

Question #2: Are You Getting the Right Directions?

Both Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses agree that God has revealed Himself through His Word and has revealed to us who He is as well as His plan for our salvation.

The questions we must ask and explore revolve around whether Watchtower literature and the plan of salvation taught therein are accurate and consistent with Scripture.

Explore...

Is the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses Accurate and True?

Under the presidency of Watchtower leader Nathan Knorr (1942-1977) the New World Translation was produced and published. Jehovah's Witnesses say that this is the best translation of God's Word available today. Let's explore whether this is the case.

There are at least 4 things that must be explored in regards to the New World Translation of the Bible. (1) What biblical linguists say about the New World Translation. (2) Whether the translators of the NWT were biblical linguists themselves. (3) Whether the NWT has remained consistent or has changed throughout the years. (4) Whether the NWT has correctly translated the Scriptures.

What Do Biblical Linguists Say About the New World Translation?

Consider the following statements from well attested biblical scholars...

Dr. Robert Countess, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on the Greek text of the **New World Translation**, concluded that the *translation "has been sharply unsuccessful in keeping doctrinal considerations from influencing the actual translation...*

It must be viewed as a radically biased piece of work. At some points it is actually dishonest. At others it is neither modern nor scholarly." No wonder British scholar H.H. Rowley asserted, "From beginning to end this volume is a shining example of how the Bible should not be translated." Indeed, Rowley said, this translation is "an insult to the Word of God."

Are Drs. Countess and Rowley alone in their assessment of the **New World Translation**? By no means! Dr. Julius Mantey, author of *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, calls the **New World Translation** "a shocking mistranslation." Dr. Bruce M. Metzger, professor of New Testament at Princeton University, calls the **New World Translation** "a frightful mistranslation," "erroneous," "pernicious," and "reprehensible." Dr. William Barclay concluded that "the deliberate distortion of truth by this sect is seen in their New Testament translation. It is abundantly clear that a sect which can translate the New Testament like that is intellectually dishonest."

Were the Creators of the New World Translation Biblical Linguists Themselves?

Nathan Knorr, Frederick Franz, Albert Schroeder, George Gangas, and Milton Henschel were the translators of the NWT and each were grossly unqualified for the task. Four of the five of them had no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew at all and the only who claimed he did, Frederick Franz, later revoked his statement in a court of law in Edinburgh, Scotland. (Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, p. 50)

Has the NWT Remained Consistent or Has It Changed Throughout the Years?

A few examples of the major changes that have taken place include...

- The *Watchtower Magazine* (1880) said that "to worship Christ and cannot be wrong" and in an 1892 publication the same magazine said, "Yes, we believe our Lord Jesus while on earth was really worshipped, and rightly so."
- Compare that to the 1959 publication of the *Watchtower Magazine* that said, "Do not erroneously conclude that Christians are to worship Christ; that is not what he taught." In 1964 the same magazine stated, "It is unscriptural for worshipers of the true and living God to render worship to the Son of God, Jesus Christ."

Ask...

- Do you find it disturbing that such major changes in doctrine such as whether Jesus should be worshipped or not are present in the New World Translation?

Has the New World Translation of the Bible Properly Interpreted the Scriptures?

In short, the answer is no. As we explored earlier, the name Jehovah has been inaccurately placed throughout the New Testament where it does not belong, the unfounded addition of “a god” in **John 1:1** and the insertion of the word “other” in **Colossians 1:16** are all there simply to push a biased theology against Jesus. Since this is the case with the New Translations treatment of the Godhead we must now explore and ask whether other important doctrines such as salvation by grace alone as opposed to works are rightly handled and interpreted in Watchtower theology.

Explore...

Is Salvation By Grace or By Works?

Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that one cannot be sure of their salvation and emphasize the necessity of good works to be saved. In the *Watchtower Magazine* (1 April, 1947, p. 204) the following is written, “to get one’s name written in the Book of Life will depend on one’s works.” They teach that no one is guaranteed salvation and Christ’s sacrifice only wiped out the sin we inherited from Adam, but not our own personal sins. Are these beliefs consistent with Scripture?

We will answer whether salvation is something that must be earned, whether Christ’s sacrificial death paid the full penalty for all of our sins, and whether we can be sure of our salvation by going back to some key verses and teachings by scholar Ron Rhodes...

