

## The Logos and Carmen Christi

The New World Translation used by the JW's changes the style of many passages. This makes them sound strange, but usually does not change their fundamental meaning. On occasion, the translation is done specifically to change the intent of the passage to conform to JW doctrine. The single most well known passage is John 1:1

1 In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god. John 1:1 NWT

We immediately note that in comparison to more conventional translations, the "Word" is identified not as "God", but as "a god." Later verses in this chapter clearly identify the "Word" as Jesus, so the change in wording makes out Jesus to be a minor deity, but not to be God. This defense is routinely used by JW's of Jesus. They state that he is a god, but not "Almighty God."

(Greek scholars have written volumes on the translation of this passage, and have almost unanimously condemned the "a god" translation in the NWT. The JW's quote one such scholar who appears to support their translation in a major Greek grammar textbook. However, when the quote is seen in its entirety in the textbook, it becomes obvious that the quote is taken out of context, since the author is actively condemning the NWT. We will bypass such discussions, since few of us will ever be able to discuss the Greek with the apparent fluency of the JW.)

1. What does Jehovah say about the existence of other gods, major or minor? (Is 43:10; 45:5)

43 YOU are my witnesses, is the utterance of Jehovah, "even my servant whom I have chosen, in order that YOU may know and have faith in me, and that YOU may understand that I am the same One. Before me there was no God formed, and after me there continued to be none. (Is 43:10 NWT)

5 I am Jehovah, and there is no one else. With the exception of me there is no God. (Is 45:5 NWT)

2. Psalm 82 is the only other text (cf. John 10:34-35) which indicates other gods as a reality. What characteristic of these beings can be properly deduced from this passage? (Ex 18:14-15, Is 10:1-11) (particularly note vv. 1-2, 7)(The NWT does not substantially change this passage.)

If John did not intend that Jesus be identified as God, then there must be a reason that he wrote that opening verse. We have noted that it is impossible for Jesus to be a minor deity, and the other wording contradicts the JW position. This places the JW in an impossible position, since either position contradicts his Christology, but this will only drive him into a defensive position. We must properly show him the reason John wrote this prolog. To do so, we need to look at John's recurring focus in his gospel, epistles, and the book of Revelation.

About two centuries before Christ, Gnosticism began to creep into Judaism. It was borrowed from Plato, who got it from the Egyptians. The essential element of Gnosticism is a dual view of the nature of man. The belief was that man was made of his physical body, which was evil, and a spirit (or soul) which was inherently good. At death the spiritual part returned to the spirit world. Knowledge (*gnosis*) of this nature was restricted to certain spiritual men (*pneumatikoi*). Certain other spiritual secrets were also restricted to the *pneumatikoi*. These included various numbers derived from mathematical experimentation. Since the Greek language did not include separate numerals such as we use today, every letter had a numerical value. The sum of the values of the letters in a word yielded a number value for the word. This art of "gematria" (the root our modern word "geometry") led to further spiritual secrets.

The most critical element of Gnosticism was its dualistic concept of God. Because spirit was considered to be good and flesh evil, the true god of the Gnostics was pure spirit. But, since we live in a physical world, there had to be another god who made the earth. Thus, they invented two Gods. The ultimate god over all was the "Logos". This was the god of the spirit world and the true god of the *pneumatikoi*. The Logos created various lesser gods called "aeons". These were less pure than the Logos, and created lesser beings. Eventually one of the aeons was sufficiently impure as to not be worried about dealing with physical things. This god was the "Demiurge", and was the creator of the physical world.

When Gnostics converted to Christianity, they brought their basic concepts with them. This syncretism led to several ideas. First, Jesus was recognized as coming from God (the Logos), but not being God. He was one of the more pure aeons, but being primarily spiritual, he did not actually come as a physical being, but was an apparition. This heresy is known as Docetism. They also kept the idea of a separate soul which returned to the spirit world at the death of the body. And they hung on to gematria as a means of discovering various spiritual secrets.

3. Is there any element of Gnosticism in view in Rev 13:18? What point is John making here?

18 Here is where wisdom comes in: Let the one that has intelligence calculate the number of the wild beast, for it is a man's number; and its number is six hundred and sixty-six. (NWT)

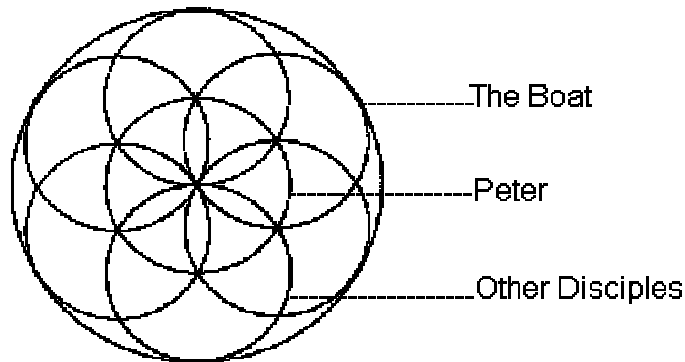
4. What is John's reason for including his list of evidences in 1 John 1:1?

5. Why does John make the statement in 2 John 7?

In the last chapter of John's gospel, we find the story of the 153 fish in the unbroken net. This is a gematria puzzle of considerable complexity. To illustrate the point of the story, we will reproduce its key elements.

