

# Should You Believe in the Trinity?



Stephen H. Mitchell

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by  
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Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version, 2016 edition (ESV).

Unless otherwise indicated, all Greek word references are to its Lemma.

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## INTRODUCTION

I remember having a conversation with a Jehovah's Witnesses' elder which centered on whether Jesus was God (as in God almighty).

One of the points I brought up was Jesus' being worshipped as proof that He was God almighty. While that was and is a valid point, he raised a counterpoint, that Nathan worshipped David,<sup>1</sup> but that doesn't mean that David is God.

Another point I brought up was Jesus' raising the dead as proof that He was God almighty. Again, while that was and is a valid point, the Jehovah's Witnesses' elder raised a counterpoint, that Elijah, Elisha, Peter, and Paul also raised people from the dead,<sup>2</sup> but that doesn't mean that they're God.

A third point I brought up was Jesus saying that he and the Father are one.<sup>3</sup> This was and is not a valid point. The elder pointed to John 17:11 and verse 22 which clearly point out that Jesus was talking about intimacy, about being in tune with each other, not about sharing divinity.

This experience taught me that people who belong to other religions aren't going to simply roll over and go, "Hey, I never thought of that!" and become Christian. They, or their elders or others in their religion, have probably heard arguments in favor of Jesus' deity and have developed counterpoints that make their religion seem credible – and may even correct a few of our misinterpretations when we make them.

Untangling and proving the validity of the first two points I made would get complicated. So, while there are many verses that could be used to support the doctrine of Jesus' deity – especially to those who already accept it – the following verses were selected for their usefulness in presenting the deity of Jesus to those who reject it (or are at the very

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 1:23.

<sup>2</sup> 1 King 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37; Acts 9:36-42; and Acts 20:7–12, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> John 10:30.

least skeptical of it) and for the relative ease in countering typical counterpoints.

And belief in the Trinity is no small or trivial thing. Romans chapter 4 verses 3 and 21 through 25 as well as Romans chapter 10 verses 9 and 10 indicate that there are two doctrines that should be believed – or at the very least not rejected – for a person to be saved: That Jesus is Lord (meaning Jesus is God Almighty as we'll see later) and that Jesus was raised from the dead.

## OVERVIEW

By way of background, I'll begin by briefly explaining what the Trinity is and also what the Septuagint is and how it is used to understand the relationships between Old Testament Hebrew words and the New Testament Greek words.

Because it is such a stumbling block to so many, I'll then show how the term "firstborn" is used in the Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek and why the phrase, "firstborn of all creation" can't legitimately be used to argue that Jesus is a created being, that he cannot be deity.

I will then proceed to show how the phrases or terms "the First and the Last", "I Am", "God", and "Lord" are used in the Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, and how individually and collectively they prove that Jesus is God Almighty.

## BACKGROUND

### What Is the Trinity?

The term “Trinity” is not found in the Bible. It is a term that Christians use to represent the Bible’s teaching that there are three distinct persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) in one God, that is to say, in a numerically singular substance.<sup>4</sup> It’s actually a contraction of two words, tri-unity, three in one. And it’s that one-ness that makes the Trinity a monotheistic doctrine: mono meaning one; theistic meaning, God.

It is a particularly difficult doctrine because we generally learn by extension. That is a wall; that is a ceiling; that is a chair, and so on. However, there is nothing in the physical world that correlates to the Trinity. In the physical world if a human being has three persons, they have a mental illness. And because there is nothing else in the universe that has three distinct persons sharing a single substance, some people find it too difficult to accept the doctrine of the Trinity. Sometimes they confuse it with polytheism where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are separate Gods, or they deny it altogether teaching that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are created beings, exalted though they may be. Nonetheless, the Bible clearly teaches that the Father is God, that Jesus is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God, but that there is nonetheless only one God . . . three in one. Since everyone accepts that the Father is God, and to limit the scope of this paper, I’ll focus on Jesus’ Godhood and leave the Holy Spirit’s Godhood as a topic for another paper.

