

# Christianity, Cults & Religions

## *The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*

### 1. JW Beginnings

- William Miller (1782-1849) leader of Second Adventism (Second Coming: 1843/44)
- Charles Taze Russel (1852-1916) JW founder (Armageddon/Paradise: 1914, 1915, 1918)
- "Judge" Joseph Rutherford (1869-1942) (predicted Armageddon and the return of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob [even building them a house called Beth Sarim in San Diego]: 1925)

### 2. The Watchtower Society

- Presently over 18 million followers
- *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines
- New World Translation (NWT) (retranslation of the King James Version, NT: 1950, NT+OT: 1961)

### 3. Distinctive Beliefs

- All "Christians" prior to Russell were and non-JW's after Russell are apostates
- No Trinity: Jehovah; Jesus is a lesser, created god; "holy spirit" is J's invisible, active force
- Michael the Archangel was the first being created by Jehovah. Michael came to earth and became Jesus, a perfect man who Jehovah used to create everything else.
- Jesus was not resurrected bodily, but only spiritually and is presently reigning from heaven, with an invisible presence on earth. He is awaiting Armageddon, when he will rid the earth of human governments and set up "Paradise" under "Jehovah's Kingdom government arrangement".
- Salvation: have faith in the "ransom sacrifice" of Jesus that bought back what Adam lost (the right to perfect life on earth), plus good works: (1) taking in knowledge of Jehovah God & Jesus Christ, (2) obeying God's laws and conforming to Biblical moral laws, (3) belonging to and serving with Jehovah's one true organization (Watchtower Society) and (4) loyalty to Jehovah's organization.
- Witnesses must work toward perfection
- Present Prohibitions: blood transfusions, holiday or birthday celebrations, military service, voting
- Past Prohibitions: belief in germ theory of disease, vaccinations (a crime against nature), pasteurization, aluminum cooking utensils (a curse to humanity), organ transplants (cannibalism)

## 4. Key Terms

- **Jehovah:** The personal name of God the Father that the Jehovah's Witnesses apply to every appearance of the word God in the New World Translation of Old & New Testaments <sup>Psalms 83:18</sup>.  
Origin: The English transliteration of the OT Hebrew word for God is "YHWH" (Tetragrammaton). For many years, Jews kept God's name holy by saying "Adonai" (Lord) instead of saying YHWH. Scholars chose to add the Adonai vowels to YHWH, yielding "YaHoWaH", leading to "Jehovah".
- **Anointed Class** (Little Flock <sup>Luke 12:32</sup>): According to Watchtower teaching, 144,000 is the number of Christians living between Pentecost and 1935, who will live in heaven as spirits forever.
- **Earthly Class** (Other Sheep <sup>John 10:16</sup>): People who followed Jehovah God prior to the Pentecost or who became Jehovah's Witnesses after 1935. According to the Watchtower, these followers will not go to heaven, because their eternal destiny is everlasting life in the earthly Paradise.
- **Watchtower Bible and Tract Society:** The Jehovah's Witness organization, headquartered in Brooklyn, NY. Its "Governing Body" claims to have sole spiritual authority over Jehovah's people.
- **Armageddon:** The final battle between wicked mankind and Jehovah God that will end the world governments and bring about the establishment of Jehovah's "kingdom rule" on Paradise Earth.
- **Christendom:** Disparaging term used to describe "professed Christianity" – all non-Jehovah's Witness religions that claim to be Christian (and viewed to be under Satan's control) – in contrast with "the true Christianity of the Bible".
- **Torture Stake:** The Watchtower teaches that Jesus was executed on an upright pole or stake instead of a two-beamed cross. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the cross is a pagan symbol and that using it in worship violates the Second Commandment's prohibition against idolatry.
- **Bible:** Old Testament ⇔ "Hebrew Scriptures"; New Testament ⇔ "Christian Greek Scriptures"
- **Apostasy:** Falling away from God by leaving or rejecting the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- **Babylon:** All non-Jehovah's Witness religious organizations and worldly governments.
- **Paradise:** Nature on Earth restored to the pre-curse conditions (the Garden of Eden in Genesis).
- **New Light:** Watchtower euphemism for the reason for changes in their doctrine.

## Traits of God and Jesus

The Watchtower teaches that Jesus is a lesser god than Jehovah. However, Scripture portrays Jesus as co-equal with God the Father, demonstrating Jesus' deity.