1 Timothy 2:5,6—The Ransom Sacrifice of Jesus

The Watchtower Teaching

The **New World Translation** renders 1 Timothy 2:5,6, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all." The Watchtower Society argues that because Jesus is said to mediate "between God and men," it is clear that He cannot be viewed as God. After all, "since by definition a mediator is someone separate from those who need mediation, it would be a contradiction for Jesus to be one entity

with either of the parties he is trying to reconcile. That would be a pretending to be something he is not."¹⁸ Their conclusion, then, is that Christ as a mediator cannot be viewed as God. How could Jesus mediate between God and man if He Himself was God?

Regarding the "corresponding ransom" Jesus paid, the Watchtower Society teaches that the human life Jesus laid down in sacrifice was exactly equal to the human life Adam fell with. Indeed, "as the human life privileges had been forfeited for the human race by its perfect father Adam, through sin, those life privileges had to be repurchased by the sacrifice of a perfect human life like Jesus."¹⁹ Clearly, then, Christ's ransom corresponded **exactly** to Adam: Jesus, no more and no less than a perfect human, became a ransom that compensated exactly for what Adam lost—the right to perfect human life on earth. So Jesus could rightly be called "the last Adam" by the apostle Paul, who said in the same context: "Just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22,45). The perfect human life of Jesus was the "corresponding ransom" required by divine justice—no more, no less. A basic principle even of human justice is that the price paid should fit the wrong committed. Watchtower literature argues that if Jesus were a part of a triune Godhead, "the ransom price would have been infinitely higher than what God's own Law required."²¹ After all, it was Adam—a **perfect human being—who** sinned in the Garden of Eden, not God. Hence, the ransom that was paid, to be truly in line with God's perfect justice, had to be an exact equivalent to Adam—a perfect human being: "When God sent Jesus to earth as the ransom, he made Jesus to be what would satisfy justice, not an incarnation, not a god-man, but a perfect man." (*Should You Believe in the Trinity*, p. 15) This sacrifice of the second Adam, being of corresponding value, could "balance the scales of justice." (*Ibid.*, p. 15)

The Biblical Teaching

Is it true that because Jesus is a mediator between God and man, He cannot be God, since "by definition a mediator is someone separate from those who need mediation"? By no means! The folly of this reasoning is at once evident in the fact that if Jesus as mediator cannot be God, then, by the same logic, He cannot be man either.

The fact is, Jesus can mediate between God and man precisely because He is both God and man. Indeed, humankind's redemption was completely dependent upon the human- divine union in Christ. If Christ the Redeemer had been only God, He could not have died, since God by His very nature cannot die. It was only as a man that Christ could represent humanity and die as a man. As God, however, Christ's death had infinite value sufficient to provide redemption for the sins of all people. Clearly, then, Christ had to be both God and man to secure man's salvation (**1 Timothy 2:5**).

This is related to the Old Testament concept of the kinsman- redeemer. In Old Testament times, the phrase kinsman- redeemer was always used of one who was related by blood to someone he was seeking to redeem from bondage. If someone was sold into slavery, for example, it was the duty of a blood relative—the next of kin—to act as that person's kinsman- redeemer and buy him out of slavery (**Leviticus 25:47,48**).

Jesus is the Kinsman-Redeemer for sin-enslaved humanity. For Jesus to become such, however, He had to become related by blood to the human race. This indicates the necessity of the incarnation. Jesus became a man in order to redeem man (**Hebrews 2:14-16**). And because He was also fully God, His sacrificial death had infinite value (**Hebrews 9:11-28**).

Related to Christ's role as Mediator is his role as Savior. A study of the Old Testament indicates that it is only God who saves. In **Isaiah 43:11**, God asserts, "I, even I, am the Lord, and **apart from me there is no savior**" (emphasis added). This is an extremely important verse, for it indicates that 1) a claim to be Savior is, in itself, a claim to deity; and 2) there is only one Savior—God.

And because the New Testament refers to Jesus Christ as the Savior, we can be certain that He has a divine nature. Following His birth, an angel appeared to some nearby shepherds and said, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (**Luke 2:11**). John's Gospel records the conclusion of the Samaritans: Jesus "really is the Savior of the world" (**John 4:42**).

In **Titus 2:13**, Paul encourages Titus to await the blessed hope, the "glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." An examination of **Titus 2:10-13, 3:4, and 3:6** reveals that the phrases "God our Savior" and "Jesus our Savior" are used interchangeably four times. The parallel truths that **only God is the Savior (Isaiah 43:11)** and that Jesus Himself is the Savior constitute a powerful evidence for Christ's deity. In the incarnation, God the Savior became a human being—and this enabled Him to fulfill His role as Mediator between God and man (since He Himself was both God and man).

Ask...