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<sup>4</sup> Deut 6:4; James 2:19.



## What Is the Septuagint?

The Septuagint (abbreviated as LXX) is the earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that exists today. The translation was done by 70 or 72 Jewish scholars for Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt who were fluent in Greek, but not in Hebrew. It was written between the mid-3rd century BC and the 2nd century BC<sup>5</sup> and incorporated several more ancient Greek translations of Hebrew Bible dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the Septuagint provides insight into the meaning of the Hebrew language through its translations into Greek. There are two ways where using the Septuagint comes in handy today. The **first** is to help translators understand the meaning of the ancient Hebrew where its meaning is uncertain. And the **second** is to help knit together Hebrew and Greek passages that share a related vocabulary.

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<sup>5</sup> "Septuagint," Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint> (accessed on August 08, 2021). "Septuagint," Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Septuagint> (accessed on August 08, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> "Septuagint," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint> (accessed on October 3, 2011).

## FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION

Before proving the deity of Jesus, it may be best to address a common stumbling block: What does “firstborn” mean? Obviously, it refers to the first child born to parents, the firstfruits of a woman’s womb. So, when the Holy Spirit through Paul says in Colossians that Jesus . . .

1:<sup>15</sup> . . . is the image of the invisible God, ***the firstborn of all creation***. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (emphasis added)

. . . it is clearly saying that Jesus is a created being, the first created being, right?

Not necessarily.

Sure, in English speaking cultures, the word “firstborn” almost exclusively refers to the first child born to parents. However, in ancient Hebrew cultures, the word “firstborn” often meant “pre-eminent” or “having priority”.

Let take a look.

### “Firstborn” Can Mean “Pre-eminent” or “Having priority”

The Greek word which is translated “firstborn” is (πρωτότοκος, prōtotokos). As in English, it can mean “the first child born to parents” as it clearly does in Luke.

2:<sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In 1 Samuel, David is stated as being the youngest of eight brothers.

16:<sup>10</sup> And Jesse made **seven of his sons** pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." <sup>11</sup> Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "**There remains yet the youngest**, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." (emphasis added)

But in Psalms God **makes** David the firstborn among the kings of the earth.

89:<sup>20</sup> I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him . . . <sup>27</sup> And I will **make** him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. (emphasis added)

In Genesis, Ephraim is stated as being Joseph's youngest son

41:<sup>51</sup> "Joseph called the name of the firstborn the Manasseh . . . <sup>52</sup> The second son he named Ephraim . . ."

But in Jeremiah God states that Ephraim is **his** firstborn.

31:<sup>9</sup> "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is **my** firstborn". (emphasis added)

In the context of Colossians, does "firstborn" mean that Jesus is the first child born to God Almighty, that Jesus is God Almighty's first created being? That is possible. But it is also possible that "firstborn" means that Jesus holds a position of high honor, that he is "Pre-eminent" or "has priority". So, how do we judge between the two? We look at how the term is used. In this context, *since Jesus is said to be the firstborn of all creation just after he is declared to be the image of the invisible God, does it seem more likely that Paul is saying that Jesus is the first child born to God or that he holds a position of high honor since he is the image of the invisible God?*

If the meaning of firstborn is still ambiguous, it is sound methodology to look to other verses to bring clarity to this verse. For example, if other verses are most likely referring to Jesus as being deity, then it is most likely that firstborn in this verse is referring to Jesus holding a position of high honor.

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Jesus Is the First and the Last, the LORD of Hosts, the LORD Almighty

Now that we've clarified that the phrase "firstborn of all creation" is, at the very least, not a clear indication that Jesus is the first created being, I'll move on to what is perhaps the easiest way to prove the deity of Jesus, by comparing a passage in Isaiah with three passages in Revelations.

Let's look at these verses together.

Isaiah says,

44:<sup>6</sup> Thus says the LORD the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:<sup>7</sup> "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god."

