It is important to observe that Jesus had glory with the Father at a time when Jehovah had said that no one possessed that kind of divine glory. If Jehovah will not give his glory to anyone, and Jesus possesses the glory of Jehovah, then the most plausible explanation is that Jesus is of the essence of Jehovah.

Who is the Savior?

Jehovah's Witnesses openly acknowledge that Jesus is their Savior.²⁵ Sadly, they do not have a proper understanding of this term, essentially believing that Jesus, as a "corresponding ransom," provides man a clean slate from original sin whereby man can then earn his salvation via good works. The Watchtower understanding of Jesus as Savior has missed the gospel, but it also has difficulty harmonizing with key passages in Isaiah.

Isa. 43:11-12 NWT "*I—I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior. I myself have told forth and have saved and have caused [it] to be heard, when there was among YOU no strange [god]. So YOU are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I am God.'*"

Isa. 45:21e-22 NWT "*Is it not I, Jehovah, besides whom there is no other God; a righteous God and a Savior, there being none excepting me? Turn to me and be saved, all YOU [at the] ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no one else.*"

Two points bear emphasizing: First, these verses (along with others) teach that Jehovah is the "savior."²⁶ Second, Jehovah is the *only* savior, for "besides me there is no savior." The New Testament writers were well aware of these facts and yet still felt compelled to write the following about Jesus:

Acts 4:10-12 NWT ". . . let it be known to all of YOU and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Naz·a·rene' . . . *there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved.*"

These verses indicate that salvation is found in Jesus. But how can salvation be in Christ if Jehovah is the only savior? Furthermore, the Watchtower has an additional problem with Acts 4. JW's hold that it is the name of Jehovah that saves. After all, in the NWT version of Rom. 10:13 (which is a bad translation) we read, "For 'everyone who calls on *the name of Jehovah* will be saved.'" Comparing this verse to Acts 4:12 is devastating to the Watchtower denial of Christ's Deity because the Acts verse specifically notes that "not another name under heaven" is given *other than Jesus* by which we must get saved.

²⁵ "Jesus Saves – How?" *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*, Vol. 122 (New York: The Watchtower, Nov. 15, 2001), 4.

²⁶ See for example Isa. 43:3; Jonah 2:9 NWT.

Would the authors of the New Testament really play so fast and loose with scripture? Isn't it more reasonable to conclude that they are not merely being sloppy, but are trying to communicate an intricate theological truth about the nature of God? Consider another verse that affirms Jesus as Savior:

Titus 2:13 NWT ". . . while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus"

To be sure, the Watchtower translation "of the great God and of [the] Savior of us" is a biased rendering in order to avoid exclaiming that Jesus is God. But for our purposes the point is that the text still clearly gives Jesus the credit as the Savior. But there is no Savior but Jehovah.

Other examples could be sighted, but the point of Scripture is clear. The Savior is Jehovah. Jesus is the Savior. Therefore, Jesus is Jehovah.

For Whose Sake?

Isaiah 43:25 NWT "I [Jehovah]—I am the One that is *wiping out your transgressions for my own sake*, and your sins I shall not remember."

While this verse teaches that sins are wiped away for Jehovah's own sake, interestingly, when one reads 1 John 2:12 one finds that sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake:

1 John 2:12 NWT "I [John] am writing YOU, little children, because *YOUR sins have been forgiven YOU for the sake of his name*."

The question is, To whom is the pronoun "his" referring in 1 John 2:12? The answer is that it refers to Jesus as is evident for two reasons: First, "his" refers back to "Jesus Christ, a righteous one" in verse 1 of chapter 2. Second, in the even more immediate context, verse 13 refers to the same person as "him who is from [the] beginning." And as is indicated from 1 John 1:1, Jesus is the one "which was from the beginning."

This leads to the question we should lovingly ask our JW friends, For whose sake are sins forgiven? It cannot be overstated that the New Testament writers knew the book of Isaiah, yet they repeatedly and unashamedly took Old Testament verses about Jehovah and applied them to Jesus. Given the first century Jewish mindset, wouldn't such a tribute be utterly profane unless Jesus was God?

The Rock

In Isa. 44:8 NWT Jehovah declares that He is the only God and that besides Him there is no rock. In fact, earlier in Isaiah one reads that Jehovah Himself is the stone upon which Israel would stumble.

