

# Denominationalism, Religious Cults and World Religions

## Lesson 13

### Jehovah's Witnesses

#### Introduction:

The Jehovah's Witnesses are officially known as *The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*, and trace their beginning to Charles Taze Russell, born February 16, 1852, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Jehovah's Witnesses are designated as a "cult" by mainstream religious denominationalism. The organization is directed by the *Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses*, a group of *elders* in Brooklyn, New York, that establishes all doctrines. Among those doctrines, Jehovah's Witnesses reject belief in the deity of Jesus Christ, and deny that the Holy Spirit is a third person of the godhead.<sup>1</sup> They reject the concept of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Jehovah's Witnesses also believe that the destruction of the present world system (at Armageddon) is imminent, and that the establishment of God's kingdom on earth is the only solution for all problems faced by mankind.<sup>2</sup> They consider secular society to be morally corrupt and under the influence of Satan, and therefore limit their social interaction with non-Witnesses. They also reject belief in the immortality of the soul, and do not believe in a literal hell. They claim these are all unscriptural doctrines. Jehovah's Witnesses commonly refer to their body of beliefs as "*the truth*" and consider themselves to be "*in the truth*." They base all their beliefs on the teachings of the church's official publications (such as *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines), and from interpretations of their own version of the Bible – *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT).<sup>3</sup>

Jehovah's Witnesses are best known for their door-to-door evangelism, and street-corner distribution *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* They consider the name *Jehovah* as the only proper name of God, and that the use of this name is absolutely essential for proper worship. They also refuse military service and blood transfusions, and do not observe any religious holidays, birthdays, or other holidays and customs which they believe have pagan origins and are therefore incompatible with Christianity. Disciplinary actions within congregations include *shunning*, and *disfellowshipping* (formal expulsion). Baptized individuals who formally leave are considered *disassociated* and are also shunned. However, disfellowshipped and disassociated individuals may eventually be reinstated if are deemed repentant.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit*, Attachments, pp. 1-12

<sup>2</sup> *Over a Century of False Prophecies from Jehovah's Witnesses*, Attachments, pp. 13-21

<sup>3</sup> *The New World Translation of The Jehovah's Witnesses*, Attachments, pp. 22-48

Jehovah's Witnesses claim a worldwide membership of nearly 8 million adherents involved in evangelism, although, *Convention* attendance of over 12 million, and an annual *Memorial* attendance of over 19 million.

The group emerged from the *Bible Student* movement – founded in the late 1870s by Charles Taze Russell with the formation of *Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society* – with significant organizational and doctrinal changes under the leadership of Joseph Franklin "Judge" Rutherford. The name *Jehovah's Witnesses*, based on Isaiah 43:10–12, was adopted in 1931 to distinguish themselves from other *Bible Student* groups and symbolize a break with the legacy of Russell's traditions.

The Jehovah's Witnesses position regarding conscientious objection to military service and refusal to salute national flags has brought it into conflict with some governments. Consequently, Jehovah's Witnesses have been persecuted and their activities are banned or restricted in some countries.

### **Arianism**

However, the most troubling teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses emphatically denies the deity of Jesus Christ, claiming He is a subordinate entity to God the Father and therefore not equal to the Father. In reality, Jehovah's Witnesses contend that Jesus is Michael the archangel. The seeds of this doctrine can be traced back to Arius of Alexandria (ca. AD 250–336). His ideas posed a major threat to the early Church by undermining the most essential beliefs in the deity of Christ. In an effort to combat his teachings the early church fathers convened councils to formally adopt creeds that were originally intended to crystalize fundamental orthodox beliefs in brief simple statements, but which ultimately led to a move toward extra-Biblical authority in the church.

