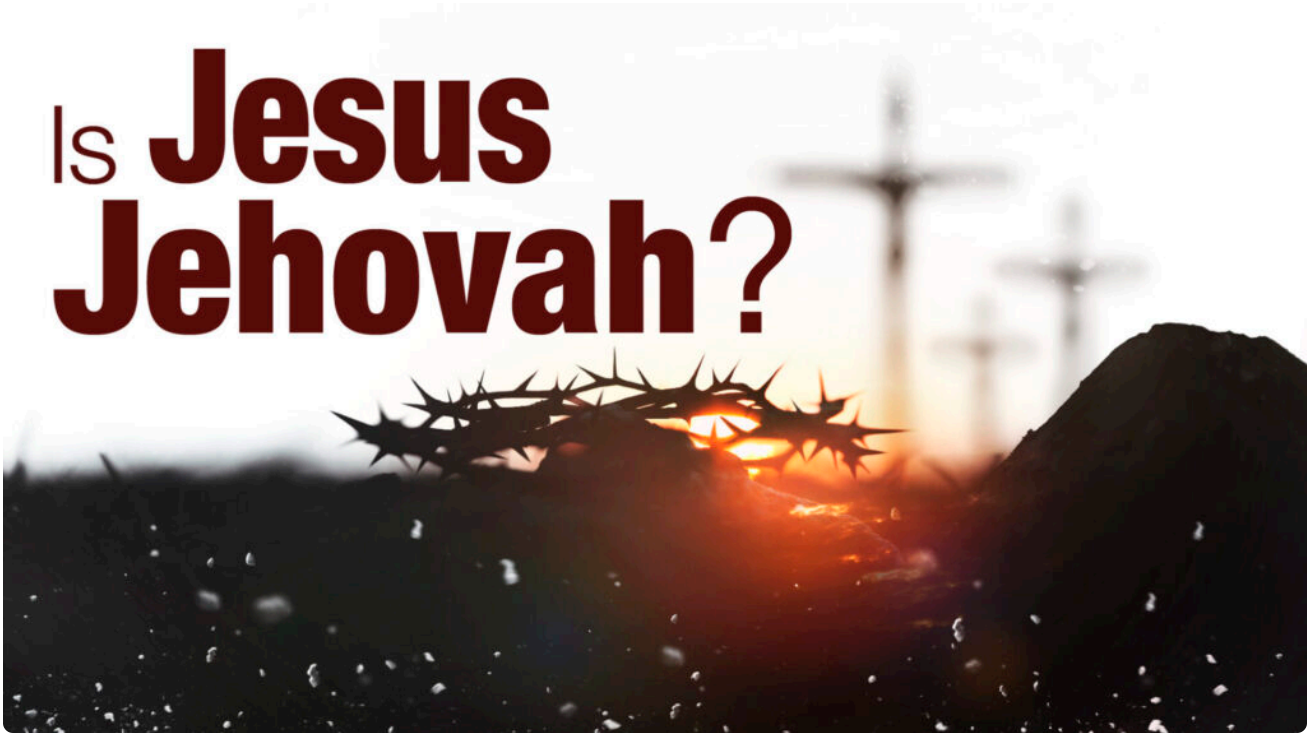


Is Jesus Jehovah?

DAVE MILLER, Ph.D.

DEITY OF CHRIST | JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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ARTICLE IN BRIEF

Those who deny the deity of Christ would do well to examine the multiple instances in the Old Testament where "Jehovah" is identified, and then consider the New Testament's application of those allusions to Jesus—thus equating Jesus and Jehovah.

Predictive prophecy constitutes a fascinating feature of the Old Testament. It repeatedly anticipates events far into the future that pertain to the coming Christ and the religion of Christ. One stunning feature of biblical prophecy as it relates to the deity of Christ concerns the fact that in a number of prophetic contexts, Old Testament prophets alluded to "Yahweh/Jehovah."[1] When we come to the New Testament, we find the inspired penmen applying these very prophecies to Jesus. **They equate Jesus with Jehovah.**[2] This one feature of biblical prophecy **alone** forever eliminates the Jehovah's Witnesses' claim that Jesus does not share deity with God. Consider the following 10 (out of many

more) exhilarating instances found in the New Testament. (In the passages that follow, the divine name "Jehovah" is bracketed in each Old Testament prophecy to flag its occurrence, with its translation of "the LORD" placed in bold type.)

