

2 Jesus is Jehovah

The Watchtower Society has done a good job at changing the Bible to cope with the more obvious statements of Jesus' divinity—for example, that Jesus “was God” (John 1:1), is “God blessed for ever” (Rom. 9:5), and “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13). As fallible men, however, they could not erase all declarations of Jesus' divinity.

The First and Last statements of Jehovah present such a declaration. Jehovah proclaims Himself the First and the Last (Isa. 41:4; 48:12; Rev. 21:6; 22:13), the eternal one. This First and Last, though, claims to have been resurrected from the dead:

- “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; *I was dead*, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!” (Rev. 1:17-18)
- “These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, *who died and came to life again*.” (Rev. 2:8)

When was Jehovah dead? When was Jehovah raised from the dead? Jesus is indeed the First and the Last. He is indeed the eternal one. He is indeed the Jehovah that declared to the prophet Isaiah, “apart from me there is no God” (Isa. 44:6)!

3 Significance of Orthodoxy

In the burning bush, Jehovah introduced Himself to Moses as “I AM” (Ex. 3:14). This divine name Jesus takes to Himself: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM” (John 8:58; cf. 18:4-6). His Jewish opponents pick up stones to throw at Him because they understand He is claiming to be God (John 8:59).

Earlier in this same dispute, Jesus makes a proper knowledge of His divinity essential for salvation:

Unless you believe that I AM, *you will die in your sins*. (John 8:24)

In saying “you will die in your sins,” Jesus warns His detractors not to trifle with His divinity. Such sobering words should loosen grips (even family grips) that hold us to religious counterfeits. For not only does Jesus call us unworthy of Him if we cherish anyone more than Him (Matt. 10:37), but to die in your sins procures divine fury that never ends, “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48).

So Jesus now asks you: “Who do *you* say that I am?”

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS *to the Jehovah's Witnesses*



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2 Corinthians 10:5

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One of the most important questions Jesus ever asked His disciples was, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15). Confusions over Christ’s status cause some to give a fatal answer to this question.

Clarifying JW Confusions

Gathering from many conversations with Jehovah’s Witnesses, many of your objections to Christ’s deity stem from two misunderstandings: (a) the nature of the Trinity, and (b) Jesus’ subordination to His Father. Please consider the following clarifications:

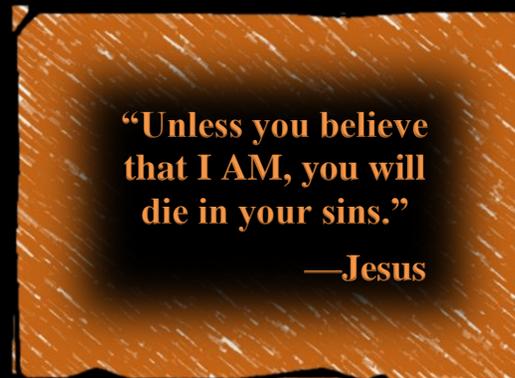
(a) Nature of the Trinity

Sometimes the doctrine of the Trinity is charged as being contrary to reason. To say that God is one and at the same time three violates the laws of logic, it is thought.

We Christians, though, bear some blame for this misunderstanding. We have not always presented the doctrine accurately. We have sometimes stated it in a contradictory manner. But stating it correctly removes any logical objections.

We may define the Trinity as “one God, three persons,” or “one divine essence, three persons,” or “one God who is tri-personal,” etc. So when we say that God exists as three *persons* in one *essence*, there is no contradiction—for the oneness and three-ness are in different senses. The oneness pertains to His essence; the three-ness

pertains to the persons. It would be a contradiction for the oneness and the three-ness to be in the same sense—that is, one essence and three essences, or one person and three persons. But if the way He is one is not the same as He is three, we have no contradiction. We admit, however, it is quite *mysterious* how one being can be multi-personal. Mystery, though, far differs from irrationality. The Trinity, then, falls into the same mysterious category with God’s creation from nothing, with the virgin birth, with floating ax-heads, etc. It does not fall, however, into the irrational category.



Moreover, having this proper understanding of the Trinity answers another misguided criticism. Sometimes people fault the Trinity by pointing to verses distinguishing Jesus from God: Jesus prays to God (Mark 15:34; John 17:3), Christ ministers for us now in the presence of God (Heb. 9:24), Stephen sees Jesus standing at God’s right hand (Acts 7:55), and God is said to be the head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). Jesus cannot be God, some think, if the Bible distinguishes

Him from God. Yet such verses are adequately explained if Jesus is God in one sense (the divine *essence*) and still distinct from God the Father in another sense (the *personhood*). So the fact that Jesus calls the Father “God” (John 17:3) no more detracts from Jesus’ deity any more than it does from the Father’s deity when He likewise calls the Son “God” (Heb. 1:8).

(b) Jesus’ Subordination to His Father

At other times people fault the Trinity by pointing to several instances in the Bible where Jesus subordinates Himself to the Father: He prays to His Father “not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26:39; *cf.* John 4:34; 6:38), and He declares, “I seek not to please myself but him who sent me” (John 5:30). So if the Trinity teaches three *equal* persons, these verses teaching *inequality* are supposedly problematic for the doctrine.

Overcoming this second objection, however, requires distinguishing the *economic* Trinity from the *ontological* Trinity. The economic Trinity refers to how the three persons relate to each other with regard to creation. Here Jesus (and the Spirit) subordinates Himself to the Father in dealing with the economy of creation (particularly in redeeming it). The ontological Trinity, on the other hand, refers to God’s intrinsic nature from all eternity. Here there is equality of persons (John 10:30; 14:9; Phil. 2:6), even as John recognized that Jesus was “making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18).