

## The Messiah in the Hebrew-Aramaic Scriptures

As we study the Jehovah's Witnesses, it becomes very evident that they have altered their translation of the Bible in a manner designed to support their theology. While it is possible to argue the translation issues, such a discussion becomes very technical, and, unless you are already a Greek scholar, you will be overwhelmed by your JW counterpart. He studies his theology carefully, and attends as many as four classes a week where the JW translation of key texts is expounded. Tackling such a task is best left to experts.

Most of us can be quite successful in witnessing to JW's if we tackle the problem from a different angle. Since the New World Translation is the keystone of JW theology, an attempt to work from any other translation is likely to fail. The JW will regard your discussion as not proceeding from the Bible. Thus, we should strongly consider using the NWT as our Bible when we deal with them. While this limits the passages we can use, it does not cripple us, because even the decades of concerted work by the JW's have not been able to purge the Bible of the truth of Christ.

Our first effort will be to discover just who the OT prophets said the Messiah would be. The Psalmist (Q1) identifies the Messiah as one who would be "a priest to time indefinite According to the manner of Mel-chiz'e-dek!" (NWT) Since we know that Jesus is the Messiah, this is one of the offices he will have. When we look at the Genesis account (Q2), we find that Melchizedek was "priest of Most High God" and "King of Salem". Our search then takes us to Hebrews where we again (Q3) see Jesus listed as priest according to the order of Melchizedek. It is at this point that things start to get interesting.

There are three candidates for the identity of Melchizedek (Q4). There can be an ordinary person by that name, Jesus, or God the Father. The ordinary person theory draws from the manner of presentation of the name, in that Jesus is not expressly identified as Melchizedek, and the Father is seen speaking on Psalm 110, which is quoted in Hebrews 6:19. However, as we read more deeply, we discover in verse 3 (Q5) that Melchizedek was "being fatherless, motherless, without genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life." Put simply, Melchizedek had no beginning and will have no end. This is made clear three different ways.

1. He has no father or mother.
2. He has no genealogy.
3. He had no beginning of days.

Because only God can claim to be "From time indefinite even to time indefinite" (NWT), as well as the other conditions, this means that Melchizedek was God. So far, there is nothing in this which would directly concern a JW, it raises a question. Since John tells us that "No man has seen God at any time" (Q8), this creates a conundrum. If only God meets the conditions set out in Hebrews to be Melchizedek, but no one has ever seen God, who is he?

There is no obvious answer to the JW. If Melchizedek is another person, that makes him another uncreated god, and that is contrary to both JW and Christian theology. On the other hand, if he is Jesus, then this contradicts JW theology because it implies that Jesus is god, being uncreated. JW's teach that Jesus was a created spirit being, and therefore had a beginning, contrary to the statement in Hebrews. When we look at the emphasis given by Hebrews to his name "King of Righteousness" and "King of Peace", this problem escalates, since only God can rightly claim these names (Q6). The absence of Melchizedek (Q7) from scripture at any other time emphasizes that the event in Genesis was a theophany, but since the Trinitarian view of Jesus as God is the only answer which is possible, JW's are left without an answer.

Jesus is clearly identified as the Messiah in Micah 5 (Q9). But once again, the JW theology has a problem, because his origin is from "everlasting" (NASB). The NWT attempts to hide this fact by translating it as from "time indefinite", but this cannot change the fact that Micah is referring to the uncreated nature of the Messiah, a timelessness we have already noticed.

As we move on, the classic prophecy of Isaiah 9 (Q10) comes into view. In it, the names of the Messiah are listed. Among them are "Mighty God" and "Eternal Father". This creates a severe problem for JW's. There is no way to parse this sentence, adjust the punctuation or change the translation to remove these names. Jesus will be called "Mighty God". Their only response is to say that Jesus is a "mighty god", but that he is not "Almighty God". This is a new semantic bind, since the text from which they get their own name (Is 43:10) explicitly declares that there is only one god, and the adjectives are irrelevant. Either there

is one God, and Jesus is God, or they allow multiple gods, which are clearly denied, even in the NWT. This problem becomes worse when we move one chapter away (Is 10:20-21), where the "Mighty God" is clearly identified as Jehovah!

As we continue one chapter further (Q11), we find that the Messiah will be the judge of all at the end of time. Not only will he determine innocence or guilt, he will carry out the sentence. But when we look at other texts (Q12), it becomes clear that Jehovah will be the judge. The language of some of the passages is quite emphatic, declaring that Jehovah himself will do the judging. Finally, when we examine other passages, they are equally emphatic that the Jesus will personally be the judge.

If we are to demand purely human logic to examine these passages, they would seem to be contradictory. The Judge (Q13) will be Jehovah, and it will be Jesus. If these are two separate personages, then there is no logical resolution to the dilemma. But if both Jesus and Jehovah are God (Q14), then the problem resolves itself. Depending on the setting, the judge will be spoken of as one or the other. But given the equally emphatic statements regarding both, it is clear that both will exclusively be the judge. Our only possibility is to accept Jesus as God, and as such as the only sacrifice of great enough value to redeem all of lost mankind.