- Can you see how the parallel truths that **only God is the Savior (Isaiah 43:11)** and that **Jesus Himself is the Savior (Luke 2:11)** requires that Jesus be God Almighty?
- Since Jesus is called Savior in the New Testament, and since only Jehovah-God can be Savior, then doesn't this mean that Jesus is Jehovah-God?

Was Jesus's Death On the Cross Just a Corresponding Ransom?

In answering the Watchtower argument that Jesus was a "corresponding ransom" to Adam, we begin by addressing what the Greek text for 1 Timothy 2:6 indicates. The New American Standard Bible says that Jesus "gave Himself **as a ransom** for all" (emphasis added). The Greek word for "ransom" is **antilutron**. The question is, Does this word point to a "corresponding ransom" in the sense of "no more and no less" as the Watchtower Society argues? By no means! This is a case of over translation, and the Jehovah's Witnesses are reading more into this word than is really there.

Thayer's Greek lexicon says that **antilutron** means "what is given in exchange for another as the price of his redemption, ransom."²⁸ The "ransom" is here called **antilutron** "in order to stress the fact of Christ's coming and suffering in the place of all and for their advantage." **Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words** points out that the preposition **anti** "has a vicarious significance, indicating that the 'ransom' holds good for those who, accepting it as such, no longer remain in death since Christ suffered death in their stead."

Watchtower expert Robert Bowman points out that "although the word **[antilutron]** is very rare in Greek, and it appears only here in the Bible, the meaning is certainly the same as Christ's statement in Mark 10:45 that he came to give his life as 'a ransom in exchange for **[lutron anti]** many' (NWT). The idea in both passages is simply that of substitution—of Christ's taking our place. The idea that this required that Christ be 'no more' than a perfect human is absent." So the Greek text solidly militates against the Watchtower understanding of **1 Timothy 2:6**.

Ask...

- Did you know Greek language authorities universally agree that the meaning of the Greek word for "ransom" simply involves the idea of substitution and not a strict "no more/no less" type of correspondence?

Acts 16:30-32—Believing on the Lord Jesus

The Watchtower Teaching

Commenting on **Acts 16:30,31**, **Reasoning from the Scriptures** says, "*If* that man [the jailer] and his household truly believed, would they not **act** in harmony with their belief? Certainly." In other words, works play a central role.

The Biblical Teaching

This passage is actually strong evidence for the deity of Jesus. The following teaching by Ron Rhodes is helpful here...

When the jailer asked Paul and Silas how to become saved, they responded, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (Acts 16:31). Then, after he became saved, we are told that the jailer "was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God **[Theos]**—**he** and his whole family" (verse 34). **Believing in Christ** and **believing in God** are seen as identical acts.

Ask...

- What do you think it says about Christ's nature that **believing in Him** (Acts 16:31) and **believing in God** (verse 34) are seen as identical acts?

Moving on to the next question: Is believing in Christ sufficient for salvation? Or must we combine believing in Christ with doing good works? Emphasize to the Jehovah's Witness that close to 200 times in the New Testament salvation is said to be **by faith alone—with** no works in sight. Consider the following:

- **John 3:15** tells us that "**everyone who believes in him** may have eternal life".
- **John 5:24** says, "I tell you the truth, **who ever hears my word and believes** him who sent me **has eternal life** and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life".
- In **John 11:25** Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. **He who believes in me** will live, even though he dies".
- **John 12:46** says: "I have come into the world as a light, so that **no one who believes in me should stay in darkness**".
 - **John 20:31** says: "But these are written **that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that **by believing** you may have life in his name". Clearly, salvation is by faith in Christ!

Related to belief in Christ is the issue of grace versus works. Consider the following:

- **Ephesians 2:8,9** says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."
- **Titus 3:5** says, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."
- **Romans 3:20** tells us that "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight".
- In **Galatians 2:16** Paul tells us, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (NASB).

Ask...

- Does salvation as described in these verses sound like the concept of salvation that is set forth in Watchtower literature, or do you see a difference?

Romans 10:13—Calling Upon Yahweh

The Watchtower Teaching

In the **New World Translation**, Romans 10:13 reads, "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." In citing this passage (and others like it), the Jehovah's Witnesses say that the proper use of God's "correct" name—Jehovah—is absolutely essential to one's salvation.