Isa. 8:13-14 "Jehovah of armies—he is the One whom YOU should treat as holy, and he should be the object of YOUR fear, and he should be the One causing YOU to tremble.' And he must become as a sacred place; but as *a stone to strike against and as a rock over which to stumble* to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and as a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

Yet in 1 Peter, the apostle applies the stumbling stone imagery directly to Christ.

1 Pet. 2:7 "It is to YOU, therefore, that he is precious, because YOU are believers; but to those not believing, 'the identical stone that the builders rejected has become [the] head of [the] corner,' and '*a stone of stumbling and a rock-mass of offense.*'"

If Jehovah is the only rock and the rock over which Israel stumbles, what are we to make of Peter's statement which flatly states that Jesus is the rock over which Israel stumbled? It would seem that either the authors of the Bible are deeply confused or they are vigorously trying to tell us something about the identity of Jesus.

To Whom will I Bow?

In the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, the apostle John is given a stern warning to "Worship God" and not a creature.²⁷ Throughout chapters 40-48 of Isaiah, God has emphatically driven home the same point; namely, worship God, for there is only one true God and only He is worthy of worship. In fact, God even predicts that one day everyone will recognize His sovereignty. This is beautifully put in Isa. 45:22-24.

"Turn to me and be saved, all YOU [at the] ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no one else. By my own self I have sworn—out of my own mouth in righteousness the word has gone forth, so that it will not return—*that to me every knee will bend down, every tongue will swear*, saying, 'Surely in Jehovah there are full righteousness and strength.'"

In the Isaiah passage, every knee will bow and every tongue will swear in recognition of Jehovah. But in the New Testament the same phrasing is used in the recognition of Jesus.

Phil. 2:10-11 ". . . so that in *the name of Jesus every knee should bend* of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground, *and every tongue should openly acknowledge* that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Ask the JW, Why would holy spirit inspire language expressly used to recognize Jehovah and apply it to a creature? Would it not be deceitful for God to inspire such language about a created being when the context of Isaiah is about God establishing His identity? Does it not seem more reasonable to conclude that God is consistent with the

²⁷ Rev. 22:9 NWT.

use of terminology, particularly when it comes to His indistinguishability? Further, doesn't the context of Philippians 2 indicate that Jesus existed "in God's form"?²⁸ How can a finite creature have ever existed "in God's form"? And if the Son is not Almighty God, how can he receive sovereign worship reserved expressly for Almighty God?

Conclusion

Though the NWT has been warped by the Watchtower in many places so as to seemingly teach that Jesus is not Almighty God,²⁹ we have demonstrated that it has not succeeded in stealing the Deity from Christ. Even in the theologically biased translation, some truth can be found regarding The Divinity of the Son, which should give the open minded Jehovah's Witness serious concerns about his theology and the inaccuracies of his bible.

Even in the NWT, the New Testament writers repeatedly take the titles, attributes, and actions strictly reserved for Jehovah and apply them to Jesus. The best explanation for these facts is that the New Testament authors are trying to communicate that Jesus is Almighty God, while making every effort distinguish the persons of the Father and the Son.

We would be remiss if we did not note that one of the primary reasons it is so difficult to for JW's to accept what the Bible is clearly teaching is that they believe the Trinity is an unreasonable doctrine.³⁰ While giving a complete defense of the Trinity is beyond the scope of this article, a few preliminary comments are in order regarding the mindset with which one should approach the scriptures.

In Isa. 1:18, God attempts to reason with his followers. To be sure, there are numerous places in scripture where God calls us to use our minds.³¹ While God places a value on human reason, however, there are also numerous places in scripture that indicate that God is beyond our understanding. For example, in Isa. 55:9 NWT God declares, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than YOUR ways, and my thoughts than YOUR thoughts." So while God never goes *against* our reason, He does go *beyond* our reason. There is a big difference between a contradiction and that which extends beyond full human comprehension. The Trinity is not a contradiction. We can *apprehend* the Trinity without needing to fully *comprehend* it just as we do with many of God's attributes (such as infinitude.) Let us be honest enough to follow all of the Scriptures where they lead rather than forcing human limitations on how God defines Himself.

²⁸ Phil. 2:6 NWT.

²⁹ For example, John 1:1, Col. 1:16-17; Titus 2:13 NWT.

³⁰ *Should I Believe in the Trinity?*, 4-5, 30.

³¹ Isa. 1:18; Matt. 22:37; Rom. 12:2.