Jehovah’s Witnesses – Lesson 2

From Ron Rhodes’ introduction in his book “Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah’s Witnesses”:

In 1985 the Watchtower Society published a 445-page book entitled *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (first edition: two million copies). This book, like most other Watchtower books, was designed to equip Jehovah’s Witnesses to argue their peculiar doctrines from Scripture. The book set out to demonstrate how to disprove the full deity of Christ, prove that He is a created being, that the Holy Spirit is neither a person nor God but is rather God’s “active force,” that the doctrine of the Trinity is unbiblical and is rooted in paganism, and much more.

When one realizes that Jehovah’s Witnesses are presently devoting over 1.4 billion man-hours each year spreading these doctrines around the world, it is obvious that the Christian must become equipped to answer these cultists on the doorstep. Indeed, Christians must learn to *reason from the Scriptures* with Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Today we begin discussing the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ beliefs about Jesus that differ from orthodox Christianity. Remember, Jehovah’s Witnesses believe in the one true God and insist in using His divine name Jehovah everywhere it is written, and that it refers to God alone and not to Jesus. They deny the Trinity nature of God.

Their major beliefs about Jesus Christ are:

1. Jesus was/is the Archangel Michael
2. Jesus was created by God
3. Jesus is a god, not the God
4. After His crucifixion, Jesus was not physically raised from the dead – only spiritually
5. The second coming of Christ was in this invisible spiritual form, and it already happened in 1914

In the May 15th, 1969 issue of The Watchtower magazine it says, “there is Scriptural evidence for concluding that Michael was the name of Jesus Christ before he left heaven and after his return.” Then later in the December 15th, 1984 issue they reaffirm this by saying, “’Michael the great prince’ is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.” They believe that God created Jesus just as He created the other angels. They do give significance to Jesus as the first of God’s creations, and in fact believe that God created everything else through Jesus, but they do not equate Jesus to God nor give Him eternal pre-existence the same as God.

Colossians 1:16-17 in the NWT (New World Translation – JW’s translation of the bible) says:

By means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things 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.

Compare this to our ESV translation:

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

These verses are talking about Jesus. In the NWT, the word *other* is inserted four times. This word does not appear in the original Greek. Their reasoning is that it is inserted for a smoother rendition in English, just as other translations have done in Luke 13:2, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?” (ESV). In both cases the Greek word for *all* is *panta*. In Luke 13:2 “the other” is inserted to make the English more readable, without changing the meaning of the text. And it is noted in the Foreword in the NWT, “brackets enclose words inserted to complete the sense in the English text.” They claim that the bracketed word contributes to smoother English without changing the meaning of the text. But the inserted *other* in Colossians 1:16-17 does change the meaning of the text. Their motive for doing this is clear – they do not want it to appear that Christ is uncreated and that He existed before all things. They believe that God created Jesus. Without the insertion of *other* in these verses, this becomes a contradiction (if all things were created by Him, then He couldn’t have been created Himself).

We all know that John 1:1 is about Jesus, where John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (ESV). The NWT renders this as, “In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” Note the insertion of “a” before the second occurrence of “God”. There’s a long explanation of why JW’s believe this is the correct translation, even though the same Greek word *theos* is used for both occurrences of God. They even cite four biblical scholars that support their translation. The truth is that one of these is not a true biblical scholar, and the other three are cited out of context or just plain misquoted. One of these scholars even sent the JW’s a letter calling them on it, but that hasn’t stopped them from citing him. No credible biblical scholar agrees with the JW’s on this verse.

To go along with their belief that Jesus is not God, the NWT translates Colossians 2:9 as, “It is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily.” Contrast this to the ESV, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” The JW’s do not want it to appear that the “whole fullness of deity” dwells in Jesus, for this would (correctly) prove that Jesus is God. So they purposely change this to mean only the “fullness of the divine quality” dwells in Jesus. This allows Jesus to be “a god” (divine), but not the God (deity).

One more example of the NWT translation being skewed to fit their ideology: In Zechariah 12:10, God is quoted as saying:

And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of favor and entreaties, and they will certainly look to the One whom they pierced through, and they will certainly wail over Him as in the wailing over an only [son]; and there will be a bitter lamentation over him as when there is bitter lamentation of the firstborn [son].

Where as the ESV renders this as:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Notice the removal of “me”, so that the pierced one cannot be understood as God Himself. JW’s are taught, through Watchtower and their NWT, that Jesus is not one with God.

There are several more examples that Rhodes gives of the NWT changing the meaning of the text to support their belief that Jesus is not God or “Jehovah”, that He was created by God as a separate entity and is lessor than God.