A few things should be observed here. **First**, you'll see two instances of the word "LORD" which are spelled with four capital letters, referring to the most holy name for God Almighty. The four capital letters indicates that this is translated from the Hebrew language's most holy word for God Almighty. It consists of four consonants, Y H W H, and is generally pronounced "Yahweh". **Second**, notice the word "and" between the phrase "LORD the King of Israel" and the phrase "his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts". *How many distinct LORDS are mentioned in this verse?* Even the Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation*, though using different phraseology, clearly expresses that there are two distinct Jehovah's in this verse.<sup>8</sup> **Third**, these LORDS are the "first" and "last". **Fourth**, there is no other God.

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<sup>7</sup> "יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת" translated here as "LORD of hosts" [ESV, NASB95, NKJV, KJV] is typically translated as "LORD Almighty" [NIV84] in other verses.

<sup>8</sup> "This is what Jehovah has said, the King of Israel and the Repurchaser of him, Jehovah of the armies, 'I am the first and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.'" *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania and International Bible Students Association, 1984).

Now, let's look at what Revelation says.

1:17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.'"

22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

A few questions should be asked here. **First**, *who died and came to life?* And **second**, *who will be coming soon?*

The only Biblical character who is the answer to both of those questions is Jesus.

### Jesus Is the I AM

Another way to prove that Jesus is God Almighty is to look at the verses where he says he's the "I am".

In Exodus, God Almighty says that his name is "I AM".

3:13 "Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' 14 God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to

Moses, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: “The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.’”

The phrase “I AM” in verse 14 is translated from the Hebrew word “hyh” (היה). Using the Septuagint, we learn that “I AM” in Greek is “ego eimi” (ἐγὼ εἰμί).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to himself as the “I am” in two places.

8:<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’”<sup>9</sup>

The parallel between Exodus and the Gospel of John is striking and is reinforced by the reaction of the Jews (v48, v52, generally regarded as the religious leaders of the Jewish people), “they picked up stones to throw at him” (v59).

However, people who begin with the premise that the Trinity can’t be true have tried to explain this verse away by misrepresenting what the Greek says whether intentionally or ignorantly because that’s what they’ve been taught. Basically, their contention is that “I am” should be “I have been”.<sup>10</sup>

The challenge of correcting a mistranslation is that it requires access to the original language text as well as an understanding of the original language. Using Logos Bible Software’s Nestle-Aland *New Testament*

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that Jesus, in the Gospel of John, uses the phrase, I Am (egō eimi, ἐγὼ εἰμί) in three different ways, as a predicate (“I am the . . .”), with an implied predicate (“I am [he]”), and as an absolute. John 8:58 is the clearest example of the “I am” as an absolute. John 8:24, 28; 18:5-6 are also widely regarded as absolute uses of “I am”. Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 139–140. See also Carson, Borchert, Lincoln, Beasley-Murray.

<sup>10</sup> *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania and International Bible Students Association, 1984).

Greek text,<sup>11</sup> we can look at the untranslated Greek text, and using Logos Bible Software’s “interlinear” feature we can see how major English translations of the New Testament are translated from the Greek.

John 8:58 – Nestle-Aland *New Testament Greek* text to ESV

εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	Ἰησοῦς	ἀμὴν	ἀμὴν	λέγω	ὕμῖν	πρὶν	Ἀβραάμ	γενέσθαι	ἐγώ	εἰμί
said	to them	Jesus	Truly,	truly,	I say	to you,	before	Abraham	was,	I	am

John 8:58 – ESV to Greek

Jesus	said	to them,	Truly,	truly,	I say	to you,	before	Abraham	was,	I	am
Ἰησοῦς	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	ἀμὴν	ἀμὴν	λέγω	ὕμῖν	πρὶν	Ἀβραάμ	γενέσθαι	ἐγώ	εἰμί

The problem with translating ἐγώ εἰμί as “I have been” is that there is nothing to indicate or warrant the present perfect tense, “have been”. The Greek word translated “am” (εἰμί) is an irregular verb. If past perfect tense (“have been”) was intended, “ἦ” or “ἦν” would have been used.<sup>12</sup>

The Jehovah’s Witnesses invent “a tense in the Greek and titles it ‘the perfect indefinite tense.’” This is a tense which does not exist in any known Greek grammar book.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012) – available in Logos Bible Software.