Arians taught that the Son of God, in His pre-incarnate state, was a divine being created by (and therefore inferior to) God the Father. He further denied the eternal nature of the Son by claiming at some point in eternity past, prior to the creation of the heavens and earth, the Son did not exist. Arius taught that the Son was the first to be created among the heavenly creatures, or the "firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 2:15), recognized His own subjugation to the Father by virtue of the fact that He was the Son of God, claimed the Father was greater than Himself (John 14:28), and that He came to do the Father's will (John 5:30; 6:38, etc.). While Arius believed Jesus possessed a divine nature (as a "spirit creature"), He is merely "a god." The claims Jesus made that He and the Father are one (John 10:30) merely indicate Jesus and the Father are one in thought and purpose. Obviously this doctrine emphatically denies the deity of Jesus Christ, His Godhood, and His equality with the Father and claims only the Father is worthy to be called God.

## Jehovah's Witnesses: Modern-Day Arians

The influence of Arius and his heretical doctrine continues to the present day with groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. As a result of their convictions, these modern-day Arians actively promote this false teaching around the world. The doctrine of Arianism is eagerly embraced by those who have been confused over the relationship between God the Father and the Son. The confusion is done away by simply claiming Jesus is, and always has been, inferior to the Father – Jehovah, God Almighty. However, the impact of this doctrine makes salvation from sin impossible since the most fundamental step leading to eternal life in Christ begins with having faith in the deity of Christ. Arians taught that the pre-incarnate Jesus was a divine being created by (and therefore inferior to) God the Father at some point, before which the Son did not exist. However, Jesus made it crystal clear that believing in Him (believing in His deity and equality with the Father) is absolutely essential for salvation:

*"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)*

## The Beginning of the Jehovah's Witnesses

### Charles Taze Russell:

In 1870, Charles Taze Russell, while still in his teens and without formal theological education, organized an independent group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to study the Bible. The group officially designated Russell as "pastor." Russell and his group was strongly influenced by the teachings of William Miller<sup>4</sup> and by the writings of Millerite-Adventist ministers George Storrs and George Stetson, who frequently attended Russell's studies.

Under the influence of Storrs and Stetson, Russell began to dispute many beliefs of mainstream Christianity including immortality of the soul, a literal hell, predestination, the fleshly return of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and belief that the world would be destroyed by fire. In 1876 Russell met Nelson H. Barbour; later that year they jointly produced the book *Three Worlds and the Harvest of this World*, which taught that:

- God's dealings with mankind were divided into dispensations, each ending with a "harvest,"
- Christ had returned as an invisible spirit being in 1874, inaugurating the "harvest of the Gospel age,"

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<sup>4</sup> William Miller (February 15, 1782 – December 20, 1849) was an American Baptist preacher who is credited with beginning the mid-nineteenth century North American religious movement now known as Adventism. Among his direct spiritual heirs are several major religious denominations, including Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. Later movements found inspiration in Miller's emphasis on Bible prophecy. His own followers were known as "Millerites". Estimates of the number of Miller's followers ranged from 50,000 to 500,000.

- 1914 would mark the end of a 2,520-year period called "the Gentile Times," at which time world society would be replaced by the full establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

In June 1879, Russell and Barbour split over doctrinal differences. In July, Russell began publishing *Zion's Watchtower* magazine (officially titled: *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*), which featured Russell's own unique interpretation of Bible prophecy. Russell claimed the magazine's purpose was to demonstrate the world was in "the last days", and that a new age of earthly and human restitution under the invisible reign of Christ was imminent.

From 1879, Watchtower supporters gathered as autonomous congregations (30 congregations) to study the Bible topically. Russell visited each to provide the format he recommended for conducting meetings. In 1886, the first volume of seven books were published (six written by Russell) entitled *The Millennial Dawn* (later retitled *Studies in the Scriptures*).

As congregations continued to form during Russell's ministry they each remained self-administrative, functioning under a "congregational style"<sup>5</sup> of church government. In 1881, *Zion's Watchtower Tract Society* was presided over by William Henry Conley and in 1884 Russell incorporated the society as a non-profit business to distribute tracts and Bibles.