1. Genesis 2:1-4 → Colossians 1:16

One instance where Jesus is equated with Jehovah of the Old Testament can be seen at the very beginning of Creation. Genesis indicates that the entire Universe was created by God, specifically, Jehovah:

> Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day **God** ended His work which He had done…. Then **God** blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which **God had created** and made. This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that **the LORD** [Jehovah] **God** made the earth and the heavens (Genesis 2:1-4).

When we move to the New Testament, we are informed concerning Jesus: "For **by Him** all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth…. All things were created **through Him** and for Him" (Colossians 1:16). Hence, the Jehovah Who created the Universe at the beginning of time is said to be the Jesus Who created all things.

2. Exodus 5:2 → Hebrews 11:26

Another example of the equation of Jesus with Jehovah is seen on the occasion when Moses confronted Pharaoh's obstinacy. God instructed Moses to take the elders and pay a visit to Pharaoh:

> …you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, "**The LORD** [Jehovah] God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to **the LORD** [Jehovah] our God" (Exodus 3:18).

We are informed that when Moses articulated God's directives, Pharaoh **reproached Jehovah**: "And Pharaoh said, 'Who is **the LORD** [Jehovah], that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know **the LORD** [Jehovah], nor will I let Israel go'" (Exodus 5:2). Yet, the writer of Hebrews states emphatically that Moses endured the Pharaoh's reproach **of Christ**:

> By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of

> sin, esteeming **the reproach of Christ** greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, **not fearing the wrath of the king**; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:24-27).

3. Exodus 16:29; 20:8-10 → Matthew 12:8

Shortly after their exit from Egypt, as the Israelites were traveling through the Sinai Peninsula on their way to the Promised Land, on the occasion when God miraculously provided them with manna, He instituted their observance of the Sabbath. They were to gather manna Sunday to Friday, gathering twice as much on Friday to supply their needs on Saturday. Moses identified Saturday as "a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to **the LORD** [Jehovah]" and "a Sabbath to **the LORD** [Jehovah]" (Exodus 16:23,25). When some disobeyed the directive, God, Himself, addressed the matter: "And **the LORD** [Jehovah] said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse to keep **My** commandments and **My** laws? See! For **the LORD** [Jehovah] has given you the Sabbath'" (Exodus 16:28-29). This context makes it very clear that the Sabbath was instituted by Jehovah, He authored the Sabbath observance, it was to be dedicated to Him, and refusal to comply was a failure to keep **His** command.

Yet, with the advent of Christ on Earth, we see Jesus repeatedly addressing the observance of the Sabbath in conversations with His contemporaries. On one such occasion, He sparred with the Pharisees who invented trumped-up charges in order to accuse Jesus' disciples of violating the Sabbath. In a dazzling display of logic and keen insight into Mosaic law, Jesus showed that the charges were unfounded and inaccurate.[3] He placed closure on His masterful handling of the charges with this sweeping declaration: "For the Son of Man is **Lord even of the Sabbath**" (Matthew 12:8; cf. Mark 2:28). Jesus was not simply affirming His **agreement** with the Sabbath law. He was not simply asserting that His disciples had not violated the Sabbath. He was declaring in no uncertain terms that His explanation and application of the Sabbath law in the face of Pharisaic accusations was correct since **the Sabbath law emanated from Himself**. He authored it and, exercising His divine authority, He enjoined its observance on the Jews.[4] Here is yet another indication of Jesus' identification with Jehovah.

4. Number 21:5-7 → 1 Corinthians 10:9

Another example is seen on the occasion when God punished the Israelites for whining about their difficult traveling conditions and speaking against Him and Moses—putting Him to the test. Consequently, the LORD [Jehovah] punished their presumption by sending snakes among them:

> And the people spoke against **God** and against Moses…. So **the LORD** [Jehovah] sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against **the**

> **LORD** [Jehovah] and against you; pray to **the LORD** [Jehovah] that He take away the serpents from us" (Numbers 21:5-7).