<sup>12</sup> In English grammar terminology, “have been” is called “present perfect tense”. In Greek grammar terminology, “have been” is called aorist or imperfect tense. See “A Digital Tutorial for Ancient Greek,” Classical and Ancient Studies Program, University of Missouri-Kansas City, [https://daedalus.umkc.edu/FirstGreekBook/JWW\\_FGB3.html](https://daedalus.umkc.edu/FirstGreekBook/JWW_FGB3.html) (accessed on August 12, 2021); and “Ancient Greek verbs,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Greek\\_verbs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_verbs) (accessed August 12, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Walter Martin, *Jehovah’s Witnesses*, (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1957), p. 36. See the “A Digital Tutorial for Ancient Greek” and “Ancient Greek verbs” web pages from the previous footnote.



## Jesus Is God

One of the most common places to start proving the deity of Jesus is John 1:1,

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In verse 14, “the Word” is clearly identified as Jesus. The phrase “the Word was with God” clearly identifies the Father as God and is separate from Jesus, and the phrase “the Word was God” clearly identifies the Son as God. So here we have two members of the Trinity being identified as God and being separate from each other.

Non-trinitarians (those who don’t believe in the Trinity) reject this translation and contend that Jesus is the preeminent created being and not God Almighty (cf, Col 1:15 discussed above). So the last clause of this verse should read “the Word was a god” instead of as “the Word was God”.

Primarily, there are two reasons they use to defend this translation. The first is asserting **in this verse only** that the absence of a definite article in front of God in the second clause means it can’t be referring to God Almighty. The second is that since **on only one obscure occasion** the Bible calls people of high position “god”, therefore referring to Jesus as “a god” is appropriate.

Let’s take a look at each of these in more detail.

### What Not Having a Definite Article Means?

Let’s start by dealing with the absence of a definite article in front of second instance of God.

John 1:1 – Nestle-Aland *New Testament Greek* text to ESV

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ	λόγος,	καὶ ὁ	λόγος	ἦν πρὸς	τὸν θεόν,	καὶ	θεὸς	ἦν ὁ	λόγος.
In the beginning was the	Word,	and the	Word	was with	God,	and	God	was the	Word.

### John 1:1 – ESV to Greek

In the beginning was the	Word,	and the	Word	was with	God,	and	the	Word	was	God.
Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ	λόγος,	καὶ ὁ	λόγος	ἦν πρὸς	τὸν θεόν,	καὶ	ὁ	λόγος	ἦν	θεὸς.

Two key words in this verse are “logos” (λόγος) which is translated as Word and “theos” (θεός) which is translated as God.

As you can see, there are two instances of the word “theos” in John 1:1.<sup>14</sup> In the first instance, there’s a definite article in the Greek before “theos”. Those pair of words can be translated as “the God”. But in the second instance there is no definite article. Because of this, some have argued that the second “theos” should be translated as “a god”.<sup>15</sup>

However, just a few verses down there are several instances of “theos” without a definite article, but the meaning nonetheless is still clearly God Almighty. Compare the *English Standard Version* or ESV with the *Jehovah’s Witness’ New World Translation* or NWT.

<sup>14</sup> In these two instances (θεόν and θεός), the last letter is different indicating a distinction between the direct object (accusative case) and the subject (nominative case), respectively, and is therefore not relevant to our discussion. Cf, “Different greek cases for Theos,” Latin Language Stack Exchange, <https://latin.stackexchange.com/questions/8844/different-greek-cases-for-theos> (accessed on August 08, 2021) and “A Digital Tutorial for Ancient Greek,” Classical and Ancient Studies Program, University of Missouri-Kansas City, [https://daedalus.umkc.edu/FirstGreekBook/JWW\\_FGB3.html](https://daedalus.umkc.edu/FirstGreekBook/JWW_FGB3.html) (accessed on August 08, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> “A god in John 1:1, really?” *Greek for All*, <https://greekforall.com/a-god-in-john-1/> (accessed on August 9, 2021).

