

The Third Watchtower President Taught that Jesus was to be Worshiped

Nathan Knorr succeeded Rutherford (1942). The following is from the *Watchtower*: “Since Jehovah God now reigns...whosoever would worship him must also worship and bow down to Jehovah’s Chief One...Christ Jesus” (1945). “When he returned to the spirit realms...Jesus Christ was again seen in the midst of God’s holy angels in heaven...fulfilling the Scripture: ‘And let all the angels of God worship him’ (Heb 1:6)” (1948).³

The Official Watchtower Charter States that Jesus is to be Worshiped

The original 1884 *Watch Tower* charter was a formal document incorporating the organization, as well as a formal written statement of the aims, principles, and procedures of the organization. Resolutions amending Articles 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10 of the original charter were adopted on 2 October 1944, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was a significant event in **WT** history.⁴ Article II of the amended charter is pertinent to the subject of the worship of Jesus Christ. The original charter was printed in the 1 November 1917 *Watch Tower* (Reprints, p 6162). Article II as amended was reproduced in its entirety in the 1945 *Yearbook of JW’s* (p 32). It states that one of the purposes of the Society was “for public Christian worship of Almighty God and Christ Jesus.”⁵

The WT Reverses Its Position in 1954! No One Can Worship Jesus Anymore!

This new anti-worship doctrine was first stated in the *Watchtower* (1 Jan 1954)—“No distinct worship is to be rendered to Jesus Christ...Our worship is to go to Jehovah God” (p 31). This is a direct contradiction to what they had just published the previous year! Their book, *Make Sure of All Things* (1953), affirmed the worship of Christ with this subsection title: “Christ to be Worshiped” (p 85). And this same title was even retained in the 1957 revision of the book! This all gets very amusing for true believers who know Christ. From 1879 to the mid-20th century, Jesus was worshiped and properly so by **JW’s**. But then, abruptly—it’s *idolatry*! For their first 75 years—it was “worship Jesus!” But since 1954—it’s “no worship of Jesus!” Honestly, can you even remotely imagine such an organization being led by God’s Spirit?

Think about this fact that’s absolutely inescapable: This doctrinal change by the **WT**

makes **every JW before 1954 guilty** of the gross sin of *idolatry*! That’s inevitable! There’s no way around it! The whole organization for 75 years—*idolaters*! Their founder: Russell—an *idolater*! The two presidents that followed: Rutherford and Knorr—*idolaters*! This is *their* doctrine, and it’s *their* jumbled mess; and up to today, they haven’t figured out how to get out of it! Here it is: **(1)** They believe Jesus is **an angel**—Michael the archangel. **(2)** The **WT** has always taught that *idolatry*, including *angel-worship*, is false worship, causing one to be disapproved by God. In their 1995 book that explains in depth their fundamental beliefs, *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, in chapter 5, *Whose Worship Does God Accept*, they state on page 49—*angel-worship* always: offends God, is unacceptable, contaminates true worship, and is idolatry. **(3)** Because they believe Jesus to be **an angel**, their own official charter **promotes angel-worship**! This is one of the biggest cult-contradictions on record! They’ve gotten themselves into a cobweb they can’t get out of! A dilemma that’s embarrassed them for years! And they haven’t yet figured out how to fix it.

So the question arises—What does the **WT** do with this glaring contradiction in their charter which speaks of the “**worship of Almighty God and Christ Jesus**”? *They hide it!* That’s right! Since 1954 whenever they quote the charter in any of their publications, the three words they never want anyone to see—“*and Christ Jesus*”—are either altered, or left out completely! For example, when Article II was reproduced in their 1969 *Yearbook*, they quoted the entire Article, but left out “*and Christ Jesus*” replacing it with an ellipsis (...) (p 50). Then in the 15 December 1971 *Watchtower*, the entire Article is quoted but at this point says, “for public Christian worship of Almighty God [through] Christ Jesus” (p 760). This subtle change altered the charter’s meaning completely! As the charter has it stated, “God and Christ”—Christ is worshiped. But as it’s been shrewdly changed, “God through Christ”—Christ is now *not* worshiped. This is a classic example of how well schooled the **WT** leaders are in the art of deception!

The Scriptures display Christ worshiped as “**God**” many times—see the wise men, the leper, the ruler, the woman, Mary Magdalene, the blind man and the disciples worshiping him (Matt 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 28:9, 17; John 9:38).