The Watchtower Society often says that the time left to call upon Jehovah for salvation is very short because Armageddon is near. The Watchtower book **Man's Salvation Out of World**

Distress A t Hand! states:

*Since we have been living in the "time of the end" of this worldly system of things since the year 1914C.E., the time that is left during which Jehovah may be found in a favorable way is by now very short. So **now** is the favor able time in which to search for him. A person does not have to go far in this search in order to find him. He is still near, within reach of sincere searchers for him. So **now** is also the time to call to him. He is not beyond hearing distance. Now, before "the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah," is when the reassuring words apply: "It must occur that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe."*

The Biblical Teaching

The New World Translation blatantly mistranslates **Romans 10:13**. The original Greek text has no reference to "Jehovah." This word was inserted into the passage by the Watchtower Society's translators. The verse correctly reads, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord [Greek: kurios] will be saved" (Niv, emphasis added, insert added). And, in the broader context of our passage (Romans 10:9-13), "Lord" is referring to Jesus Christ (see **verse 9**, where Jesus is explicitly identified as the "Lord" of these five verses).

Ask...

- Did you know that it is the Greek word *kurios* (Lord) that is used in **Romans 10:13** and that the word “Jehovah” does not appear in any Greek New Testament manuscript?
- Did you know that the context of **Romans 10:9-13** makes it clear that the “Lord” being referred to is unmistakably Jesus?

Romans 10:13 is actually a quote from **Joel 2:32**: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord [Yahweh] will be saved. "This **does not** give justification, however, for using the words Yahweh or Jehovah in Romans 10:13. As noted earlier, the word used in the Greek manuscripts for "Lord" in Romans 10:13 is **kurios**, not Yahweh. Thus, the Watchtower's translation is unwarranted.

Here is what is significant about **Joel 2:32**: As much as the Jehovah's Witness may want to deny it, the apostle Paul is quoting **Joel 2:32** ("calling upon the Lord [Yahweh]") in the context of **being fulfilled** by calling upon Jesus Christ for salvation. "Calling upon Yahweh" and "calling upon Jesus Christ" are here equated. This is clear evidence pointing to Christ's identity as Yahweh.

The apostle Peter cites this same verse from **Joel 2:32** when preaching to the crowd on the day of Pentecost: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (**Acts 2:21**). A look at **verses 22** through **36** shows beyond any question that the "Lord" Peter is speaking of is none other than Jesus Christ. (This "Lord" was attested by miracles and wonders on earth, was nailed to a cross, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father.)

Ask...

- Since Peter is quoting **Joel2:32** in **Acts2:21** as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ, what does this say about Jesus' true identity?

John 3:5 – Being “Born Again”

The Watchtower Teaching

According to Watchtower literature, being "born again" enables one to become a "son of God" with the prospect of sharing in the Kingdom of God. "When Jesus spoke about being born again he said that it was necessary in order to enter the Kingdom of God, that is, to be part of God's Kingdom, his heavenly government." (Robert M. Bowman, *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses*, p. 108) Jesus experienced being born again, and the 144,000 people that make up the Anointed Class are also born again, sharing with Him a spirit existence in heaven. (Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah; The New Testament Witness*, p. 230)

Mortal human beings cannot take part in this spirit existence in heaven. After all, Paul tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, neither does corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:50 NWT). John 3:6 is clear that "what has been born from the flesh is flesh, and what has been born from the spirit is spirit." (*Reasoning From the Scriptures*, p. 77) Only those born of the spirit ("born again") can take part in spirit life in heaven. Those born of the flesh are suited only for life on earth.

This is not to say that one who is not born again cannot be saved. After all, Scripture teaches that a "great crowd" of Jehovah's Witnesses look forward to eternal life on a paradise earth (Revelation 7:9). These individuals are not born again but are nevertheless saved and enjoy Jehovah's favor.

How does this earthly class relate to the Anointed Class in heaven? The Anointed Class (those who **are** born again) will rule over those who live on earth (those who **are not** born again). (*Reasoning From the Scriptures*, p. 79) Being born again clearly has its benefits!

The Biblical Teaching

Scripture is clear that the opportunity to become born again is not limited to 144,000 people in the so-called Anointed Class but is open to **all** who believe in Jesus Christ. First John 5:1, for example, states, "**Everyone** who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God". There are no exceptions. Any and all who believe in Jesus Christ are "born again."

This is consistent with Jesus' discussion on being "born again" with Nicodemus (**John 3:1-21**). After saying that one must be born again (verses 3,7), Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish, but have eternal life" (verse 16 NASB). **John 1:12,13** agrees: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, **even to those who believe in His name, who were born** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (NASB).

Ask...

- Why is it that every passage in the New Testament that speaks of being born again says that **all who believe in Jesus** can be born again, with no mention of limiting this experience to a mere 144,000 people?