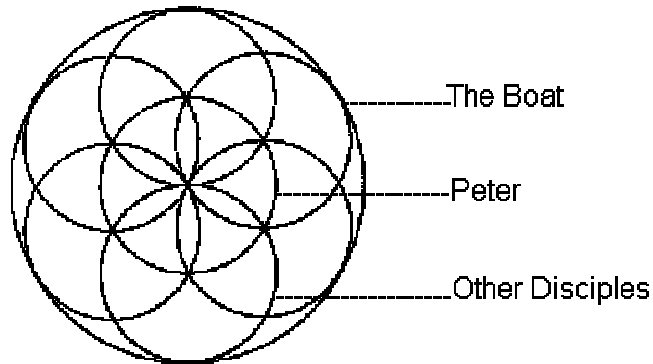
a. Peter enters the boat, then six follow him (John 21:2-3)

The Greek gematria value of Simon Peter is 1925. If a circle of 1925 circumference is drawn to represent Peter, then it can be filled with six similar circles representing the others. Each circle touches the center and the perimeter. Then a circle is drawn around all seven circles. Its diameter is 1224, which is the gematria value of "fishes" and "the net".



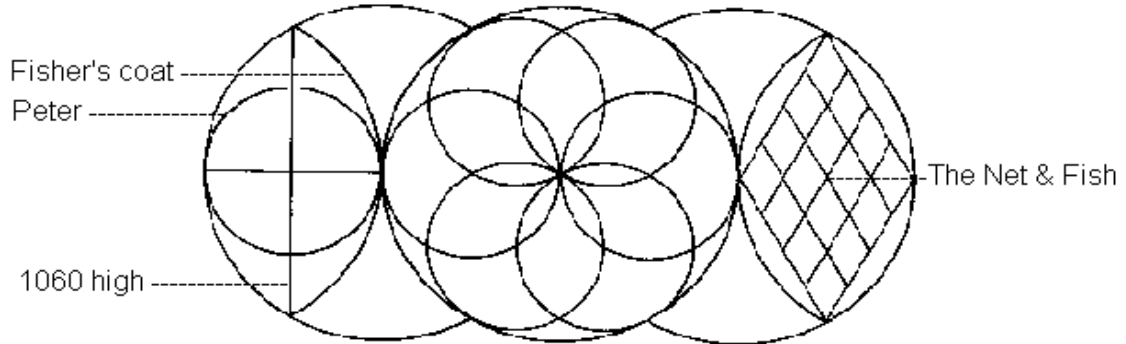
b. Jesus tells the men to cast the net from the other side of the net. (John 21:6)

The net is drawn from the side of the first large circle which represents the boat. Another arc is drawn which now creates the “vesica piscis”: the measure of the fish. A large rhomboid fish is drawn into the right piscis.



c. Peter is naked. He wraps his fisher's coat around him, and jumps into the water from the other side of the boat. (John 21:7)

Another piscis is drawn on the other side, with Peter's circle in it to represent Peter in the water. The height of the piscis is 1060, which is the gematria value of “fisher's coat.” A four by four net is drawn inside the large fish, and now we find the 153 fish. Each small “fish” has a width of 153, and there are a total of 17 fish: 16 small and one large. 153 is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 17.



d. For extended meanings, we now rotate the diagram so that the net is on the bottom and Peter is on the top.

We now have a diagram of the Gnostic cosmos as described by Plato in *Timaeus*. The net in the sea represents the shifting world of manifestation, where everything is in a state of flux and nothing forever remains the same. The upper world, the world of gods and first principles, is the Intelligible world: all of the universal laws on which manifestation is based. The middle world of Humanity partakes of both spirit and matter, the eternal and the temporal.

Much more can be and is drawn out of this simple story. A host of primary mathematical relationships are contained within it. These were also considered to be of religious importance. It is all based on the “secret” gnosis of the pneumatakoï.

6. Is the “Logos” Jesus? (John 1:14-15)

7. Read John 1:1-3 with “Logos” in place of “Word”. What is John’s point in this statement?

Philippians 2 is known as the “Carmen Christi”, or “Hymn to Christ”. Verses 5-11 are most likely a hymn sung in early Christian churches. This passage is often considered one of the most powerful passages which speak to the divinity of Christ. The NWT translates this passage as follows.

5 Keep this mental attitude in YOU that was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although he was existing in God’s form gave no consideration to a seizure, namely that he should be equal to God. 7 No, but he emptied himself and took a slave’s form and came to be in the likeness of men. 8 More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes death on a torture stake. 9 For this very reason also God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave to him the name that is above every [other] name, 10 so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground, 11 and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The Greek word “*harpagmos*” is translated “seizure” here. The NASB translates it “grasped”. It legitimately means either “to take hold of” or “to keep hold of.” The verb “*hegeomai*” translated “gave no consideration”, is in the aorist tense, referring to an action which takes place at a specific point in time and is completed.

8. What is the focus of the introduction (verses 1-4) to the hymn?

9. Did Jesus have this same attitude? (v. 5) What action did He take as a result of this attitude? (v. 7) Did anyone else cause Him to be “emptied?” What does “being emptied” mean?

10. Is it possible for a created being to “empty himself” to become a man?

11. Is it humility for someone of subordinate status to act within the rules applied to that status? Is it humility to NOT grasp for a higher status?

12. Given that a created being cannot “empty himself”, and that a created being would not be humble by acting within the limits of his “createdness”, which definition of “*harpagmos*” makes the most sense, and what does that tell us about the divinity of Christ?

13. After the Cross, Jesus is given the “name which is above every name.” (v. 9, note [other] in the NWT) What does that say about Jesus’ divinity? (See Rev. 19:12-13) Why does the NWT include “[other]?”

14. Why, if Jesus was God, was it necessary for the Father to bestow on Jesus the name?

15. In verse 10, Paul quotes Is 45:23. Does this give us any information regarding the divinity of Jesus? (Heb 6:13-16)

23 By my own self I have sworn - out of my own mouth in righteousness the word has gone forth, so that it will not return - that to me every knee will bend down, every tongue will swear, 24 saying, ‘Surely in Jehovah there are full righteousness and strength. All those getting heated up against him will come straight to him and be ashamed. (Is 45:23-24 NWT)