Translation	John 1:1	John 1:6	John 1:12	John 1:18
ESV	“the Word was God”	“sent from God”	“children of God”	“No one has ever seen God”
NWT <sup>16</sup>	“the Word was a god”	“a representative of God”	“God's children”	“No man has seen God at any time”

Consistency in methodology is important whether we’re talking about interpreting the Bible or translating it. Using a different methodology as a “one off” is considered “special pleading”, a type of logical fallacy, unless there are **very good grounds** for that exception.

Yes, the two instances of “theos” in verse 1 are different, but why? There are a few possible answers to that question. According to D.A. Carson,

If John had included the article, he would have been . . . so identifying the Word with God that no divine being could exist apart from the Word. In that case, it would be nonsense to say . . . that the Word was with God. The ‘Word does not by Himself make up the entire Godhead; nevertheless the divinity that belongs to the rest of the Godhead belongs also to Him’ (Tasker, p. 45).<sup>17</sup>

And according to G.L. Borchert

Simply because the Greek term “Word” (*logos*) here has an article and the Greek term for “God” (*theos*) lacks the article does not mean that the term “God” should be rendered as “a god.” In this predicate nominative construction the Greek verb “to be,” when linking the noun “God,” is used in a generic or adjectival manner. It does not therefore mean that the Word is “a god” as

<sup>16</sup> *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania and International Bible Students Association, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 117.

over against “God” or that the Word merely possesses some attributes of the “divine nature.” As Beasley-Murray has pointed out, there is another Greek word (*theios* [θεῖος]) for that type of divine reference, for instance in 2 Pet 1:4, where believers are said to participate in the “divine nature.” The meaning of John 1:1 is not merely that the Word has divine characteristics but that the Word participates in the reality called God. That Word was true deity, and John wanted there to be no doubt about it.<sup>18</sup>

And according to A.T. Lincoln,

In the Greek of v. 1c there is no definite article with ‘God’, as there was in v. 1b. This can be explained by saying that ‘God’ is the predicate and frequently predicate nouns that precede the verb, as here, are without an article, so ‘the Word was God’ is an acceptable and straightforward translation.<sup>19</sup>

And according to G.R. Beasley-Murray,

καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος; θεός without the article signifies . . .  
. God *in his nature*, as truly God as he with whom he  
“was,” yet without exhausting the being of God  
(observe that the Evangelist did not write καὶ λόγος ἦν  
ὁ θεός (“and God was the Word”).<sup>20</sup>

**First**, while keeping an eye on how “theos” without a definite article is translated elsewhere, it may be because John wanted to abundantly identify God the father. **Second**, it could simply be variety in John’s literary style. **Third**, it could be for some reason we can’t think of.

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<sup>18</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 103–104.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John, Black’s New Testament Commentary* (London: Continuum, 2005), 97.

<sup>20</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *John, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 10-11.

Regardless, in the absence of very good grounds to do otherwise, proceed with the same methodology used elsewhere which means “the Word was God”.

### What About Exalted Persons

Now let’s deal with whether “theos” can refer to a merely exalted person in the context of John 1:1.

In Judaic or Christian contexts, in either the New Testament or in the Septuagint,

- “theos” can refer to . . . God Almighty.
- Or “theos” can refer to . . . a false god.
  - “The god of this age . . .” (2 Cor 4:4)
  - “. . . their god is their stomach . . .” (Phil. 3:19)
- Or “theos” can refer to . . . a magistrate or a person of exalted stature (Psa 82:1-7)

While the Hebrew word ’ēlō-hîm (“theos” in the Septuagint) often refers to God Almighty, in the context of Psalm 82, it refers to rulers or judges whether as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power – in other words, persons who are exalted.<sup>21</sup>

Setting aside references to Jesus, God refers to exalted persons as gods **on only this one obscure occasion.**

However, just because the term “God” **could** refer to a person of exalted stature, doesn’t mean that it does in a specific context – and, setting aside references to Jesus, the fact that it does so only once and obscurely is grounds to be especially careful.