Thomas worshiped him with all due reverence calling him “**my Lord and my God**” (John 20:28). In all these passages Jesus never sought to correct his followers when they bowed down and worshiped him—full proof of who he really is: “Emmanuel...**God with us**” (Matt 1:23). “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the **Godhead** bodily” (Col 2:9). He is truly “our **great God and Savior** Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13 RSV). The fact that Jesus was worshiped shows his true identity, for the consistent testimony of Scripture is that **only God** is to be worshiped (Exod 34:14; Matt 4:10).

“Worship” or “Obeisance” The WT’s Attempt to Conceal the Truth

What does the **WT** do with all this biblical evidence of Jesus being clearly worshiped as “**God manifest in the flesh**” (1 Tim 3:16)? The Greek word for “worship” is *proskuneo*. Whenever this word is used of “Jehovah,” the *New World* translators correctly rendered it “worship” (22 times); but when the same Greek word, *proskuneo*, is used of Christ, *they conceal it*. In the gospel accounts above where Jesus was worshiped, instead of correctly using the word “worship” in their Bible, they put “*obeisance*.”

What is “*obeisance*”? The **WT** defines it—“the custom of prostrating oneself before a person.”⁶ Applying their own definition of “obeisance” to those who gave obeisance to Jesus, we could say they “prostrated themselves before *a god*,” since Jesus is “*a god*” in **WT** theology—“the Word was a god” (John 1:1 NWT). This is a clear and logical conclusion reached by following the **WT**’s own definition of “obeisance” and who they believe Jesus to be. Yet this is a direct violation of Scripture! It is written, “You must not prostrate yourself to *another god*, because Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, he is a jealous God” (Exod 34:14 NWT). The **WT** claims that “obeisance” to Jesus is okay because it’s not worship; but the simple conclusion is—either Jesus is God, or those rendering “obeisance” to him are guilty of “prostrating themselves before another god!”

There was one “*worship*” passage referring to Jesus that they did translate correctly—“Let all God’s angels *worship* him” (Heb 1:6 NWT). But that didn’t last long. You’ll find it that way in their 1961 edition; but ten years later it was changed—“Let all God’s angels *do obeisance* to him” (1971 ed.). This is consistent with the **WT**’s ongoing campaign to eliminate all traces

of the deity of Christ from the Word of God. The **WT**, though, did inadvertently admit that “worship” is given to Jesus. In their book, *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (1985), this question is posed in a subsection title: “Does the fact that worship is given to Jesus prove that he is God?” (p 214). Now, that question makes a powerful statement! Consider three things: **(1)** They are admitting here that it is a “*fact*” that “worship *is given* to Jesus!” **(2)** It is a *fact* that he never refused it nor rebuked anyone for worshiping him! and, **(3)** It is a *fact* that worship is to be given only to God! Facts are stubborn things, and these facts leave no doubt about who Jesus really is!

The **WT** teaches three phases of Jesus’ existence: **(1)** before he came to earth he was a spirit creature, Michael the archangel, **(2)** while he was on earth he was not a spirit creature, but only a man, the exact equivalent of Adam before the fall, and then, **(3)** he was raised from the dead, not bodily, but as a spirit creature, Michael.⁷ We have a couple of questions in light of this teaching: Michael—Jesus—Michael, or angel—man—angel.

(1) Remember when Cornelius met Peter, he “fell down at his feet and did obeisance” (*proskuneo*) (Acts 10:25). Listen to the reason Peter gives as to **why** he “lifted him up” and refused to accept such worship—he said, “I myself am also *a man*” (v 26). If Peter had to tell someone not to do obeisance to him because he was only a man, why did Jesus not have to do the same? The **WT** says that Jesus on earth was a man, “a perfect man,” yes, but still only *a man*. If Peter had no right to accept *obeisance* because he was “also a man,” then Jesus had no right to accept *obeisance*, because he too was “also a man.”

(2) The **WT** teaches that Jesus was raised “a spirit creature,” higher in status than he had been when he lived on earth as a man, but still only “*a creature*.” He now lives the life of an exalted angel called Michael. In Revelation 22:8-9, the angel who had been speaking to John told him *not* to “worship” him (*proskuneo*), but to “worship” (*proskuneo*) **only God**. If Jesus after his resurrection was *only an angel*—higher, to be sure, than the other angels, but less than God—how could he accept the “*proskuneo*” (*worship*) of the two women and the disciples in Matthew 28 without rebuking them? (vv 9, 17).

