

Defending the Deity of Christ: An LGH Hermeneutic Approach to Jehovah's Witness Objections

Jehovah's Witnesses frequently challenge the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity by pointing to specific New Testament verses that seem to depict Jesus Christ as a created being or an entity inherently inferior to God the Father. Their arguments typically rely on isolating verses from their immediate context, applying modern English definitions to ancient terminology, and overlooking the historical backdrop of the biblical authors.

By applying the **Literal, Grammatical, and Historical (LGH) hermeneutic**, these proof texts are systematically shown to teach the exact opposite of the Jehovah's Witness position. The LGH method reveals two major theological truths that dismantle these objections: the distinction between Christ's eternal nature and His mediatorial role, and His status as the uncreated Sovereign over creation rather than a product of it.

Here is a defense addressing their four most common objections: 1 Corinthians 15:28, Philippians 2:5-8, Revelation 3:14, and Colossians 1:15.

Part I: Nature vs. Role (The Incarnation and Submission of the Son)

The first major Jehovah's Witness argument confuses **ontology** (who God is in His nature) with **economy** (how God functions in the plan of redemption). They argue that because Jesus submitted to the Father, He must be an inferior, created being.

Philippians 2:5–8: The Descent of the King

Jehovah's Witnesses argue from Philippians 2 that Jesus was an angel who simply knew his place and did not try to "seize" equality with God. However, an LGH approach reveals this passage to be one of the highest declarations of Christ's deity.

- **Historical:** In the status-obsessed Roman colony of Philippi, crucifixion was the ultimate degradation, reserved for slaves. Paul is contrasting the highest conceivable status with the lowest conceivable humiliation. Furthermore, Paul applies **Isaiah 45:23**—a strictly "Yahweh-only" text ("every knee will bow")—directly to Jesus in verse 10, proving historically that Paul viewed Jesus as Yahweh.
- **Grammatical:** The Greek word for "form" (*morphē*) refers to the unchangeable, intrinsic essence of a thing. Jesus eternally possessed the exact essence of God. When He "emptied himself," the grammar (a participle of means) explains exactly *how* He did it: "by taking the form [*morphē*] of a servant." He did not empty Himself by subtracting His deity; He emptied Himself by adding humanity.

- **Literal:** The immediate context of verses 3-4 is a command to the Philippians to put others' interests above their own. If Jesus were merely an angel who obeyed God and didn't rebel, He would not be the ultimate illustration of self-sacrifice. His humility is only profound if He already possessed the highest privileges of deity and voluntarily stepped down.

1 Corinthians 15:24–28: The Triumphant Submission

Having established in Philippians *how* the Son took on a subordinate human role, 1 Corinthians 15 explains the *culmination* of that role. JW's argue that because the Son is "subjected" to the Father at the end of the age, He cannot be Almighty God.

- **Historical:** Paul is relying on the Old Testament concept of the "Last Adam" and the Regent King. A sovereign king would send a regent to conquer a rebellion. Once the enemies were defeated, the regent would return the pacified kingdom to the sovereign. Jesus is fulfilling the historical, Messianic role of conquering sin and death.
- **Grammatical:** The Greek word for "subject" (*hypotassō*) is an orderly arrangement of roles, not a definition of essence. Luke 2:51 uses the exact same word to say the boy Jesus was "subject" to Mary and Joseph. This did not make Him ontologically inferior to humans; it was a voluntary submission of role.
- **Literal:** The literal context of the chapter is the defeat of death through resurrection. Verse 28 describes a specific timeline: once the Son's mediatorial rescue mission as the God-Man is complete, He hands the perfected kingdom back to the Father. He ceases His temporary mediatorial function so that the Triune God may dwell directly with humanity ("God all in all").

Summary of Part I: Submission dictates function, not essence. Just as a human Vice President is subordinate in role but fully equal in human nature to the President, the Son voluntarily subjects Himself to the Father's redemptive plan while remaining completely equal in His divine nature.

Part II: The Preeminent Creator (Titles of Supremacy)

The second major Jehovah's Witness argument relies on misunderstanding first-century titles. When the Bible calls Jesus the "firstborn" or the "beginning," JW's apply modern English, chronological definitions to argue Jesus was the first thing God created.

Colossians 1:15–16: The Supreme Heir

JWs claim that being the "firstborn of all creation" means Jesus was chronologically the first created entity. To support this, their *New World Translation* (NWT) famously inserts the word "other" into the text ("by him all [other] things were created").

- **Historical:** In first-century Jewish culture, "firstborn" (*bekhor*) was a title of supreme rank, sovereignty, and inheritance, not strictly birth order. In Psalm 89:27, God calls King David His "firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth," even though David was the youngest of eight sons. Calling Jesus the "firstborn over creation" means He is its Sovereign Master, not a product of it.
- **Grammatical:** If Paul meant "first-created," he would have used the exact Greek word for that: *protoktistos*. Instead, he used *prototokos*, the cultural title for preeminence. Furthermore, the word "other" does not exist in the Greek text. Paul definitively wrote that Jesus created "all things" (*panta*). If He created *all* things, He cannot be one of the things created.
- **Literal:** Paul defines his own terms in verse 16. Jesus is the Firstborn... *because* ("for") by Him all things were created. He does not hold the title because He was the first thing made; He holds the title because He is the Creator of everything that exists.

Revelation 3:14: The Uncaused Cause

JWs point to Christ's title as the "beginning of God's creation" as absolute proof of His start date.

- **Grammatical:** The Greek word translated "beginning" is *archē*. While it can mean a chronological start, it heavily carries the meaning of "source," "originator," or "ruler" (as seen in English words like *architect* or *archangel*). Jesus is the active Source of creation, not the passive result of it.
- **Literal:** The fatal flaw of the JW argument is found in how Revelation defines its own vocabulary. In Revelation 21:6, Jehovah God calls Himself the *archē* ("Beginning"). If *archē* must mean "the first created thing," then Jehovah must also be a created being. Because Jehovah is uncreated, *archē* must mean the eternal Source—a title Jesus rightfully claims for Himself in Revelation 22:13.
- **Historical:** Jesus is speaking to the church in Laodicea, a wealthy and arrogant city just 11 miles from Colossae. These churches already possessed Paul's letter to the Colossians affirming Christ as the Creator. Jesus is introducing Himself not as a fellow creature, but as the absolute Sovereign Authority over their lives and wealth.

Conclusion: Synthesizing the Apologetic

When engaging with Jehovah's Witnesses on the deity of Christ, the most effective strategy is to gently guide them out of isolated proof-texting and into the rich, logical flow of the LGH hermeneutic.

1. **Acknowledge the text:** Never fear the texts they bring up. Agree with what the words say, but challenge their *definitions* of those words using the Bible's own internal dictionary (e.g., matching Rev 3:14 with Rev 21:6; defining "firstborn" with Psalm 89:27).
2. **Separate Nature and Role:** Consistently reinforce the difference between *who* someone is and *what* job they are performing. Christ's submission (1 Cor 15) and His emptying of heavenly privileges (Phil 2) are proofs of His profound love and mediatorial role, not a downgrade of His divine nature.
3. **Point to the Creator/Creature divide:** If Jesus created *all* things (Col 1), He is the Creator. If He receives the exclusive worship of Yahweh (Phil 2 via Isaiah 45), He is Yahweh.

By allowing the grammatical syntax, the literal surrounding context, and the historical Jewish worldview to speak for themselves, the scriptures flawlessly unite to present Jesus Christ not as a created archangel, but as the eternal, uncreated God incarnate.