Methodologically speaking, any Greek word usually has the same meaning its prior instance has if it is in the same sentence unless there

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<sup>21</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 43-44.

are **very good grounds** to conclude differently – otherwise it’s an equivocation which is another type of logical fallacy. At this point, two questions should be asked. **First**, setting aside references to Jesus, *does “god” referring to exalted persons in only one obscure occurrence in all of scripture constitute very good grounds?* **Second**, with such a profound statement at the very beginning of his Gospel, *how likely is it that John, a first century Palestinian Jew, would use such an obscure use of the word “god” to refer to Jesus?*

## Jesus Is Lord God

Another favorite way to prove the deity of Jesus is to compare the first verse of the Shema in Deuteronomy with the Gospel of John.

Let’s start with Deuteronomy.

6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

A few things should be observed here. First, you’ll see that the word “LORD” is spelled with four capital letters, referring to God Almighty (YHWH as discussed above). Second, you’ll see the emphatic statement that God is one. It doesn’t say what kind of one. One in personhood or one in numerical substance. Based on other passages we’ve looked at, it clearly refers to one in substance, but not one in personhood.

The Septuagint translates YHWH as “kyrios” (κύριος) which is translated into English as “Lord”. In New Testament Greek, it can refer to owners, rulers, or deities.

Let’s take a look at the Gospel of John.

20:<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

<sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, **“Peace be with you.”** <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, **“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”** <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, **“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

As previously discussed, in Jewish culture, “theos” can mean God Almighty, a false god, and, on one obscure occasion, an exalted person such as a magistrate or a ruler. And just covered, “kyrios” can mean owner, ruler or deity. At this point a few questions should be asked, *given that Thomas was a first century Palestinian Jew, why would he use both of those terms . . . together . . . to address Jesus if he wasn’t addressing him as God Almighty?* Do the other options make **MORE** sense?

**Sidebar: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**

It is worth considering that Thomas witnessed many miracles performed by Jesus – healing the sick, freeing the possessed, the feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000 from almost nothing, walking on water, calming the sea, raising the dead. And he heard Jesus predict his death, burial, and resurrection just like the other apostles. Given all that he witnessed, was part of, and heard before Jesus’ death, why was believing that he was raised from the dead so difficult to believe. Jesus was not condoning belief without evidence; he was surprised at how much evidence Thomas needed.

## CONCLUSION

### Summary

I shared with you, by way of background, that the doctrine of the Trinity is that there are three distinct but co-equal persons in one substance, tri-unity, three-in-one. I also shared with you that the Septuagint is a useful tool when comparing words between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I then shared with you that the term “firstborn” can mean a first child born to parents, but in ancient Hebrew culture it also meant a title of high honor, that it meant “pre-eminent” or “having priority”.

I followed this by presenting four ways that clearly establish at least two members of the Trinity, the Father and the Son, and they are both referred to in the Bible in ways that can only mean that they are both God Almighty: (1) In Isaiah 44:6, there are two LORDs (YHWH), the King of Israel and his Redeemer, and they are both called the first and the last, and in Revelation Jesus is identified as the first and the last, (2) in the Gospel of John, Jesus referred to himself as the I AM (“ego eimi”, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “hyh”), (3), John stated that Jesus both was **with** God and **was** God, and (4) Thomas called Jesus Lord (“kyrios”, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “YHWH”), and God (“theos”).

### Key Takeaways

My hope in sharing this with you is twofold: **First**, that you will have a good understanding of what the Trinity is. **Second**, that you will know and understand what some of the reasons are for believing it.



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