If Jesus is *not* to be “worshiped,” both the Holy Spirit and the New Testament writers know this. So the obvious question is: Why do they use the word “*proskuneo*” at all when speaking of Jesus? Take the gospel of **Mark** for example. We have Jairus who “fell at his feet” (5:22); and the woman who “fell down before him” (5:33); and the rich young ruler who “fell upon his knees before him” (10:17); and the unclean spirits who “prostrated themselves before him” (3:11); and the Syrophenician woman who “prostrated herself at his feet” (7:25). According to the **WT**, what did all of these people do? **Obeisance!** Plain and simple! That’s their definition of obeisance!—“*prostrating oneself before another*.” And in none of these is “*proskuneo*” used. But now the question arises, right in the middle of all this in **Mark 5:6**, why does the Holy Spirit use the word “*proskuneo*” with reference to Jesus if it’s not something **different**? The man with the unclean spirit ran to Jesus and did what? The **WT** would have us believe that he did the **same thing** as all those above, because they say he “*did obeisance*.” But the Scriptures will allow for no such interpretation! In this singular instance, a definite distinction is made! It is made by the writer’s use of the word **proskuneo!** He “**worshiped**” Jesus! If it’s not “worship” in 5:6, Mark would have worded it the same as he did in 5:22, “fell at his feet,” or 5:33, “fell down before him.” Why would Mark not **say** the **same thing** if it is the **same thing**? Without question, the Holy Spirit has marked out this instance as “**worship!**”

Two of the gospel accounts where Jesus was worshiped clearly show the Society’s insertion of “obeisance” not only to be false, but ridiculous. In the *Watchtower* (Feb 15, 1983, p18) “obeisance” is defined as “a respectful bow.” Let’s think about this definition for a moment. On seeing the child Jesus, the **WT** says of the wise men, “*falling down, they did obeisance to it*” (Matt 2:11 NWT). But the Holy Spirit’s wording shows the fallacy of their translation. You don’t “*fall down*” and then “*bow*.” That’s ludicrous! You *fall down* and then “**worship!**” The same is true of the two women Jesus met after he arose (Matt 28:9). It says, they “*caught him by his feet and did obeisance to him*.” But here again, you don’t “catch someone by the feet” and then “bow”—you “catch someone by the feet” and then “**worship!**” The same nonsensical wording is used with Cornelius

before Peter—he “*fell down at his feet and did obeisance to him*” (Acts 10:25). Notice how the act of “bowing” is ruled out completely by the wording. Cornelius wasn’t “*kneeling*” before Peter, nor did he just “*fall down*” before Peter. It says he “*fell down at his feet!*” By the time he got that far down, there was no room left for “a respectful bow.” Any thinking person can see the absurdity of their translation!

Compare what Jairus did with what the wise men did. Jairus “*fell at his feet*,” they “*fell down*.” Both did obeisance. But with the wise men something is **added**—*proskuneo*. Notice: (1) “falling down” (*obeisance*) (2) “they _____.” This is clearly **two** distinct things set before us. Even so with the two women: (1) “caught him by his feet” (*obeisance*) (2) “and _____.” This word “and” (Greek: *kai*) is simply a **connecting** word. Matthew uses it to connect **two** separate things: (1) obeisance, “**and**” (2) _____. And the same with Cornelius—**two** things: (1) “fell down at his feet” (*obeisance*) (2) “and _____.” It’s pointless to put “obeisance” in these blank spaces because obeisance is **already there!** All three of these are **already on the ground!**

The five examples in Mark’s Gospel we listed previously **all have obeisance**, but not *proskuneo*. These three examples now (the wise men, the two women & Cornelius) **all have obeisance and proskuneo**. Now, the **WT** wants us to see “obeisance” in **both (1) & (2)** above. But that can only work for someone who does not know how to speak properly, or perhaps someone who’s “*twisting the Scriptures to their own destruction*” (2 Peter 3:16). I’ll show you what I mean. To say, as the **WT** does, that Cornelius “fell down at his feet **and** did obeisance”—**This is to say the same thing twice!** It would be just like saying today, “He greeted that person **and** did greet that person.” “He shook his hand **and** did shake his hand.” See what I’m talking about? It’s redundant! It’s repeated for no purpose! “He bowed himself **and** did bow himself.” It’s absurd! This is exactly what the **WT** is doing: “Cornelius fell down **and** did fall down.” “Cornelius fell down at his feet **and** did obeisance.” In other words, “**Cornelius did obeisance and did obeisance!**” It’s nonsense! Anyone can see that! The **WT** will stop at nothing to **dishonor** the Lord Jesus! Even portraying themselves as **imbeciles** in grammar! There’s only one word that can possibly fit in those blank spaces above—**worship!**

