

The Jehovah's Witnesses

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The Origin of the Jehovah's Witnesses

The modern day Jehovah's Witness organization is officially known as: The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. [For research purposes, their official website is: www.watchtower.org]. The Watchtower organization claims to be God's sole channel for communicating truth to humankind today. [Watchtower, 10/1/1967, p. 590]. It claims to be: "Jehovah's theocratically controlled organization under the immediate direction of Jehovah God Himself." [Watchtower, 6/1/1965, p.352]

The Watchtower organization traces its roots back to a man by the name of Charles Taze Russell. Russell was born in 1852 near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Having attended a Presbyterian Church, as well as a Congregational Church, Charles Russell, as a teenager, found himself unable to accept their teachings concerning:

1. Hell
2. The Trinity
3. The deity of Christ

So in 1870, at the age of 18, Russell organized a Bible study in Pittsburgh, at which he began to share his unorthodox beliefs with others (some of which we'll consider in a few minutes). This Bible study grew, and the group eventually made him pastor of the group. In 1879, Charles Russell started his own magazine to promote his doctrines. That magazine, still in publication today, is now called The Watchtower. The Watchtower organization disseminates over 25 million of these magazines twice a month in 148 different languages. Another publication that is produced today is Awake! (also published twice a month, in nearly the same quantities (22.5 million in 87 languages). The Watchtower organization continued to grow after Russell's death in 1916, into what is today one of the most influential cults of our time.

Today there are nearly 6 million Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide, attending some 90,000 Kingdom Halls where the witnesses meet to study. In 2001 the Jehovah's Witnesses baptized over 263,000 new converts around the world.

The Watchtower organization is mainly known outside of the organization for three things:

1. Their door to door activity.

2. The fact that they don't celebrate birthdays, Christmas or Easter.

3. The fact that they don't allow blood transfusions.

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that to please Jehovah, it would be better to allow their young child (who has perhaps been bitten by a rattlesnake) to die in the hospital room, rather than give her a blood transfusion that would save her life.

For years the Watchtower organization taught that immunizations and organ transplants were an abomination to God as well. Even claiming that: "Organ transplants are cannibalism, hence inappropriate for Christians." [Watchtower, 11/15/1967, p. 702-704]. Many Jehovah's Witnesses and their children got sick and even died during the time the Watchtower held to these teachings. As serious as these beliefs are, they are somewhat peripheral issues that I'd rather not focus on in our limited time tonight.

This evening I would like to look at eight teachings of the Watchtower organization and then hold them up to what the Bible says.

False Teachings of the Watchtower Organization

1. The Watchtower teaches that Jesus was merely a created, angelic being.

The Watchtower Society teaches that Jesus, rather than being God the Son, was really just a physical manifestation of Michael the archangel.

But the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was God. Here are some examples...

A. The apostle Thomas called Jesus God in John 20:27-29.

After seeing Jesus risen from the dead, Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

B. The apostle Peter called Jesus God in 2 Peter 1:1.

C. The apostle Paul called Jesus God in Titus 2:12-14.

D. The apostle John called Jesus God in John 1:1-3, and v. 14.

E. The prophet Isaiah said that the Messiah would be called "mighty God" in Isaiah 9:6, the very title ascribed to God the Father in Isaiah 10:21.

F. Jesus Himself referred to Himself as the "I AM" in John 8:58-59, the Old Testament name for God in Exodus 3:14.

G. The angels will worship Him in Hebrews 1:6 at His second coming.

Worship is something that is strictly forbidden by God of any created being (See Rev. 22:9) Jesus said, in Matthew 4:10, "it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."

[Click here to see a list of 20 reasons from the Scriptures why Christians believe Jesus is God.](#)

False teaching, number 2:

2. The Watchtower denies the bodily resurrection of Christ.

They teach instead that Jesus' body was dissolved into gases and that He was raised as a spirit.

But the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus' rose from the dead in the very same physical body that was laid in the tomb. Turn over to Luke 24:36. This scene takes place after Christ's resurrection.

Luke 24:36-39

36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." 37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. [They were making the very same error that the Watchtower organization has made. The disciples thought Jesus was a spirit or ghost] 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

Jesus told His disciples here that He was not a spirit! He says, 'Guys, it's Me. Touch me. I have a body of flesh and bones!'

In John 20:27, Jesus told Thomas to feel the nail wounds in His hands, and to put his finger into His side. Guys, Jesus walked out of that tomb in the very body that had been crucified.

In John 2:19 Jesus said, "Destroy this temple [referring to His body, v.21] and in three days I will raise IT up."

So the Watchtower organization teaches false doctrine when it comes to...

1. The deity of Christ
2. The resurrection of Christ

False teaching, number 3:

3. The Watchtower teaches that upon death the soul goes into an unconscious state of sleep until the time of the resurrection.

