

Common JW Objections to Christ's Deity

Objection	Response
1. <i>Jesus never claimed to be God, only the son of God.</i>	Response: “Son of God,” “Son of Man,” and “Christ” are all titles of deity (Mark 14:61-64). Jesus claims to be God not only in this passages, but also in passages such as John 8:58: “Before Abraham was, I Am” (Isa 41:4; 43:10).
2. <i>John 1:18 says that “no one has ever seen God.” Jesus can’t be God because we can see him.</i>	Response: The same passage goes on to say that that the one who has made the Father known (namely, Jesus) is Himself “God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side” (that is, He is the visible manifestation of the invisible Father see <i>point # 8</i> below). God <i>in His essence</i> is invisible (1 Tim 1:17). Yet there are many OT passages where God was “seen” by people (Gen 18:1-4; 32:30; Jdg 13:15-23; Ex 3:6; Isa 6:1, 5). This is known as a theophany (or christophany); i.e., a visible manifestation of God.
3. <i>Jesus calls the Father “the only true God.” Therefore Jesus can’t himself be the true God.</i>	Response: This doesn’t make the proper distinction between God as One Being and the three persons within that One Being. The text doesn’t say “ <i>only</i> the Father is the true God”; rather, it says, “the Father is the only true God.” The first statement would exclude Jesus and the Holy Spirit from being God; the second does not. The Father is indeed the “only true God”; but so is the Son and the Holy Spirit. Expanded: Jude 4 calls Jesus “our only Master and Lord.” Does this mean that God the Father is not also our Master and Lord? The only way this makes sense is if both the Father and the Son are the One Being called God.
4. <i>Jesus himself said, “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). How can God be greater than Himself?</i>	Response: This again doesn’t make the proper distinction between God as One Being and the three persons within that One Being. The person of the Father <i>is</i> greater than the person of the Son. How so? The word translated “greater” here (<i>meizon</i>) denotes “status,” not quality. If “quality of being” were in mind, the word <i>kreitton</i> (“better”) would have been used. In a human father and son relationship, the father can be said to be greater in status than his son, but they still share the same human nature (a father is not “better” than his son in quality of being). The president of the United States is “greater” in status than the average citizen; but that doesn’t imply he has a different and better <i>nature</i> . He still shares the same humanity with all citizens. In the same way, the Father is “greater” (<i>meizon</i>) than the Son <i>in status</i> . Compare this to Heb 1:4 where the Son is said to be “better” (<i>kreitton</i>) than the angels (in quality).
5. <i>Jesus is called the “only-begotten” in John 1:14, 18; 3:16. This means he was the only “born” son of God. God made him, and he made everything else.</i>	Response: The word translated “only begotten” is <i>monogenes</i> in Greek. It used to be though that this word was a combination of <i>mono</i> (“only”) + <i>gennao</i> (born) = “only born” or “only begotten.” We now know that <i>monogenes</i> is instead a combination of <i>mono</i> (“only”) + <i>genos</i> (“kind”) = “only one of its kind” or “one and only” or “unique.” Hence, the NIV translates it as “God the One and Only” Expanded: Compare Heb 11:17 where Isaac is called Abraham’s “only begotten.” We know from Genesis 16 that Abraham also fathered Ishmael, so this word cannot mean “only born,” but rather “unique” or “only one of his kind” (i.e., he was the son of the promise; Gal 4:22-23).
6. <i>Jesus is called the “firstborn of all creation” in Col 1:15. This means that Jesus was the first one created.</i>	Response: The word “firstborn” doesn’t here mean “first one born,” but rather “preeminent one,” as the context makes clear. Israel is call God’s “firstborn” (Ex 4:22). Does that mean Israel was the very first nation on earth? In Ps. 89:20-27 God calls David his “firstborn,” “the most exalted of the kings of the earth”; but David was neither the first son of his father, nor the first king of the earth. Similarly, the nation of Ephraim is called God’s firstborn in Jer 31:9. There are many other places where someone who was not physically the firstborn held firstborn status (1 Chr 5:1-2; 26:10). Expanded: The context makes it clear that what is meant here is “firstborn status” or “preeminence.” In v. 15 he calls Jesus “firstborn <i>over</i> all creation” [the genitive is rightly translated here as “over” not “of”]. In v. 17 it says that he is “ <i>before</i> all things [i.e., in place, status and honor]” In v. 18 he clarifies what he means by firstborn: “He is the <i>beginning</i> (in the sense of “the beginning and the end”; Rev 22:12-13) and the firstborn from among the dead [was Jesus the first to be raised from the dead? How about Lazarus?], so that in everything He might have preeminence [or supremacy].” Rom 8:29 makes it clear that Jesus is the “firstborn among many brothers”; i.e., he holds first place among them.
7. <i>Jesus is called the “beginning of the creation of God” (Rev 3:14). This means that Jesus was the first one created.</i>	Response: The word used here is <i>arche</i> , which is also used in Rev 1:5 and translated as “Ruler” in the New World Translation. Why the inconsistency? If 3:14 is to be rendered “beginning” it is only in the sense that Jesus is the “Beginner” or “Originator” of all creation. He is the Creator (John 1:3) and the “Author of life” (Acts 3:15).
8. <i>Jesus is called the “image of the invisible God.” He isn’t God himself, only an image of Him (much like Adam was made “in the image of God”).</i>	Response: The verse says, “He is the image of the invisible God.” Paul is not saying that Jesus is something other than God; just the opposite. He’s using a play on words here. By “image” Paul means that Jesus is the <i>visible manifestation</i> of the <i>invisible God</i> . Expanded: John 1:18 tells us that “no one has seen God at any time (i.e., He is invisible; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16); but then goes on to say that the one who has made Him known (namely, Jesus) is Himself “God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side” (that is, He is the visible manifestation of the invisible Father). In Heb 1:3, Jesus is said to be the very “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature.” The word “radiance” means “outshining,” not “reflection.” It is intrinsic to God’s glory, in the same way that wetness is intrinsic to water and heat is intrinsic to fire. He is also said to be the “exact representation of His nature.” In other words, whatever qualities and attributes the Father may have, the Son also has—all the qualities of deity in exact duplicate. In John 14:9 Jesus says that if you’ve seen Him, you’ve seen the Father. <i>It is in this sense that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God” in Col 1:15.</i>
9. <i>In passages such as John 8:58-59, 10:33, 5:18, Matt 26:65, etc., in which the Jews accuse Jesus of claiming to be God, they simply misunderstand Him.</i>	Response: When there is a misunderstanding on the part of either Jews or Jesus’ disciples, John is quick to correct that misunderstanding (John 2:21; John 21:22-23). He doesn’t do that in the passages that record the Jews accusing Jesus’ of blasphemy.