



Jehovah Witnesses

Comparative Theology

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Introduction

- **Officially, Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) are called The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTBTS) as "The Watchtower" is their prime publication espousing their teachings and Bible interpretations.**
- **Jehovah's Witnesses, claiming to have restored teachings lost through the apostasy in Christendom, believe they are the only true Christian organization—though they reject central teachings of historic Christianity (e.g., Trinity, deity of Christ, physical resurrection of Christ, person of the Holy Spirit).**

Introduction

- The Watchtower headquarters has the believers in this cult totally convinced that all who disagree with them (specifically orthodox Christians) are not only wrong, but are enemies who will be destroyed by Jehovah in the great battle of Armageddon which is to come.
- One of the major tools in JW evangelism (which they perform zealously going door to door or standing in public places sharing literature) is their own version of the Scriptures called *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT)*.

Introduction

- **This version is filled with mistranslations to prove JW doctrine. Interestingly, this group which claims to be “the remnant” did not come on the religious scene until the 1880s when it was officially founded by Charles Taze Russell.**
- **By the time he was a teenager, Russell had rejected many of the doctrines taught in his Congregationalist church; particularly those of the Trinity and heaven and hell all of which he found unreasonable.**

- **After a period of skepticism in all belief, he was taken in by Adventist teaching which proposed that there was no eternal punishment, because the wicked would be annihilated. His interest in end time prophecy was piqued here.**

Introduction

- **In 1879, Russell left the Adventists to launch “The Watchtower”. By 1896, Russell had established the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society with its headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.**
- **Russell never had any formal theological training yet he promoted himself as a Greek scholar and wrote a 7 volume series entitled Studies in the Scriptures. In 1912 he was exposed as a perjurer in court when he could not read letters from the Greek alphabet.**

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- **Regardless, he kept on going and kept on adding to the number of followers. He prophesied the end of the world beginning in 1914 but died with his prophecy unfulfilled in 1916.**
- **Without missing a beat, his shoes were filled by the charismatic and powerful personality of Joseph Rutherford, a lawyer who served as legal advisor to the WTBTs.**
- **He set 1925 as the new date for Armageddon.**

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- . When this did not come to fruition, he cast aspersions on the believers stating they had misunderstood what he had said and that that was not what the Lord had stated at all.
- The name Jehovah's Witnesses came from Isaiah 43:10 and was employed to distinguish Rutherford's group from certain splinter groups of WTBTs. In order to increase membership, Rutherford instituted the now infamous and wildly successful door to door visitation program.

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- He incorporated “scare tactics” by telling would be converts that only 144,000 would go to Heaven. This method was so successful that Rutherford found himself in a conundrum.
- By the 1930s Armageddon still hadn’t happened and there would soon be more than 144,000 on the rosters. No problem, he revealed that all JW’s prior to 1935 would go to Heaven; these were referred to as “the little flock”.

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- **All other converts would constitute the “great crowd” who would not go to heaven but could look forward to spending a Millenium on earth with Jesus after Armageddon.**
- **In 1942, Rutherford died and was succeeded by Nathan Knorr. While Knorr was not a dominating personality like Russell or Rutherford, he fancied himself a prophet and predicted that decidedly, 1975 was the true date for Armageddon.**

- **He also published a book explaining away the previous erroneous predictions. Surprisingly, by 1977 JWs still had over 2 million active members around the world- despite the unfulfilled predictions and over 200 changes to their doctrines. Today, JW boast a worldwide membership in excess of 6 million.**

- **Historically, the Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) are best known for their practices of refusing:**
 - **to serve in the military**
 - **to salute the flag**
 - **to celebrate Christmas, birthdays, or other holidays**
 - **to give or to accept blood transfusions**

- **Rejecting the medical practices of vaccinations, organ transplants, and blood transfusions, the Watchtower has caused the deaths of many of its members throughout its history.**
- **Now, however, vaccinations and organ transplants have been acknowledged by the Watchtower as acceptable practices, contradicting their previous doctrinal position.**