By about 1900 Russell had organized thousands to distribute his religious publications, and was appointing foreign missionaries and establishing branch offices. Ten years later Russell's organization claimed to have nearly a hundred "*pilgrims*", or traveling preachers. Russell engaged in significant global publishing efforts during his ministry, and by 1912 he was the most widely distributed author in the United States.

Russell moved The Watchtower Society's headquarters to Brooklyn, New York, in 1909, combining printing and corporate offices with a house of worship; volunteers were housed in a nearby residence he named Bethel. He identified the religious movement as "Bible Students", and more formally as the *International Bible Students Association*. By 1910, about 50,000 people worldwide were associated with the movement and congregations re-elected him annually as their "pastor". Russell died October 31, 1916 at the age of 64 while returning from a ministerial speaking tour. By the time of his death in 1916, "Pastor" Russell, according to *The Watchtower*, traveled more than a million miles, gave more than thirty thousand sermons, and wrote books totaling over fifty thousand pages.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Congregationalism* is a system of church governance in which every local congregation of a church is independent, self-governing, and/or "autonomous."

<sup>6</sup> *Qualified to be Ministers*, Anon., The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1955, p. 310

### Joseph F. (Judge) Rutherford:

In January 1917, a few months after the death of Charles Taze Russell, The Watchtower Society's legal counselor, Joseph Franklin Rutherford<sup>7</sup>, was elected as the second President of the Society. However, his election was not accepted by many members of the Board of Directors who accused him of acting in an autocratic and secretive manner. The divisions between Rutherford's supporters and opponents triggered a major turnover of members over the next decade.

In June 1917, in opposition to *The Great War* (World War I), Rutherford released *The Finished Mystery* as the seventh volume of Russell's *Studies in the Scriptures* six volume series. The book, published as the posthumous work of Russell, was a compilation of his commentaries on Ezekiel and Revelation, plus numerous additions by Rutherford supporters Clayton Woodworth and George Fisher. It strongly criticized Catholic and Protestant clergy lending their support to the war. As a result, Watchtower Society directors were jailed for sedition under the *Espionage Act* in 1918 and members were subjected to mob violence. Charges against the directors were dropped in 1920.

Under Rutherford's leadership The Watchtower Society was reorganized to create centralized control of the organization and him the power to make all policy decisions. In 1919 he instituted the appointment of a director in each congregation, and a year later all members were instructed to report their weekly preaching activity to the Brooklyn headquarters. At an international convention held at Cedar Point, Ohio, in September 1922, a new emphasis was made on house-to-house preaching.

In addition to organizational changes, significant changes in doctrine were regularly introduced during Rutherford's twenty-five years as president, including the 1920 announcement that the Jewish patriarchs (such as Abraham and Isaac) would be resurrected in 1925, marking the beginning of Christ's thousand-year Kingdom. Rutherford made extensive use of radio broadcasts to preach his doctrine during this period of time, and was best known for beginning each broadcast with the words, "Millions now living will never die!"

Following the failure of Rutherford's predictions that 1925 would mark the beginning of Christ's thousand-year kingdom on earth, Rutherford claimed that the beginning of Christ's "presence" (Greek: *parousía*), His enthronement as king, and the start of the "last days" actually occurred in 1914 – it was declared to be an "invisible" return of Christ.

However, widespread dissatisfaction with Rutherford's autocratic control of The Watchtower Society led to tens of thousands of defections during the first half of his tenure due. This led to the formation of several *Bible Student* organizations independent of The Watchtower Society, some of which still exist. By 1919, as many as

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<sup>7</sup> Rutherford, a lawyer, was often called "Judge Rutherford" even though he had never been appointed to serve on the bench.

one out of every seven of Russell's followers had severed their association with the Society. And by the end of the 1920s, that number reached to as many as two-thirds.