It is self-evident that, as they had done incessantly ever since leaving Egypt (Deuteronomy 6:16; 8; Hebrews 3:7-11,15), the Israelites "tempted" Jehovah, that is, they put Him to the test, essentially blaming Him for their discomfort and hardship. Yet when we come to Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, the Corinthians are admonished: "…nor let us tempt **Christ**, as some of them also tempted, and were **destroyed by serpents**" (1 Corinthians 10:9). When the Israelites tempted Jehovah in Numbers 21, they were tempting Christ.

A further confirmation of Christ's deity on this same occasion is the fact that the term "God" is used in Numbers 21:5-6 synonymously with "the LORD." Likewise, the Psalmist accused the Israelites of having "tested **God** in the desert" (Psalm 106:14). Hence, "God," "the LORD" [Jehovah], and "Christ" are terms that can all refer to the same Person of the Godhead, i.e., Jesus Christ.

5. Deuteronomy 32:3-4 → 1 Corinthians 10:4

After declaring to the Israelite nation the words that God wanted them to hear in anticipation of entering the Promised Land, Moses presented the words of an inspired song to the entire assembly, which included these words: "For I proclaim the name of **the LORD** [Jehovah]: Ascribe greatness to **our God**. He is **the Rock**, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, a **God** of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32:3-4). Moses, by inspiration, clearly connected three terms that are intended to identify Deity: "Jehovah," "God," and the "Rock." While we might refer to a spouse or friend as "the rock that I lean on" or some such comparison, we do not intend to suggest that we are attributing deity to that individual. But for Moses to use the term "Rock" to refer to Jehovah, he clearly means to convey the idea that God is a "Rock" in a way that cannot be compared with mere humans. He is a **divine** Rock.

Incredibly, when Paul surveyed some of the highlights of Israelite desert travels, he noted that the Israelites "all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that **spiritual Rock that followed them**, and that Rock **was Christ**" (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). Alluding to the two occasions when God provided the Israelites with physical water from a rock (Exodus 17; Numbers 20), Paul uses those incidents to inform the Corinthians that the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Sinai was accompanied by the very presence of Jesus Christ. Jesus was there with them every step of the way. And He is declared by the inspired apostle to be **the Rock**—an unmistakable and undeniable allusion to the same Rock that Moses identified in Deuteronomy. Jesus is "Jehovah," "God," and "Rock."

6. Deuteronomy 10:17 → Revelation 17:14

Near the end of the desert meanderings that the Israelites were doomed to endure due to their incessant disobedience (Numbers 14:32-35), Moses issued directives and admonitions to the new generation of Israelites who would soon enter the Promised Land. He admonished them with firm insistency to love God, obey God, fear God, serve God, and keep His commandments. He then declared: "For **the LORD** [Jehovah] your God is God of gods and **Lord of lords**, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:17). Using the Hebrew superlative, Moses expressed the marvelous truth that Jehovah God is the ultimate, quintessential Lord—there are no others who are greater than Him in His role as Lord. All mere human lords are not and cannot be "Lord of lords"—except, perhaps, as an exaggeration.

Yet, once again, when we come to the New Testament, we find just such terminology being used to refer to Jesus. In the book of Revelation, in a context in which an angel is explaining to John the meaning of the apocalyptic portrait of the great harlot sitting on a beast, he explains that the kings who give the beast power will wage war with Jesus: "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is **Lord of lords** and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14). If the Hebrew superlative is used to refer to that which is the ultimate, peerless, and exclusive, there can't be two "Lord of lords." Such an appellation applied to Jesus requires Jesus to be every bit "Lord of lords" as Jehovah.[5]

7. Psalm 24:10; 29:3-4 → 1 Corinthians 2:8

Deity possesses a **glory** that humans do not possess. Ultimate glory resides only in the Godhead. The psalmist asked this poignant question: "Who is this King **of glory**?" His answer? "**The LORD** [Jehovah] of hosts, He is the King **of glory**" (Psalm 24:10). He further extolled: "The voice of **the LORD** [Jehovah] is over the waters; **The God of glory** thunders; **The LORD** [Jehovah] is over many waters. The voice of **the LORD** [Jehovah] is powerful; The voice of **the LORD** [Jehovah] is full of majesty" (Psalm 29:3-4). Such exclamations and attributions belong only to Deity. The LORD is the God and King of glory.