This is an incorrect, unbiblical doctrine known as "Soul-Sleep."

The Bible teaches that those who have died are conscious. Read the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16. Both of them, Lazarus the righteous man, and the other rich man who was unrighteous, were conscious after death.

The Bible does teach that when a person dies their body is laid to sleep but the Bible teaches that the Spirit of the person remains conscious. The unbeliever they will go to Hades (Luke 16) to await the resurrection (Jn. 5:29) and the judgment of the wicked at the end of the 1,000 year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:5-15). The believer who dies today goes immediately into the presence of God.

2 Corinthians 5:8 says...

"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and [what?] to be present [where?] with the Lord."

A believer who dies goes into the very presence of the Lord. In Philippians 1, Paul said....

Philippians 1:21-23

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart [Where??? Into the ground until the resurrection? No. He says "having a desire to depart...] and be with Christ, which is far better."

Paul realized that death would mean he would go to "be with Christ."

Jesus said to the repentant thief on the cross, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me [where?] in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Where is Paradise? Revelation 2:7 tells us that Paradise is in the presence of God.

[Other examples would include: Moses and Elijah. Their souls were not asleep after they died. They appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:3)!! Nor will the souls of the Tribulation martyrs be asleep after they die. See Revelation 6:9-11. They will be awake and able to speak to God.]

So number three, the Watchtower is mistaken in its view of the soul after death.

False teaching, number 4:

4. The Watchtower denies the existence of a literal hell that is the place of punishment for the wicked.

The Watchtower teaches that Jehovah will annihilate the wicked and they will simply cease to exist.

However, the Bible clearly teaches the endless punishment of the wicked. Turn with me to Revelation 19.

The Bible teaches that when Christ comes back with the saints at the end of the Tribulation Period [not the rapture, but His Second Coming to the earth] to establish His kingdom on earth at the end of Revelation 19 that one of the first things he does is have the antichrist (also referred to as the beast) and the false prophet (the antichrist's religious ruler, and right hand man) thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). That happens before the 1,000 year millennial reign.

In Revelation 20:2, we are told that an angel is sent with a chain and seizes the devil and throws him into the Abyss, and locks the door for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:3).

At the end of that thousand year period, Satan is permitted to come out for a short time (Rev. 20:7), in which he leads one final rebellion against the Lord (Rev. 20:8-9).

When the rebellion is squashed by the Lord, we read in Revelation 20:10...

Revelation 20:10

"And the devil who deceived them [some of those alive during the Millennium] was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, [notice] where the beast [the antichrist] and the false prophet are also; and they [not just the devil, but all three of them: the devil, the beast and the false prophet] will be tormented day and night [for how long??] forever and ever."

Notice again that it says, "they" will be tormented day and night forever and ever." The devil who is cast into the lake of fire meets up with two people who have already been there for 1,000 years. We can safely conclude those that end up in the lake of fire will not annihilated, as some teach, but they will go on experiencing torment "forever and ever." (Revelation 20:10).

And this is the very place where the unrighteous will spend eternity. Revelation 20:15 says, "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

Jesus said in Matthew 25:41, "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Jesus said that the fire where the wicked will be cast into is an "everlasting fire." (v.41)

Skip down to 25:46, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Just as our everlasting life (Jn. 3:16) is going to go on through eternity, so too will the punishment of the wicked. Revelation 14:11 says of the unrighteous, "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night." This is a sobering thought. But this is what the Bible teaches. We dare not tamper with the truth of God's Word to create something more palatable, as the Watchtower organization has done.

[See also: Matthew 18:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 14:10, 11; 20:10, 15.]

False teaching, number 5:

5. The Watchtower claims that only a special group of 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses are able to live forever with God in heaven.

According to the Watchtower, that number filled up in 1935, and if you were not around in, or prior to that date, you will never go to heaven. The Watchtower teaches that the rest of the Jehovah's Witnesses will remain unconscious after death until the resurrection, after which, they will spend eternity on a paradise earth.

However, the Bible clearly teaches that all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ will have eternal life in the presence of the Lord. Turn over to John 12:26

John 12:26a

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also."

According to Jesus' words here in John 12, if you serve Him, if you are a follower of Him, you will be where He is! Where is Jesus? In His Father's house. Right?

John 14:2-4

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” In heaven.

Turn over to Revelation 7. John gets a glimpse into a future scene in heaven, and notice how many people he’s sees...

Revelation 7:9-10

9 “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, [this is a massive, uncountable number of people—far more than 144,000] of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Q. Where was this massive uncountable number standing? Notice, v. 9 again: “before the throne.” What John sees is taking place in heaven, before the throne of God.