On July 26, 1931, at a convention in Columbus, Ohio, Rutherford introduced the new name *Jehovah's Witnesses* – based on Isaiah 43:10:

*"You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me." (Isa 43:10)*

This name was chosen to distinguish his group of *Bible Students* from other independent groups that had severed ties with the Society, as well as being a name that would symbolize a new approach to evangelizing the world. In 1932, Rutherford increased his control over the organization by eliminating the system of locally elected elders, and in 1938 introduced what he called a "theocratic" (literally, *God-ruled*) organizational system, under which appointments in congregations worldwide could only be made by the Brooklyn headquarters.

Prior to 1932, The Watchtower Society taught that only 144,000 of the most faithful would survive Armageddon. However, in 1932 Rutherford changed that doctrine. He claimed that in addition to the 144,000 "anointed" who would be resurrected (or *transferred* at death) to live in heaven to rule over earth with Christ, a separate class of members known as the "great multitude" would live in a paradise-version of a restored earth. All new converts to the movement, from 1935 on, were considered part of that class. In anticipation of this new paradise on earth The Watchtower Society, under Rutherford's direction, began construction in 1929 of a 10-bedroom, 5,100 square foot mansion on 100 acres in San Diego, California. The mansion would become home to the soon-to-be resurrected "princes" including Abraham, Isaac, David and Samuel. In the meantime, the opulent mansion served as Rutherford's "winter home."

As their interpretations of Scripture evolved, Witness publications began denouncing all forms of earthly government, and claimed that saluting national flags was a form of idolatry. This led to an outbreak of mob violence against Jehovah's Witnesses and government opposition to The Watchtower Society in the United States, Canada, Germany, and other countries. However, despite a century of failed prophecies, by the time of Rutherford's death in January, 1942, Jehovah's Witnesses claimed their membership reached 113,624 in 5,323 congregations.

### **Nathan Knorr:**

Nathan Knorr was appointed as third President of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in 1942. Knorr commissioned a new translation of the Bible, *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT), the full version of which was released in 1961. He organized large international assemblies, instituted new training programs for members, and expanded missionary activity and branch offices throughout the world.

Knorr's presidency was also marked by an increasing use of explicit instructions guiding Witnesses in their lifestyle and conduct, and a greater use of congregational judicial procedures to enforce a strict moral code.

From 1966, Witness publications and convention talks built anticipation of the possibility that Christ's thousand-year reign might begin in late 1975 or shortly thereafter. The number of baptisms increased significantly, from about 59,000 in 1966 to more than 297,000 in 1974. By 1975 the number of active members exceeded two million. Membership dramatically declined during the late 1970s after expectations for the return of Christ in 1975 were proved wrong. The Watchtower Society immediately claimed it did not state dogmatically that 1975 would definitely mark the end, but in 1980 the Society admitted its responsibility in building up hope regarding that year.

The offices of elder and ministerial servant were restored to congregations in 1972, with appointments made from headquarters (and later, also by branch committees). In a major organizational overhaul in 1976, the power of The Watchtower Society president was diminished, with authority for doctrinal and organizational decisions being passed to the Governing Body. Reflecting these organizational changes, publications of Jehovah's Witnesses began using the capitalized name, *Jehovah's Witnesses*. Knorr died in 1977.

### **Frederick Franz:**

Following the death of Knorr in 1977, Frederick W. Franz was appointed the new President of The Watchtower and continued conducting business in Knorr's manner. Franz became the official spokesman for the translation committee of *The New World Translation* (NWT), defending *The New World Translation* against critics who said it frequently mistranslated and perverted both the Hebrew and Greek text to favor Jehovah's Witness doctrine. Franz later admitted he had no qualifications as a translator of either Hebrew or Greek. Frederick Franz died in 1992.

### **Since 1992:**

In 1992 Milton Henschel, a member of the Governing Body, was appointed President of the Organization. Following the death of Henschel in 2000, the office is currently held by Don A. Adams, who is not a member of the Governing Body.

