

In Quest of the Real Jesus: *Contrasting the Jehovah Witnesses with Christianity*

Overview

Jehovah Witnesses: A religious sect founded in the late 19th century

Founder: Charles Taze Russell

The Watchtower Society: The controlling organization which enforces their doctrine and commands

Source of Authority: New World Translation Bible. Russell's 7-volume book, *Studies in the Scriptures*, are considered "the light of the Scriptures."

Their Trademark: Aggressive door-to-door proselytizing and cultural and social repudiations

- a. Do not salute the flag
- b. Do not accept military service
- c. Do not observe holidays or birthdays
- d. Do not accept blood transfusions
- e. Future predictions regarding end times

Two classes of Jehovah Witnesses; The "anointed class" and the "other sheep."

Organizational Structure: Jehovah God communicates His will and biblical interpretation to the Watchtower upper echelon, known as the governing body (The president and his close associates), who pass it on to others, where it finally reaches the printing press and is sent out as Watchtower literature. Active members who are known as "publishers" secure this divine literature and offer it to perspective converts.

The Tip of the Iceberg: What the J.W. would say to a Christian

1. We are Christians
2. We believe in the teachings of the Bible
3. We believe God is One
4. We believe in Jesus
5. We believe that for a person to go to heaven they have to be "born again" (John 3:3).

The Middle of the Iceberg: What a J.W. really means

1. "We" are the true Christians. For the Witnesses, both Catholicism and Protestantism (known as religionists) are lumped together and historically viewed as satanic, immoral. In addition, priests and pastors are linked with the anti-Christ.
2. We believe in the teachings of the Bible. However, *only* the Watchtower Society can properly interpret it because they receive divine illumination as to its true meaning. All non-Jehovah's Witnesses are incapable of understanding its true teachings. It is a closed book to everyone except the Watchtower Society.

3. We believe God is One—but we don't believe Jesus and the Holy Spirit are apart of the Triune Godhead. The trinity is a pagan made doctrine.
4. We believe in Jesus—but we see him in three stages or phases. 1. Michael the archangel. 2. Jesus the man of Nazareth, and the new, superior, recreated archangel, Michael. When Jesus of Nazareth died, he ceased to exist.
5. Only 144,000 Jehovah Witnesses qualify for being “born again.” They are the remnant of God's elect.

The Foundation of the Iceberg: The True Heart of the Matter

1. Jesus was not God—he was really Michael the archangel, also known as the Word.

Scriptural evidence indicates that the name Michael applied to God's Son before he left heaven to become Jesus Christ and also after his return. Michael is the only one said to be the ‘archangel,’ meaning “chief angel” or principle angel. Watchtower Aid to Bible Understanding pg. 1152).

Michael was the first “spirit son” of God. He was a direct creation of God (thereby becoming his son) and finds his uniqueness in that fact. God eventually created other spirit sons (angels) through this Michael. In heaven Michael was the head of the angels, or the archangel. ‘however, by virtue of his being sole direct creation of his Father, the first born Son was unique, different from all other of God's sons, all of whom were created or begotten by Jehovah through the firstborn son. Watchtower Aid to Bible Understanding pg. 1152).

2. The biblical passages involving the deity of Jesus have been mistranslated

John 1:1

In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **a** God (NWT)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (ESV)

Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεο ν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λό γος.

John 8:58

Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into existence, I **have been**’ (NWT)

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (ESV)

Colossians 2:9

“Because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily” (NWT)

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, (ESV)

Luke 23:43

And he said to him: 'Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in Paradise.' (NWT)

And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (ESV)

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἀμήν σοι λέγω, σήμερον μετ' ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ.

3. The Trinity is denied

"... sincere persons who want to know the true God and serve him find it a bit difficult to love and worship a complicated, freakish-looking, three-headed God. The clergy who inject such ideas will contradict themselves in the very next breath by stating that God made man in his own image; for certainly no one has ever seen a three-headed human creature" (Let God Be True, 2nd ed., pp. 101-102).