Now, what about the Watchtower claim that Jesus Himself was born again? This position is as ridiculous as it is untenable. In the incarnation, Jesus (who is eternal God) took on a human nature (**Luke 1:35; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 4:2,3**). Christ's development as a human being was normal in every respect, with two major exceptions: 1) He always did the will of God, and 2) He never sinned. As **Hebrews 4:15** tells us, in Christ "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet **was without sin**" (emphasis added). Indeed, Christ is intrinsically "holy," "blameless," and "pure" (**Hebrews 7:26**).

In light of that, and since Christ is fully God (**John 1:1; 8:58; 20:28**), there is no need for Jesus to be born again. Jesus came to **provide** redemption (**1 Timothy 2:5,6**); He—as the Redeemer—did not Himself need to be redeemed. The One who possesses life in Himself (**John 5:26**) does not need to receive such life from another.

Ask...

- Can you show me a single passage in Scripture that says Jesus was born again?

Philippians 2:12 – Are We to Work for Our Salvation?

The Watchtower Teaching

Commenting on this verse, **Reasoning from the Scriptures** says, "This [Book of Philippians] was addressed to 'the saints,' or holy ones, at Philippi, as stated in **Philippians 1:1**. Paul urged them not to be overly confident but to realize that their final salvation was not yet assured."

In the book "**Let God Be True**," we are told that before members of "Christ's body" can receive their heavenly inheritance, "they must be set apart more and more from this world and to the holy service of Jehovah God, demonstrating their dependability by carrying out their dedication faithfully until death." **Note that there is no security of salvation in Watchtower literature.**

All Jehovah's Witnesses must diligently study God's Word (and Watchtower literature), apply all that they learn to daily life, and seek at all times to be led by God's Holy Spirit. They must be holy even as God is holy. They must be entirely devoted to God and His righteousness. That is why Jehovah's Witnesses are admonished to "keep working out" their salvation with fear and trembling. (*Let God Be True*, p. 302)

Former Jehovah's Witness Lorri MacGregor's comments are highly revealing: "I was told [that 'working out your salvation'] consisted of 'publishing the good news of God's kingdom' by selling their publications door-to-door, attending five meetings a week, and meeting numerous other quotas." Salvation in Watchtower theology is works-oriented from beginning to end.

The Biblical Teaching

this verse has nothing to do with assurance of final salvation for individual believers.

One must keep in mind the situation in the church at Philippi. This church was plagued by 1) rivalries and individuals with personal ambition (**Philippians 2:3,4; 4:2**); 2) the teaching of Judaizers (who said that circumcision was necessary for salvation—**3:1-3**); 3) perfectionism (the view that one could attain sinless perfection in this life—**3:12-14**); and, 4) the influence of "antinomian libertines" (people who took excessive liberty in how they lived their lives, ignoring or going against God's law—**3:18,19**). Because of such problems, this church as a unit was in

need of "salvation" (that is, salvation in the temporal, experiential sense, not in the eternal sense).

It is critical to recognize that "salvation" in this context is referring to the **community** of believers in Philippi and not to **individuals**. Salvation is spoken of in a **corporate** sense. The Philippians were called by the apostle Paul to "keep on working out" (continuously) the "deliverance of the church into a state of Christian maturity."⁵

It is also highly important to note the possessive form of the words "your own salvation". This is not something they are to work "for" but something they already possess and are to work "out".

It is also significant that in other writings, the apostle Paul clearly sets forth what theologians call "eternal security." For example, in **Romans 8:29,30** Paul said, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son... and those He predestined, he also called, those he called, those he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." **Here we find an unbroken progression from predestination to glorification.** And the tense of the word "glorified" (in the Greek text) indicates that our future glorification is **so certain** that it can be said to already be accomplished!

This leaves no room for wondering whether or not one is saved but gives definite assurance that if one has trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior they are without a doubt saved.

To recap our discussion on **Philippians 2:12**, the Watchtower Society is way off base in teaching that Paul was urging the Philippians "not to be overly confident but to realize that their final salvation was not yet assured." Such an interpretation not only goes against the rest of the Book of Philippians, it goes against the rest of Scripture as well (see **Psalm 37:23; 138:8; John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; 17:8-11; Romans 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:8.9; 2 Cor. 1:21,22; Ephesians 1:4,5; Philippians 1:6; 1Thessalonians 5:24; 2Timothy 1:12;4:18; 1Peter1:3-5; 5:10; 1 John 2:1,2; 5:10-18; Jude 1**).