## **I. Truths They Teach:**

- A. Jehovah's Witnesses correctly teach that every member of the church is a minister (servant), and therefore must be active.

1. However, "ministry" is not an option for Jehovah's Witnesses. The cult-like control over their members demands a daily commitment of time to promote the beliefs of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
  2. Also, the Jehovah's Witness position regarding every member being a "minister" (servant) is interpreted to mean it is contrary to Bible teaching for any "minister" to receive financial support for the work they do.
  3. The Jehovah's Witnesses do, however, provide salaries for others who devote their lives working for The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- B. Jehovah's Witnesses understand that baptism must be immersion in water.
1. However, they do not believe baptism has any role in salvation or the remission of sins.
  2. They believe baptism is merely an outward sign of ones obedience to the doctrinal teachings of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- C. Jehovah's Witnesses believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.
1. However, they have their own translation of the Bible called *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT) which is a highly biased translation that is intended to support their views.
  2. They believe also that the "*The Watchtower*" magazine, along with other publications of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, are keys "to unlock the Scriptures."
  3. Jehovah's Witnesses blindly accept the teachings that come from The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and believe the Scriptures are accurately interpreted by the Society.

## II. Jehovah's Witness Doctrine vs. Bible Doctrine:

- A. Bible as the one and only final authority.
1. Jehovah's Witnesses claim their ultimate source of authority is the Bible.
    - a. "To let God be found true means to let God have the say as to what is the truth that sets men free. It means to accept His Word, the Bible, as the truth. Hence, in this book, our appeal is to the Bible for the truth. Our obligation is to back up what is said herein

by quotations from the Bible for proof of truthfulness and reliability."<sup>8</sup>

2. However, Charles Russell made this comment concerning his *Scripture Studies*:
    - a. "Not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see also that if anyone lays the *Scripture Studies* aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years — if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the *Scripture Studies* with their references and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures."<sup>9</sup>
  3. The Bible says:
    - a. Scripture was given by the inspiration of God and provides us all we need to be complete and thoroughly equipped (2 Tim 3:16-17).
    - b. We are to contend for "the faith" which was once for all time delivered to the "saints" (Jude 3)
    - c. It is the "word" which is able to save our souls (Jas 1:21)
    - d. The "gospel of Christ" is the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16).
    - e. When we read the word, we can understand just as Paul did (Eph 3:1-5)
    - f. We are never permitted to add to or take away from anything God has revealed (Rev 22:18-19)
- B. The state or condition of the dead.
1. Jehovah's Witnesses deny that man has a soul or spirit that is separate and distinct from the fleshly body, and has conscious existence after death. Their definition of "soul" is merely "life."

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<sup>8</sup> *Let God Be True*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1946, p. 9

<sup>9</sup> *Watch Tower*, Sept. 15, 1910, p. 298

- a. "(Most churches) hold to the unscriptural doctrine that man has an immortal soul. 'Is that teaching so bad?' some may wonder. Do not forget that Satan's first lie was that sin would not bring death. The teaching that man has an immortal soul tends to further Satan's lie. It has led millions of persons into fearful dealings with demons who pose as the souls of the dead. And the doctrine makes the Bible truth about a coming resurrection meaningless."<sup>10</sup>
  - b. "The word 'soul' as used in the Bible refers to a person or an animal or to the life that a person or an animal enjoys."<sup>11</sup>
  - c. "...we see that the claim of religionists that man has an immortal soul, and therefore differs from the beasts, is not Scriptural."<sup>12</sup>
  - d. "...it is seen that the serpent (the Devil) is the one who originated the doctrine of the inherent immortality of the soul."<sup>13</sup>
2. Their belief is based on passages that use the Hebrew word *ne'phesh*, or the Greek word *psyche* to speak of "life," a living "person" or thing, or the "mind" of man: (Gen 2:7; Judg 16:16; Job 19:2; John 12:27; Acts 2:43; Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 3:20).
  3. Therefore, they hold the same doctrine of "annihilation" as the Seventh Day Adventists, believing that man simply ceases to exist after death. They often quote Ecclesiastes 9:5-10 to support their claim. Concerning this belief Russell claimed:
    - a. "Death means non-existence."<sup>14</sup>
    - b. "When a man dies, he is as dead as a dog."<sup>15</sup>
  4. The Bible says:
    - a. Man is created in the image of God; God is spirit; a spirit does not have flesh and bones; therefore the image of God that man bears is his spirit, not flesh (Gen. 1:26,27; Jno. 4:24; Luke 24:39).
    - b. Sometimes the word "soul" stands for the whole man (Rom 13:1), but Jesus taught there is clearly a distinction between the body and