<b>Traits Unique to God (Jehovah)</b>	<b>Traits of Jesus</b>
Creation is "the work of his hands"—alone (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 102:25; Isa. 44:24)	Creation is "the work of his hands"—all things created in and through him (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10)
"The first and the last" (Isa. 44:6)	"The first and the last" (Rev. 1:17; 22:13)
"Lord of lords" (Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:3)	"Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16)
Unchanging and eternal (Ps. 90:2; 102:26–27; Mal. 3:6)	Unchanging and eternal (John 8:58; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:11–12; 13:8)
Judge of all people (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 94:2; 96:13; 98:9)	Judge of all people (John 5:22; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1)
Only Savior; no other God can save (Isa. 43:11; 45:21–22; Hos. 13:4)	Savior of the world; no salvation apart from him (John 4:42; Acts 4:12; Titus 2:13; 1 John 4:14)
Redeems from their sins a people for his own possession (Ex. 19:5; Ps. 130:7–8; Ezek. 37:23)	Redeems from their sins a people for his own possession (Titus 2:14)
Hears and answers prayers of those who call on him (Ps. 86:5–8; Isa. 55:6–7; Jer. 33:3; Joel 2:32)	Hears and answers prayers of those who call on him (John 14:14; Rom. 10:12–13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 12:8–9)
Only God has divine glory (Isa. 42:8; 48:11)	Jesus has divine glory (John 17:5)
Worshiped by angels (Ps. 97:7)	Worshiped by angels (Heb. 1:6)

## Cults 3: Jehovah's Witnesses

Consider, for example, this phrase: "Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He died for the sins of mankind, and then resurrected from the dead. Scripture speaks of his second coming." Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and many other cults would all agree with this statement, but they would interpret it differently from the traditional Christian view.

### Jehovah's Witnesses will say:

- "Yes, Jesus is the Christ"—but they would argue that Jesus was not the "Christ" at his birth, but became the "Christ" at his baptism.
- "Yes, Jesus is the Son of God"—but they view the term "Son of God" as a lesser "god" than God the Father because they claim Jesus was created by God.
- "Yes, Jesus died for the sins of mankind"—but they would say that his blood covers one's sin only if one proves oneself worthy through door-to-door activity.
- "Yes, Jesus was resurrected"—but they will say it was not a physical resurrection. Instead, he was resurrected spiritually as Michael the Archangel.
- "Yes, Scripture speaks of his second coming"—but they claim that this prophecy is already in the process of being fulfilled through an "invisible presence" of Christ in 1914.

## QUESTIONS ASK STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

You can't force good doctrine on a person trapped in a cult; instead, ask questions that cause him or her to think critically.

### Examples of Strategic Questions for Jehovah's Witnesses:

- ▶ If the Jehovah's Witnesses are the only true witnesses for God, and if the Jehovah's Witnesses as an organization came into being in the late nineteenth century (which is a historical fact), does this mean God was without a witness for over eighteen centuries throughout church history?
- ▶ If Jesus is Michael the Archangel, why was Jesus able to rebuke Satan at Matthew 16:23 when Michael didn't have the authority to rebuke Satan at Jude 9?
- ▶ According to Acts 1:8, 2:32, 3:15, 4:33, and 13:30-31, were the early Christians witnesses of Jehovah or witnesses of Jesus Christ?
- ▶ If there is no other Savior than God (Isaiah 43:11), then doesn't this mean that New Testament references to Jesus as Savior point to his deity (Titus 2:13)?

## **CULTISTS ARE TRAINED TO ANSWER OBJECTIONS**

**Many who have talked with Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons would say that they seem to have an answer for everything.**

The reason they seem to have answers for every question is because they've been carefully trained, and often have months—or years—of practice. For example, active Jehovah's Witnesses not only go door-to-door responding to householders' objections, but they have weekly training sessions where they learn what to say to someone like you.

So, what is the solution? Simply move the discussion back to the Bible. Don't worry if they are giving you rote responses that they have memorized. Just keep presenting evidence that their leaders are not telling them the truth and keep taking them back to the Bible. Eventually, the rote responses will stop.

One helpful technique is to request that they read a particular verse aloud, and then ask: "What is being said here?" If they repeat the typical cultic interpretation, ask them to read it aloud again, slowly and carefully—and follow it with another question. If you are persistent, you'll help them see for themselves the contradictions and problems with their view.



Note also that cultists are trained how to respond to common comebacks. For example, they are taught how to respond if people say: "I'm not interested," "I have my own religion," "We are already Christians here," "I'm busy," "Why do you people call so often?," "I am already well acquainted with your work," or "We have no money." When someone raises such an objection, this automatically triggers a response in the mind of the cultist. Keeping this fact in mind will help you to remain patient with the cultist.