Once again, the New Testament ascribes the same designation to Jesus Christ. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified **the Lord of glory**" (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). The LORD is the God and King of glory. Jesus Christ is King and He is the Lord of glory. "Lord of glory," "God of glory," and "King of glory" are equivalent expressions referring to divinity.

8. Psalm 89:8-9 → Mark 4:39

If God intends for us to understand that Jesus partakes of deity, would we not expect Him to weave indications of that fact into the Old Testament—with the added intention of providing direct fulfillments of those anticipations in the New Testament? That is precisely what we encounter. In a

psalm extolling God, the psalmist asks, "O **LORD** [Jehovah] **God of hosts**, Who is mighty like You, O **LORD** [Jehovah]? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. **You rule the raging of the sea**; When its waves rise, **You still them**" (Psalm 89:8-9). Indeed, Jehovah created the Universe and He, and only He, is in total control of every facet and feature of that Creation. But, incredibly, we are informed that Jesus is equally in control of the created order.

After a tiring day of teaching multitudes of people by the sea, Mark informs us concerning Jesus and His disciples:

> On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "**Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him**!" (Mark 4:35-41).

Of course, the answer to the disciples' question is obvious and undeniable: "Jehovah God!" Only Deity can rule the raging sea and calm the wind. Only God can cause the waves to instantaneously cease their turbulence. What the psalmist claimed Jehovah can do—because He is God—the New Testament writers claim that Jesus can do. Jesus is Jehovah.

9. Psalm 102:25-27 → Hebrews 1:10-12

Psalm 102 constitutes a psalm of petition to Jehovah for His assistance. The divine name LORD [Jehovah] occurs eight times (vss. 1,12,15,16,18,19,21,22). The psalm then reads:

> Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end (Psalm 102:25-27).

The second person singular pronouns "You" (4 times) and "Your" (2 times) are directed to **the LORD** [Jehovah]. The writer of the book of Hebrews quoted these very verses in 1:10-12 and indicated that these words were specifically spoken by God the Father **to the Son**. Jesus Christ is indicated to be **the LORD** [Jehovah].

10. Psalm 145:10-13 → Daniel 7:14

In a context in which the psalmist extols Jehovah, the **kingdom** of Jehovah is particularly emphasized:

> All Your works shall praise You, O **LORD** [Jehovah], and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of **Your kingdom**, and talk of Your power, to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of **His kingdom**. **Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom**, and **Your dominion endures throughout all generations** (Psalm 145:10-13).

Jehovah's kingdom is everlasting. What's more, His dominion is equally everlasting. Yet the mighty prophet Daniel clarifies the matter further by alluding to Jesus:

> I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like **the Son of Man**, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the **Ancient of Days**, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given **dominion** and glory and a **kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an **everlasting dominion**, which shall not pass away, and His **kingdom** the one which shall **not be destroyed** (Daniel 7:13-14).

Daniel's vision consisted of Jesus, the "Son of Man,"[6] coming before the Ancient of Days—an unmistakable allusion to God the Father, i.e., the LORD. Jesus was then given dominion and a kingdom. Both His dominion and His kingdom would be everlasting, enduring forever. Of course, Jesus' kingdom is the Church of Christ over which He is now reigning (Colossians 1:13). It was formally established on the first Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension in Acts 2. The reign of Christ is, indeed, an everlasting exercise of His rule. His kingdom will continue into eternity (1 Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 11:15). To repeat: Jehovah's kingdom and dominion are everlasting; likewise, Jesus' kingdom and dominion are everlasting. Either Jehovah and Jesus have separate and distinct kingdoms—or Jehovah is Jesus.

