

The New World Translation: What the Greek Really Says

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If you are a Jehovah's Witness, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT) is probably the only Bible you read. We write this with respect, because we know you sincerely want to honor God and His Word. But we ask you to consider a hard question: what if the translation you trust has been shaped to fit a teaching, instead of the teaching being shaped by the text? Below are several places where the NWT departs from the Greek in ways that consistently lower the identity of Jesus Christ.

1. John 1:1: "God" or "a god"?

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The NWT ends the verse with "and the Word was a god." The usual defense is that the Greek word for God (theos) has no definite article in the last clause. But the NWT does not apply that rule consistently. In the same chapter, theos appears without the article in verses 6, 12, and 13, and the NWT translates it simply as "God" each time. The rule is only invoked when the verse speaks of Jesus.

The rendering also creates a theological problem. The Bible says there is only one true God (Isaiah 43:10; 44:6). If the Word is "a god" in addition to Jehovah, then the Bible would teach two gods, one great and one lesser. That is exactly what Scripture forbids:

Isaiah 43:10 "Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me."

Notice too that John 1:3 says "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." The Word is not part of creation. He stands on the Creator's side of the line.

2. Colossians 1:16 and 17: the added word "other"

Colossians 1:16 and 17 "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

The NWT reads "all other things" four times in these verses. The word "other" is not in the Greek text at all. Earlier printings of the NWT placed it in brackets, which at least admitted it was an addition; the 2013 revision removed the brackets so the reader can no longer tell. Paul says Christ created "all things." Adding "other" turns the Creator into the first creature, which is the opposite of the point Paul is making.

3. Hebrews 1:8: "Your throne, O God"

Hebrews 1:8 "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.'"

Here the Father Himself addresses the Son as God. The NWT reads "God is your throne forever and ever." Yet the passage is quoting Psalm 45:6, and the very next verse (Hebrews 1:9) speaks of "God, Your God"

anointing Him, showing a direct address. Throughout Hebrews 1 the writer is proving that the Son is greater than the angels. Saying “God is your throne” adds nothing to that argument; saying “Your throne, O God” settles it.

4. John 8:58: “I AM”

John 8:58 and 59 “Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’ Then they took up stones to throw at Him.”

The Greek is ego eimi, “I am,” in the present tense. The NWT renders it “before Abraham came into existence, I have been.” But the Jewish listeners understood Jesus perfectly well. They did not pick up stones because He claimed to be old; they did it because He applied to Himself the name God revealed to Moses:

Exodus 3:14 “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’”

Jesus did not say He existed before Abraham. He said that He always is. Only God speaks that way.

5. Titus 2:13: “our great God and Savior”

Titus 2:13 “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”

The NWT inserts an extra “of” to read “the great God and of our Savior, Christ Jesus,” making two persons out of one. In the Greek, a single article governs both nouns, “God” and “Savior,” joined by “and.” This is the same construction found in 2 Peter 1:1, “our God and Savior Jesus Christ,” and in 2 Peter 1:11, where the NWT itself translates “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” as one person. Again, the grammar is handled one way when it touches Christ’s deity and another way when it does not.

6. Who translated the NWT?

The NWT committee chose to remain anonymous, so its work could not be checked against the training of its members. Former Governing Body member Raymond Franz later identified the committee in his book *Crisis of Conscience* as Frederick Franz, Nathan Knorr, Albert Schroeder, and George Gangas. None of these men held a degree in biblical Greek or Hebrew. Frederick Franz, regarded as the chief translator, had studied some Greek in college but did not graduate. In sworn testimony at a 1954 court case in Edinburgh, Scotland, he declined to translate a verse of Genesis into Hebrew when asked. Christian researchers such as Walter Martin (*The Kingdom of the Cults*) and the Institute for Religious Research have documented these facts for decades.

Training does not make a person right. But when an anonymous team without recognized qualifications produces a translation that departs from the Greek at the very places where Christ’s deity is taught, and nowhere else so consistently, the reader should ask why.

A loving challenge. You do not need to take our word for any of this. Get a Greek interlinear (even the Watchtower's own *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* shows the Greek of John 1:1 and John 8:58) and compare. Ask your elders why "other" appears in Colossians 1 when the Greek does not have it. Truth has nothing to fear from honest questions.

The Jesus of the Bible can save you

This is not about winning an argument. It is about knowing the true Jesus. He said, "if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). The Jesus of the Bible is God the Son, who became a man, died for our sins, and rose bodily from the dead. Salvation is not earned through an organization or hours in field service:

Ephesians 2:8 and 9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Repent of your sins and put your trust in Him alone. Read the Gospel of John with an open heart, and ask God to show you who Jesus really is.