Revelation 22 reveals the **WT’s** deliberate

deception in their use of “obeisance.” Compare Cornelius with John—“I fell down to **worship** before the feet of the angel” (v8). The wording is the same, but the **WT** translators **could not** translate it “obeisance”—they were **forced** to properly render *proskuneo* as “worship.” Why? because they were stopped cold by just two words from the angel himself!—“**Worship God**” (v9). The same word is used in all of the above passages, **but now it’s affixed to God!** And if it’s really “worship” in verse 9, then it has to be the same in verse 8, because the angel is referring to **what John is doing!** And John is doing the same thing **Cornelius was doing!** The same thing **the women were doing!** The same thing **the wise men were doing!**

When John fell down to “worship” before the angel, the angel rebuked him, saying, “Be careful! Do not do that!... Worship God” (Rev 22:8-9). The *proskuneo* (worship or obeisance) that angels refuse to accept, but say to give only to God, is the same *proskuneo* (worship or obeisance) that the Father commands to be given to the Son!—“**Let all the angels of God worship him**” (*proskuneo!*) (Heb 1:6). The Son cannot be **an angel!**—“**To which one of the angels** did [God] ever say: ‘You are my son?’” **None!** “**To which one of the angels** has [God] ever said: ‘Sit at my right hand?’” **None!** (Heb 1:5, 13 NWT). That place is reserved for the Son! who is **no angel!** It’s right there in their Bible! He’s “**better** than the angels” (v4). Could words be any clearer! We’re deceived if we refuse to give **the same** worshipful honor to the Son as to the Father. Jesus said, “...that all may honor the Son **just as** they honor the Father. He that does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him” (John 5:23 NWT). In other words, Jesus is saying if you fail to give **worshipful honor** to the Son, then your worship of the Father is in vain! □

Dan Shanks

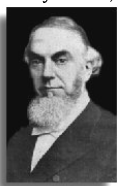
References: (1) *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, WT 1989 ed. p218 (2) *Deliverance*, WT 1926, p204; later eds., p215; *Light*, vol 2, WT 1930, p166 (3) 15 Oct 1945, p313; 1 Sept 1948, p260 (4) 1975 WT Yearbook, pp246-47 (5) For US\$10.00 (money order) a copy of the amended charter is available from: Office of Recorder of Deeds, 101 County Office Building, 542 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15219 USA. Allegheny County Pennsylvania Charter Book, vol 70, pp171-176 (recorded 27 Feb 1945). (6) *Reasoning*, p215 (7) *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* WT 2009 ed., pp42,50,51

The Watchtower and the Worship of Jesus

Consistent with their denial of the deity of Christ, Jehovah’s Witnesses (**JWs**) deny that Jesus should be worshiped. Their belief is that Jesus is Michael the archangel.¹ When they were asked, “Is it proper to **worship Jesus?**” in *Awake!* (April 8, 2000), they were instructed: “Reverent adoration should be expressed **only to God**. To render worship to anyone or anything else would be a form of **idolatry**” (pp26-27). And the *Watchtower* stated: (Nov 1, 1964) “It is unscriptural for worshipers of the living and true God to render worship to the Son of God, Jesus Christ” (p671). What most **JWs** don’t know is that for more than 60 years Watchtower (**WT**) founder C. T. Russell (d.1916) and his successor J. F. Rutherford (d.1942) taught that Jesus Christ **was to be worshiped**, a belief that would be expressed even after Rutherford’s death. And the **WT** Society’s Charter, amended in 1944, even states the same. But this was all changed in the mid-20th century.

The First Watchtower President Taught that Jesus was to be Worshiped

Charles Russell launched the publication of *Zion’s Watch Tower* in 1879. In an early issue, it says, “Christ’s position is contrasted with that of men and angels, as he is Lord of both, having ‘all power in heaven and earth.’ Hence it is said, ‘Let all the angels of God worship him’” (Nov 1879, p48). Not long after this, Russell wrote: “He still is Lord, and as such we worship him...to worship Christ in any form cannot be wrong” (March 1880, pp82-83).



The Second Watchtower President Taught that Jesus was to be Worshiped

Joseph Rutherford who followed Russell said: “Crucifixes were erected, and the worship of the people turned to these rather than to let them intelligently worship the Lord Jehovah and the Lord Jesus Christ” “...the great Jehovah commands: ‘Let all the angels of God worship him’ (Heb 1:6).”²