Conclusion

A host of additional passages affirm the same magnificent truth: Jesus Christ is fully God. He shares divinity with the other two Members of the Godhead. He possesses all the attributes of Deity and is completely equal in nature, essence, and being with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus and Jehovah are one.

Endnotes

[1] A word of clarification is in order. English translations typically capitalize every letter of the word "LORD" in order to alert the English reader that the divine name occurs in the Hebrew text. This name consists of four consonants (known as the Tetragrammaton): YHWH. Since the Jews resisted, apparently out of respect, pronouncing the name of God, the original pronunciation of the word is lost in antiquity. When read aloud, the Jews typically replaced the word with the Hebrew word for "lord," i.e., *adonai*, even as the translators of the Septuagint inserted the Greek word for "lord" (*kurios*). Various suggestions have been made as possible pronunciation approximations, the most prominent being simply to insert the Hebrew vowel points from *adonai* into the Tetragrammaton—which resulted in "Jehovah," first appearing in the 14th century. The ASV standardized the term in 1901. Since that time, scholars have generally suggested that "Yahweh" (pronounced yah-way or yah-vay) more nearly approximates the divine name. It is important to understand that the name "Jehovah" is a concocted name that **attempts** to represent the divine name—but no proof exists to verify this claim and, as indicated, the linguistic evidence is against it.

[2] Does that mean that Jesus **is** Jehovah in the sense that He is the same Person? No. Rather, it means that the word "Jehovah" can be used as a broad, generic term for deity/Godhood and, as such, be used to refer to God the Father, or to God the Son, or to God the Holy Spirit, or to all three simultaneously. Similarly, the Hebrew and Greek words for "God" (*Elohim/Theos*) are generic and can be used to refer to each individual Member of the Godhead.

[3] For a discussion of this incident and other occasions where Jesus was falsely accused of breaking the Sabbath, see Dave Miller (2019), *Is Christianity Logical?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 19ff. and Dave Miller (2004), "Situation Ethics—Extended Version," **https://apologeticspress.org/situation-ethicsextended-version-645/**.

[4] A host of scholars affirm this fact. For example: "The entire exposition regarding the Sabbath is given by Jesus as the Lord who has instituted the Sabbath, who thus knows what the Sabbath law involves…. As Lord of the Sabbath, who instituted it, he upholds it"—R.C.H. Lenski (2001 reprint), *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 466; "As the lawgiver is greater than the law, so Christ is greater than the Sabbath…. Jesus claims to be the divine legislator of the world; he is truly God manifest in the flesh"—H. Leo Boles (1961), *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), p. 259; "He had a right to direct the manner of its observance—undoubted proof that he is divine"—Albert Barnes (2005 reprint), *Notes on the New Testament: Matthew and Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 127.

[5] It is true that Artaxerxes referred to himself as "king of kings" (Ezra 7:12) and that God referred to Nebuchadnezzar as "king of kings" (Ezekiel 26:7; Daniel 2:37), but these references are clearly referring to mere human kings and the temporary power that they wielded on Earth. To refer to God or Christ as "King of kings" or "Lord of lords" transcends the temporal, limited use assigned to mere human beings.

[6] "Son of man" was Jesus' favorite expression for Himself, used over 75 times in the Gospel accounts. Outside the Gospel accounts, it is used only four times, each time referring to Jesus: Acts 7:56,

Hebrews 2:6, and Revelation 1:13 and 14:14. It is clearly used to refer to Him in Daniel 7:13. As a Hebrew expression, it refers to a person's **humanness**. Since Jesus' humanity was never questioned (i.e., only His deity), why would He use this phrase more than any other to refer to Himself? One would fully expect Jesus to manifest such a preference since the whole purpose of His coming to Earth was to take the form of a human being to offer Himself in that very form as a physical, blood sacrifice. Hence, His repeated use of "Son of Man" surely indicated His intention to accentuate His unique redemptive role and, hence, to flag the fact that He was/is "**the** Man," specifically the divine Son of God inhabiting a "prepared" body (Hebrews 10:5) to do what no mere human being could do. For further study, see, Larry Hurtado (2005), *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), pp. 290ff.; "The Son of Man" (2001), *Israel My Glory*, January/February, https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-son-of-man/.

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