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<sup>10</sup> *Happiness - How to Find It*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1980, p. 171.

<sup>11</sup> *What Happens to Us When We Die?*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1998, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> *Let God Be True*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1946, pp. 59-60.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p 66.

<sup>14</sup> *Reconciliation*, Rutherford, p. 296.

<sup>15</sup> *Deliverance*, Rutherford, p. 324.

soul (Matt 10:28). The apostle Paul taught the same (1 Thess 5:23).

- c. Solomon also taught there is a distinction between the body and the soul (spirit): "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." (Eccl 12:7; also see Zech 12:1; Heb 12:9)
- d. But The Watchtower Society's use of Ecclesiastes 9:5-10 – "the dead know nothing" – does not teach the absence of a conscious existence after death, but that the dead "know nothing" of what continues in the physical realm.
- e. Jesus taught that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still live because God "is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Luke 20:37-38). They could not be "living" unless the immortality of the soul was a reality.
- f. Jesus also taught that those who die are "like the angels in heaven" who obviously have a conscious existence, and that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though dead, still live (Mark 12:24-27).
- g. The appearance of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration of Jesus also proves this point (Matt 17:1-8).
- h. The teaching of Jesus in the story (parable) of the rich man and Lazarus shows that all have conscious existence after death (Luke 16:19-31), and that the dead remembers what occurred in the physical realm, but do not seem to have present knowledge of what continues to occur.
- i. If there was no conscious existence after death, then why do the righteous dead experience joy in the presence of the Lord (2 Cor 5:2-8; Phil 1:20-23) and the unrighteous and unbelieving dead experience torment (Luke 16:22-23; Matt 25:30, 46; Luke 13:28).

### C. Concerning Hell.

- 1. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the existence of hell as a place of everlasting punishment (same as Seventh Day Adventists), and maintain all references to "hell" are simply referring to the "grave."<sup>16</sup>
  - a. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, those who preach the Bible

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<sup>16</sup> *Let God be True*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952, p. 91.

doctrine of Hell are, "Hell fire screechers."<sup>17</sup> (*Let God Be True*, p. 76.)

- b. "The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true mainly for four reasons: (1) It is wholly unscriptural; (2) it is unreasonable; (3) it is contrary to God's love; and (4) it is repugnant to justice."<sup>18</sup>
- c. Jehovah's Witnesses maintain that the Hebrew word "hell" is "sheol" (often translated "the grave"), and the Greek word is "Gehenna" (which refers to the Valley of Hinnom, a place just outside of Jerusalem where dead bodies were thrown).
- d. Therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses claim: "Good people as well as bad people go to the Bible 'hell,' the common grave of all mankind."<sup>19</sup>

2. What does the Bible say:

- a. The Hebrew word "sheol" is translated "grave" throughout the Old Testament. However, the word is never used to speak of total inhalation, but rather is used to simply speak of death.
- b. The Greek word "hades" is frequently translated "hell" and refers to the place where the dead go to await the resurrection (Luke 16:19-31; Rev 20:14; also see 2 Pet. 2:4; Luke 23:42-43; Acts 2:27-31).
- c. When Greek the word "genenna" is also translated "hell" but is used to refers to a place of eternal punishment prepared for the devil and angels – called "the second death" (Matt 10:28; 25:41,46; Mark 9:43-48; Rev 21:8).
- d. Jesus spoke of hell as a real place of eternal punishment where the "worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).
- e. Jesus spoke of eternal punishment and eternal life in the same context. Eternal punishment lasts as long as eternal life (Matt 25:31-46).
- f. The apostle Paul spoke very candidly about eternal or everlasting destruction (2 Thess 1:7-9)
- g. The psalmist David said the fate of the wicked is hell (Psalm 9:17).