4. Jesus was a unique man:

The "Watchtower" teaches that Jehovah God created Michael the Archangel before the foundation of the world; Michael was His only begotten son by virtue of the fact that he was the only creature directly created by Jehovah. It was this created Michael who became the JW Jesus...

"Since actual conception took place, it appears that Jehovah God caused an ovum or egg in Mary's womb to become fertile, accomplishing this by the transfer of the life of his first born son (Michael) from the spirit realm to the earth" (*Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 920).

5. Jesus was not bodily resurrected

"Therefore the bodies in which Jesus manifested himself to his disciples after his return to life were not the body in which he was nailed to a tree. They were merely materialized for the occasion, resembling on one or two occasions the body in which he died" (The Kingdom Is At Hand, pg. 259)

"Our Lord's human body . . . did not decay or corrupt . . . whether it was dissolved into gasses or whether it is still preserved somewhere . . . no one knows." (Studies In The Scriptures, Vol. 2, pg. 129)

"Regarding a future 'coming,' Jesus himself made it plain that at his second coming he would not be in the flesh, visible to humans. He was resurrected as a spirit." *Watchtower*, January 15th 1980, pg. 31.

6. Salvation: Instead of salvation being in faith in Christ alone; according to the Witnesses, salvation is by faith + works. Salvation begins with an individual's entrance into the Watchtower organization and subsequent obedience to that organization. In other words, Jehovah Witnesses in good standing can be saved, at least in this life.

Three classes of people who are resurrected

- a. The 144, 000 elect (the elect and anointed. Will rule with God in heaven *if* they remain obedient to J.W. teachings.
- b. The Jehovah Witnesses "earthly class" (99 % of the Witnesses). They must earn salvation by obedience.
- c. The rest of mankind has the opportunity to earn salvation after death in their resurrection upon paradise earth. They must earn their salvation during the millennium.

7. The Second coming of Jesus has already occurred, invisibly.

"In the same way, Christ's return does not mean that he literally comes back to this earth. Rather, it means that he takes Kingdom power toward this earth and turns his attention to it. He does not need to leave his heavenly throne and actually come down to earth to do this. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Bible evidence shows that in the year 1914 C.E. God's time arrived for Christ to return and begin ruling. It was then that the cry was heard in heaven "Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ." Revelation 12:10 Watchtower: *You Can Live Forever In Paradise On Earth*". Pg. 147

"Christ Jesus comes, not again as a human, but as a glorious spirit person." (Let God Be True, pg. 196)

"Since no earthly men have ever seen or can see the Father, they will be unable to see the glorified Son." (Let God Be True, pg. 197)

"It is a settled Scriptural truth, therefore, that human eyes will not see him at his second coming, neither will he come in a fleshy body." (The Truth Shall Make You Free, pg. 295)

1904 - The stress of the great time of trouble will be on us soon, somewhere between 1910 and 1912 - culminating...October 1914.

The Christian Response

The Jehovah Witnesses present a different Jesus than the one described in the Bible.

1. Jesus was God and Creator (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15-16),
2. Jesus was God incarnate (Matthew 1:23 cf. Isaiah 7:14; John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-9)
3. The resurrection of Christ was physical (Luke 24:38-39; John 20:24-28)
4. Salvation is through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:10-12; Romans 10:9-10).
5. Jesus second coming will not be invisible to mankind (Matthew 24:27; Acts 1:11; Titus 2:13; 1 John 2:28).

Tips for Witnessing to Jehovah Witnesses

1. Pray for clarity and an attitude of love
2. Avoid arguing or becoming defensive.
3. Invest in a working relationship: Understand this will be a process.
4. Recognize that Witnesses that leave the Watchtower become disfellowshipped.
5. Let the Scriptures teach that Jesus was not Michael the archangel, but the Son of God.

Key verse: 1 Peter 3:15

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame