INTRODUCTION

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

Jehovah’s Witnesses ask, “How could the Word both be with God and be God?”

They regard that as impossible, so they note that the first use of God₁ in Greek has an article “the,” but the second use of God₂ in Greek does not have the article “the.” They argue that when John puts “the” in front of God/god, he means THE GOD, but when John does not put “the” in front of God/god, he means a god.

You will notice that the word order usually is the same in Greek as in English, except in the last clause. That is because English and Greek have different rules for saying which word is the subject and which is the predicate nominative. Let me say this without using technical terms:

Let us say that I have two sentences in English:
1. The man is mayor [not governor].
2. The mayor is a man [not a woman]

When the man is first, we are talking about the man (what he is and what he is not).
When the mayor is first, we talks about the mayor (what he is and what he is not).

Greek does not use the same rule. In Greek, the word with “the” is the one we are talking about.

1a. The man is mayor. (This = English sentence 1 above)
1b. Mayor is the man. (This = English sentence 1 above)

2a. The mayor is man. (This = English sentence 2 above)
2b. Man is the mayor. (This = English sentence 2 above)

All translations (those by Jehovah’s Witnesses and those by everyone else) change clause 3’s word order, because the Word is the subject, but God is the predicate nominative. The Word has “the,” so it comes first in English. God does not have “the,” so it goes second in English.
Jehovah’s Witnesses often violate their own rule (summary of the accompanying two-page chart)

NWT translates “the God/god” as God: 1a, 2 (follows their rule)
NWT translates “God/god” (w/o “the”) as god: 1b, 18b (follows their rule)
NWT translates “God/god” (w/o “the”) as God: 6, 12, 13, 18a (breaks their rule)

If the absence of “the” in verses 1b and 18b show that *theos* means *god* (not *God*), why does not the absence of “the” in 6, 12, 13, 18a show that *theos* means *god*?

What is it that causes Jehovah’s Witnesses to find John 1:1 so difficult. In a nutshell, they treat the word God as a name, rather than as a title. Examples may help. The following sentence does not make much sense:

President Barak Obama is eating lunch with President Barak Obama.
The Apostle John was with the Apostle John.
Jesus was with Jesus.

However, it makes sense for a titleholder to be with a titleholder. For example, during the last three years of King David’s life, he was a co-regent with his son, Solomon. In other words, if you asked David, “What are you?” He would say, “I am Israel’s king.” If (at the same time) you asked Solomon, “What are you?” He would say, “I am Israel’s king.” A co-regency is when two men share the office of king. During the last three years of David’s reign, Solomon could have said, “I am Israel’s King and I am eating lunch with Israel’s King [David].”

John 1:1 looks at two members of the Trinity: Jesus is with God [the Father] and Jesus is God.

John 1:1 must be understood in light of John 1:14 and 18.