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<sup>17</sup> *Let God be True*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952, p. 76.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 42.

D. Blood transfusions and organ transplants

1. Jehovah's Witnesses urge their members to refuse to accept blood transfusions and to not allow them to be given to their children.
  - a. This is primarily based upon four passages which they interpret as prohibiting the consuming of blood: (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:12-14; Acts 15:29; 21:25).
  - b. Witnesses have interpreted "eating" of blood to include accepting "transfusions of whole blood, packed with red blood cells, and plasma, as well as white blood cells and platelet administration."
  - c. "We feel that the Bible clearly indicates that blood is sacred and it is not to be used for human consumption. Though it doesn't discuss it in medical terms, Jehovah's Witnesses feel that would preclude the acceptance of it in a blood transfusion."<sup>20</sup>
2. The Jehovah's Witnesses position on blood has vacillated over the years from outright prohibition to being allowed as a matter of conscience.
  - a. "The injection of antibodies into the blood in a vehicle of blood serum or the use of blood fractions to create such antibodies is not the same as taking blood, either by mouth or by transfusion, as a nutrient to build up the body's vital forces. While God did not intend for any man to contaminate his blood stream by vaccines, serums or blood fractions, doing so does not seem to be included in God's express will forbidding blood as food. It would therefore be a matter of individual judgment whether one accepted such types of medication or not."<sup>21</sup>
  - b. Six years later Jehovah's Witness were once again forbidden to receive anything derived from blood in medical treatment – including anything used to sustain life.<sup>22</sup>
3. Also consider the following changes in the Jehovah's Witness position on blood:
  - a. 1945: Denunciation of blood transfusions as pagan and God-dishonoring. *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1945, p. 198-201.
  - b. 1961: Taking a blood transfusion is grounds for disfellowshipping. *The Watchtower*, 1961, pp. 63-64.

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<sup>20</sup> L.C. Cotton, Associate Director of Jehovah's Witnesses hospital information services

<sup>21</sup> *The Watchtower*, 1958, p. 575.

<sup>22</sup> *The Watchtower*, Feb 15, 1963, p. 124.

- c. 1961: Donating organs (eyes) for transplant up to your conscience. *The Watchtower*, 1961, p. 480.
  - d. 1963: Any fraction of blood considered as a nutrient not to be used in medical treatment. *The Watchtower*, Feb. 15, 1963, p. 124. (See also *Awake!* Feb 22, 1975, p. 30.
  - e. 1963: Ask your bakers and candymakers if blood is used to make the lecithin used in their products. *The Watchtower*, p. 123.
  - f. 1964: Cosmetics in which cows blood is used are condemned, as well as fertilizers which contained blood. Pet owners told it is wrong to allow transfusions to be given to sick animals. Food with blood in it not to be given to pets. *Awake!*, May 8, p. 30; *The Watchtower*, pp. 127-128.
  - g. 1967: Organ transplants are a form of cannibalism and to be shunned. *The Watchtower*, Nov 15, 1967, pp. 702-704. (compare 1961)
  - h. 1977: Blood transfusions are organ transplants: ". . . many a person might decline blood simply because it is essentially an organ transplant that at best is only partially compatible with his own blood." *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Question of Blood*, 1977, p. 41. (compare 1961)
  - i. 1978: Ban on certain blood fractions lifted for hemophiliacs. *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1978, p. 30. (compare 1963)
  - j. 1980: Organ transplants are a matter of conscience, decided by the individual. *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, p. 31. (compare 1967, 1977)
  - k. 1984: Accepting a bone-marrow transplant is up to your conscience. *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1984, p. 31.
4. More recently, a reformed group among Jehovah's Witnesses has urged The Watchtower Tract and Bible Society to change its position on the use of blood transfusions and other medical procedures.
- a. Known as the *Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood*" (AJWRB), the group describes itself as: "a diverse group of Witnesses from many countries, including elders and other organization officials, Hospital Liaison Committee members, Doctors, and members of the general public who have volunteered their time and energies in an effort to bring about an end to a tragic and misguided policy that has claimed thousands of lives, many of them children. Promoting change within The Watchtower Society on