The Watchtower came up with this number 144,000 by twisting a couple of passages in the book of Revelation that speak of 144,000 Jews that God will seal during the Great Tribulation. Twelve thousand from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:4-8). The book of Revelation, chapter 14:1-5 makes it clear though that these Jews, will all be males and they will all be virgins [or “celibates” –NASB]. This is hardly a description of the men and women that made up the Jehovah’s Witnesses prior to 1935.

[See also Rev. 7:11-15; John 3:15; 5:24; 12:26; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 3:1; 12:22; 2 Peter 1:10,11.]

False teaching, number 6:

6. The Watchtower denies that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.

In order to find a good standing in God’s sight, the Watchtower Society teaches that you must be a baptized, active member in their organization.

According to the Watchtower Society there is no salvation outside of the organization.

Listen to this quote right out of one of their books, *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (p.255): “...there will only be one organization—God’s visible organization—that will survive the fast-approaching “great tribulation.” It is simply not true that all religions lead to the same goal. You must be part of Jehovah’s organization, doing God’s will, in order to receive his blessing of everlasting life.”

If you want to be sure that you will be saved at the battle of Armageddon the Watchtower teaches that you must be faithful and active in what they call "kingdom work," which for them is mainly door to door ministry. (See You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth, p.250ff)

This amounts to a works based salvation, something that the Bible clearly rejects. The Bible teaches that salvation cannot be earned or merited. Over and over again the Bible teaches that salvation is God's free gift to those who believe.

Romans 10:9

"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Romans 3:28

"Therefore we maintain that a man is justified [declared righteous] by faith apart from the works of the law."

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

[Some other verses include: Romans 4:1-4; Galatians 2:16; Titus 3:5.]

False teaching, number 7:

7. The Watchtower teaches that Jesus returned invisibly in 1914.

Unbelievably, the Watchtower teaches that Jesus came back in 1914 and has been ruling ever since as King of the earth? How? Through the Watchtower Society!!

Could that be, that Jesus came back invisibly in 1914 as the Watchtower suggests? Not a chance!

The Bible says in Revelation 1:7

Revelation 1:7

"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen."

Did every eye see Jesus come back in 1914? Not at all.

The Watchtower tries to get out of the clear implications of what this verse says by saying, 'Well, the eyes spoken of here speak of the eyes of understanding....You see those who had the spiritual eyes to understand that this is what took place in 1914 did see that Jesus came back.'

That is an incorrect interpretation of the text.

The word "eye" there in v.7 is the Greek word "ophthalmos." That is the same Greek word used for the literal physical eyes of the blind people that Jesus healed (i.e. Matthew 20:34). The word "every" (v.7) is the Greek word "pas" and guess what? It means just what it says: "every" or even "all."

When Jesus comes back it is not going to be some mysterious, secret coming. No, the whole world will witness it.

It is interesting. Jesus warned about those in the last days who would come on the scene and say that the Messiah had already returned to earth.

Matthew 24:23-28

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. [i.e. He's already come!] 27 For as the lightning comes from the east [Jesus said] and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Like the flashing of lightning that fills the sky with light, Jesus' second coming is going to be sudden, out in the open, and evident to the whole world.

False Teaching No. 8:

8. The Watchtower Society teaches that the cross is a pagan religious symbol that was adapted by the church when Satan took control of the church.

The Watchtower teaches that Jesus did not die on a cross, but rather a post with no crossbeam, what they call a "torture stake."

Jehovah's Witnesses abhor the cross and new converts are expected to destroy any crosses that they have rather than simply dispose of them. I believe this is an attempt by Satan to do away with any reminder of where and how He was defeated.

We know for certain that Jesus died on a traditional cross. How?

John 20:25

The other disciples therefore said to him [Thomas], "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the [What?] nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

A "torture stake," as the Watchtower calls it, required one nail in the hands (nailed over the head), and this is exactly how the Watchtower consistently depicts the crucifixion in their literature (one nail).

But the Bible says there were at least two "nails" used (John 20:25).

A second reason we believe that Jesus died on a traditional cross is found in John 21.

When Jesus described Peter's coming crucifixion He said that Peter's hands would be stretched out, not up. Notice verse 18.

John 21:18-19

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will [stretch up? No.] stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."
19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God."

A third reason we believe that Jesus died on a traditional cross has to do with the placement of the sign in Matthew 27. Notice...

Matthew 27:37

"And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

When the Roman soldiers mounted the sign above Jesus they the Bible says it hung above "His head," not above His hands. Crucified victims in the first century had their arms "stretched out" on a crossbeam, just as we have been led to believe. Jehovah's Witnesses are "enemies of the cross of Christ."

Philippians 3:18-19

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction..."

And so we see that the Watchtower Society has strayed from the truth when it comes to...

1. The deity of Christ

2. The resurrection of Christ

3. The consciousness of the dead

4. Hell

5. The 144,000

6. Salvation by grace alone

7. Christ's second coming

8. The Cross of Christ

That is a brief tour through just some of the false teachings of the Watchtower Society. Next, let's talk about...

Witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses:

1. Greet them in Love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-2

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

Many Christians, especially those who are young in the faith, use what I call “the flame thrower approach” when it comes to witnessing to Jehovah’s Witnesses (blasting them with a list of disagreements)!

That is not an effective approach. Jehovah’s Witnesses are fond of quoting Jesus’ words in...

John 15:20

“If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

Persecuting them only fortifies them in their position and assures them that they are true followers of Christ.

They also like to quote:

2 Timothy 3:12

“...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

So, God has an entirely different strategy for his people as they witness to nonbelievers. It’s found in:

2 Timothy 2:24-26

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

God says I want you to be gentle, patient, humble.

We need to have great compassion on these people, realizing that they are not our enemies. They have been taken captive by the devil. They have been deceived.

2. Be forthright about the fact you are a Christian and share your testimony.

As soon as you appear to be friendly to them, they will typically launch into a memorized presentation about the evil state of the world, God’s plan for humanity on a paradise earth, and the fact that God has a name “Jehovah.”

As soon as you have a chance to talk, rather than laying out your disagreements with the Jehovah's Witnesses doctrinally, give them a glowing report about what God has done in your life.

Give them a joy-filled, concise overview of:

- What you used to be like
- How you came to realize that you were a sinner
- How God has come into your life
- How God has changed you
- What a joy it is to know Him
- What a delight it is to be loved by Him and to love Him
- How much you enjoy studying His word and fellowshipping with His people

Your testimony poses a huge problem to the Jehovah's Witness. The Watchtower has taught them very clearly that nobody outside of their organization can be saved or find favor in God's sight. The Watchtower teaches its members that Jehovah is going to destroy the people that fill the churches at the battle of Armageddon.

But there you are, presenting to them proof that God is alive and well outside of the Watchtower organization. This is shocking to Jehovah's Witnesses and can have a powerful impact on them.

Now, I used to suggest, as step number three, that you open your Bible with the Jehovah's Witness and reason with them from the Scriptures. God may lead you to do that. I think there are times for that. But, I no longer suggest that you pursue doing that. For two reasons:

1. The Jehovah's Witness uses their own version of the Bible (the New World Translation) printed up by the Watchtower organization.

This makes it very difficult to prove a point. Why? Because the Watchtower has deliberately added words, mistranslated words, switched commas around, invented tenses that don't even exist in the Greek language, etc. to make the Bible to say what they want it to say.

You'll read a verse to them that you think supports your point of view, and they will say "That is not what my translation says!"

Very frustrating.

2. The Jehovah's Witness has a blind allegiance to the Watchtower Society, and is forbidden by the Watchtower from

questioning it's interpretations.

Q. Why is there such an allegiance?

The Watchtower Society has convinced the Jehovah's Witness that it is...

--God's visible organization on earth

--God's sole channel of communication

--And that the organization is under Jehovah's direct supervision

Believing that to be true, the Watchtower's interpretations of the Bible cannot be wrong.

No matter how often, and how clearly I have explained a passage of Scripture to a Jehovah's Witnesses, it is amazing to see JW after JW cling to their understanding of the Bible rather than what the Bible actually says.

Their allegiance is frightening!!!

Jehovah's Witnesses have been taught not to question the authority or conclusions of the Watchtower organization.

3. End the meeting by:

- a. Taking their magazine (it's one less in their hands to give to someone else)
- b. Tell them that you'd like to do a little research into their religion before you'd change churches
- c. Tell them you'd be interested in getting together again for another discussion.

4. Compile a list of questions and concerns for your next meeting.

Go to my website: www.AlwaysBeReady.com and click on the link: Jehovah's Witnesses. There you'll see a list of helpful articles, but I especially want to draw your attention to the article entitled: Sixty Five Questions to Ask Jehovah's Witnesses .

Open up that article and print out a few of those questions (whatever ones you would feel most comfortable asking). These questions have been compiled by Lori MacGregor, a former Jehovah's Witness, who is now a Christian apologist

seeking to help Christians share the truth with Jehovah's Witnesses.

5. At your next meeting (and at every subsequent meeting), ask them the questions you have about the reliability of the Watchtower.

Your goal? Ultimately to lead them into a genuine personal relationship with Jesus based on the truth of Scripture. The best way to do that, I believe, is to plant in their minds reasons to doubt the reliability of the Watchtower Society.

6. Remember to pray for them.

Ephesians 6:12

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

ABOUT CHARLIE CAMPBELL

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BOOKING:

If you would like to inquire about having Charlie Campbell teach at your church, conference, Christian school, or retreat please email Info@AlwaysBeReady.com. [Click here](#) for further details.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

For additional resources, including notes, audio messages, and DVDs, that will help you always be ready to defend the faith (1 Peter 3:15) check out www.AlwaysBeReady.com