Views On God

- **The only proper name for God is “Jehovah (although Jesus does not even address Him with this name).”**
- **Jehovah’s Witnesses reject the doctrine of the Trinity as “false doctrine.” They claim that it is “nowhere mentioned in the Bible, makes God into three gods, is of pagan origin, and ultimately is derived from Satan.”**
- **God is the Almighty God who is one and Jesus, His creation, is a mighty god. So in essence, JWs believe in two gods, not one.**

- **While the JW understanding of Jesus' existence is just a rehashing of the Arian heresy (which taught that the Person of Christ did not eternally pre-exist as God the Son, being equally God with the Eternal Father, but that He was a created spirit-being made by God and used as a created instrument in the work of producing other spirit creatures), their understanding of who Jesus is is rather unique.**

- **According to JW, Jesus existed in three separate states or phases. Jesus Christ, before becoming man, was Archangel Michael, “the first of God’s creations.” Jesus ceased to exist as Michael when the life force of Michael was transferred to the man Jesus conceived by Mary and he became a perfect man (there is no incarnation, as Christians teach). When this Jesus died, he ceased to exist (He was not bodily resurrected).**

Views On God

- In his resurrection (as a "spirit person"), "Jesus" again became Michael the Archangel newly created or restored. Jesus is not God, but a god—"the equal of the perfect man Adam" (who, by the way is not eligible for the forgiveness from his own sin).
- Jesus was resurrected as "a spirit person," not in the body that died. Jesus returned invisibly in a spiritual existence in 1914 to begin setting up his kingdom (revised from an earlier 1874 prediction).
- The Holy Spirit is also countered in JW doctrine. The Holy Spirit is not a personal being, but Jehovah's "impersonal active force" "by which he accomplishes his purpose and executes his will."

Man and the Universe

- **Jehovah's Witnesses teach that all persons are born sinners. Adam's sin and its punishment, death, passed to all humanity. But man does not have an immortal soul.**
- **Only the first 144,000 believers will have immortality in heaven with Jehovah.**

Man and the Universe

- **The remaining believers will be on earth ruled by Jesus and the “little flock” for eternity. When others die, he or she ceases to exist.**
- **For all the talk of Armageddon, JW also teach that the earth will never be destroyed or depopulated but will become a peaceful paradise.**

Salvation and the Afterlife

- **First of all, JW teach that only those in their organization can be saved. But their idea of salvation is markedly different from ours. Jesus paid only for the sin of Adam (not for all human sin), to make salvation possible by means of one's works.**

Salvation and the Afterlife

- **To be saved Jehovah's Witnesses must meet the following requirements:**
 - **Take in knowledge by studying the Bible with the aid of Watchtower publications**
 - **Obey the laws of God and the laws of the Watchtower Society**
 - **Be baptized into the Watchtower organization**
 - **Promote the good news of the Watchtower Society from door to door (by collecting donations for subscriptions to the magazine) (The Watchtower, February 15, 1983, p.12)."**

Salvation and the Afterlife

- Only a special “elect” class of 144,000 individuals (the “little flock” or the “anointed”) will actually enter heaven to be with Jehovah.
- Because of their works they will share in Jesus’ nature and in fact become gods in a spiritual existence (not physical).

Salvation and the Afterlife

- A second “earthly class” of people, called “the great crowd” (other Jehovah’s Witnesses), will inherit a “Paradise” on earth during a millennium, after unbelievers are destroyed in the Great Tribulation or Battle of Armageddon.
- Unbelievers in the rest of mankind will be annihilated. There is no eternal punishment or hell, which are “fiendish concepts” originating with “the chief slanderer of God” (the Devil).”

- **Blood transfusions are forbidden by Jehovah.**
- **Birthdays and holidays such as Christmas and Easter (which are regarded as pagan in origin), Mother's and Father's days, etc. are not biblical and must not be celebrated.**
- **Participation in the armed forces, voting, and saluting the flag are wrong, demonstrating allegiance to men rather than to Jehovah.**

- **In contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses do teach and endeavor to live by the moral standards of God's Word. They are guided by principles such as the following:**
 - **"You must love your neighbor as yourself."—Matthew 22:39.**
 - **"Do not defraud."—Mark 10:19.**
 - **"Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need."—Ephesians 4:28.**
 - **"We wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things."—Hebrews 13:18.**

- **Though the Witnesses are not smug or self-righteous, they believe that if everyone applied these principles, the world would be a much better place in which to live.**
- **They also believe in God's promise that one day it will be.—2 Peter 3:13.**

- **The Jehovah Witnesses are headed by a “governing body” consisting of 18 men (chosen from living members of the 144,000 elect) having supreme and final authority, especially in the interpretation of the Bible.**
- **Locally congregations meet in the “Kingdom Hall,” usually on three days a week (a required 5 hours) and chiefly to learn from Watchtower materials taught by elders (there are no priests or pastors) in preparation for door-to-door witnessing.**
- **Jehovah's Witnesses do not use religious symbols, such as the cross, in their worship. For them, the cross is a pagan symbol; Christ was crucified on a stake, not a cross.**

- **Jehovah's Witnesses usually hold services three times a week, and most of the programs involve audience participation similar to a classroom discussion. Worship starts and ends with prayer, and most services include singing.**
- **All services focus on reading and discussing the Bible and seeing how to apply it in one's life. Those in attendance—even the very young—are encouraged to read the verses being discussed in their own copy of the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses have no clergy-laity division.**

- **All baptized members are ordained ministers, and all who attend services, including children, have an opportunity to participate.**
- **Most services are led by elders, who are spiritually mature members of the faith, or by qualified assistants, who are known as ministerial servants.**

- **The Public Meeting and Watchtower Study are often held on Sundays. The first is a 45-minute Bible-based lecture that is designed to be of interest both to members of the congregation and to visitors.**
- **The second is a one-hour question-and-answer coverage of a recent article on a Bible topic published in their main religious journal, The Watchtower.**

- **For the Congregation Book Study, Witnesses meet in small groups of about 10 to 15, usually in the private homes of members, to discuss a single Bible topic in depth. One of the books or brochures published by Jehovah's Witnesses is used to direct the question-and-answer Bible discussion.**
- **Recent study subjects have included family life, the reliability of the Bible, the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and a verse-by-verse review of the Bible book of Revelation.**

- **The Theocratic Ministry School and the Service Meeting are usually held on a weekday evening. The 45-minute Theocratic Ministry School is designed to help Jehovah's Witnesses improve their public reading and speaking. Students receive assignments on a rotating basis.**
- **At each meeting, six students give brief speeches on pre-selected Bible topics, and an instructor comments on the speech and offers suggestions for improvement. Witnesses and non-Witnesses of all ages can enroll in this school.**

- **The Service Meeting focuses on helping Witnesses improve their ability to teach the Bible to others. Topics of discussion have included how to show good manners when approaching others with a Bible message and how to discern what Bible topics may be of interest to people in the community.**
- **In addition to these services, Jehovah's Witnesses are also encouraged to read the Bible daily and to study the Bible at home with their families. There is, however, no “keeping of the Sabbath” as JW see this commandment unnecessary with the coming of Christ.**

Conclusion

- **Jehovah Witnesses do not believe in the immortality of the soul and say that this is the teaching of the devil; only Jehovah has an immortal soul.**
- **They believe that immortality is given to one upon successful living (according to JW) . That is why Jesus has immortality- because he was successful with His test on the cross (elsewhere, they say that upon His baptism He was given divinity which would mean immortality but this was before His test of the cross!)**
- **They also contradict all the promises of the heavenly kingdom by making it available to only a select few.**

Conclusion

- **Jesus died for the sins of all people at all times not just for the consequence of Adam's sin which we inherited.**
- **Sin, repentance, restoration and communion are not at the forefront of JW teachings- following the ever-changing mandates of the Watchtower is.**
- **It is remarkable that a thinking person would even consider a religion that was founded in the 1880s, has had 6 false prophecies regarding the end time (a time, by the way, which Jesus said was unknown EVEN to the Son of Man), and has changed doctrine over 200 times.**

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