

A JW stopped by a few weeks ago and I talked with him for a bit. I don't think I did an adequate job defending the fact that Jesus is God although He is God's Son. His argument was that Jesus is a created being since He is called God's "son". How can I address this point? I quoted the verse that Jesus was here since the beginning but I can't recall his response. Does "son" have another meaning in the original language?

The range of meaning ("semantic domain") of 'son' in English is close to that of Greek and Hebrew, so the answer to your question is not to be found there. All three languages admit to both a literal and metaphorical usage.

The problem faced by the Jehovah's Witness is that they have an inadequate view of both God and man at the outset, even before we get to the issue of the Trinity. They insist (at least in practice if not in writing) that God must be comprehended by a straightforward application of human logic, and that logic must be the final arbiter of truth when it comes to the nature of God. This is why the Deity of Christ is so reprehensible to them: they know that there is one God, and they know that one plus one plus one does not equal one, consequently they confess neither the Trinity nor the Deity of Christ (nor the personality of the Holy Spirit).

Their failure is multi-fold. They do not reckon on the fallenness of man's understanding and the limitations created by that fallenness, they do not reckon on the transcendent 'otherness' of God in His nature, and they allow an artifact of creation (human logic) to sit in judgment of the nature of God. In short, they don't admit to the nature of God being beyond comprehension to the human mind.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, therefore, insist that "son" must imply physical generation, in other words, physical conception, then gestation, followed by birth. In their theology, the fact that Jesus is God's Son can only mean that Jesus is a created being. And certainly, the natural understanding of the word 'son' would imply just such a thing.

The question is, are they reading the Scriptures correctly in this regard, and of course, the answer is no. The Sonship of Christ is not a matter of physical generation. ***Christ's Sonship is a statement of the eternal relation between the first and second Persons of the Trinity, not a statement of biology or any sort of creation.***

Theologians have referred to this as the "eternal generation of the Son." The Jehovah's Witnesses are thinking about Christ's Sonship through the perspective of biology; they should be thinking about it through the perspective of inheritance and decree. Gerald Bray says, "The relationship of the first to the second person of the Trinity is based on the concept of *inheritance*. The Son has been appointed heir of all things, and it is in this sense that he is described as the firstborn of all creation [Col. 1:15-16; Heb. 1:2; see also Gal. 4:7]."¹

In Colossians 1:15, Jesus is spoken of as *the firstborn of all creation*. That is a statement which should be understood as a legal, not biological, pronouncement. The law of primogeniture provides that the 'firstborn' receives the inheritance. Jesus occupies the position as firstborn of all creation in that He inherits all things from the Father. It is a statement closely linked to his preeminence, not His coming into being.

This is what is meant by the language of Psalm 2 (applied to Jesus in Hebrews 1:5).

¹ Gerald Bray, *God is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology*. Cited by Justin Taylor, in <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2012/03/21/is-the-eternal-generation-of-the-son-really-a-biblical-idea/>. Last accessed 7/25/2012.

Psalm 2:7-8 (NASB) “I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee. ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.

Notice two things about this text: (1) the language of inheritance in verse 8; (2) the language of decree (law) in verse 7. *Jesus is God’s Son by divine decree*, not by physical generation.

The point about Jesus that the Jehovah’s Witnesses really object to is His eternality, because that would establish His Deity. But the eternality of Christ is the point that Micah 5:2 makes very clearly: “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, ***From the days of eternity.***”²

The Bible that the Jehovah’s Witnesses use is the *New World Translation*. This is a translation that has been sanitized: every verse that portrays Christ as God has been changed to appear as if Christ is not the True God. One verse that they missed was Micah 5:2. It has probably been corrected in more recent editions..

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are nothing more than a particular flavor of the ancient Arian controversy, simply proving that old heresies never die, they simply get renamed. There’s a good, brief discussion of this in Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* on pages 243-244. Be sure to pay attention to the footnotes.

2 NASB, emphasis mine.