the topic of blood transfusions."<sup>23</sup>

5. The Bible says:
  - a. In the Old Testament, the blood of man or beast is equated with its life, and the loss of blood is equated with death. According to Genesis 9:4 the soul (life) of the flesh is in the blood (see also Lev 17:11, 14; Deut. 12:23). Noah was told that man could eat the flesh of any moving animal; but could not eat the flesh of an animal if its blood was still in it. This is not a ban on eating blood but rather prohibition against eating "unbled" meat.
  - b. In the Old Testament blood was therefore considered sacred, and not to be used in a profane way. It was not to be eaten under pain of death (Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:10, 14). This law was not only applied to Israelites but to foreigners in their midst as well (Lev 17:8-15).
  - c. Many pagan cultures consumed blood in ways that were prohibited under the Law of Moses. During New Testament times this became one of many issues that could lead to a weak brother stumbling (especially a Jewish brother). This is why Gentile Christians were urged to abstain from these practices (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).
  - d. However, Christians are no longer under the Law of Moses (Rom 6:14-15; 2 Cor 3:2-13; Gal 5:16-21; Eph 2:14-16; Col 2:14-17; Heb 7:12-13; 8:1-13).
  - e. Foods once condemned under the Old Testament Law of Moses are no longer condemned under the Law of Christ (Acts 10:9-15; 1 Tim 4:3). The only guideline regarding foods is to avoid offending the conscience of another (Rom 14:20).
  - f. Since the eating of foods once condemned under the Law of Moses are no longer condemned, neither is any practice that might use blood as a food supplement, nutrients, or for health or medical purposes – especially practices that may heal or sustain life.
- E. Baptism and the remission of sins.
  1. Jehovah's Witnesses deny that baptism is for the remission of sins.
    - a. "You need to show before others that you have made a dedication to serve God. How do you do this? By getting baptized in water. Such water baptism is a public demonstration that a person has

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<sup>23</sup> Official website of "Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood" <http://www.ajwr.org>

dedicated his life to Jehovah and is presenting himself to do His will."<sup>24</sup>

- b. "Since Jesus set the pattern, dedicated Christians today also should be baptized... What, then, does Christian baptism signify? It is not a washing away of one's sins, because cleansing from sin comes only through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7). Rather, it is a public demonstration, testifying that one has made a solemn dedication to Jehovah God and is presenting himself to do His will."<sup>25</sup>
  - c. "Does this mean that the waters of baptism wash away sins? It would be wrong to draw such a conclusion... Therefore, our obediently passing through the baptismal water symbolizes our dedication of ourselves to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ."<sup>26</sup>
2. The theology of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society places great importance on the importance of obedience in the role of salvation, and sees baptism as merely an outward sign of one's obedience. However, before a candidate is allowed to be baptized, Jehovah's Witnesses require all candidates "prove" themselves worthy of salvation by their strict belief in and obedience to Watchtower teachings. Russell wrote:
- a. "They must be recovered from blindness as well as from death, that they, each for himself, may have a full chance to prove, by obedience or disobedience, their worthiness of eternal life."<sup>27</sup>
  - b. "All who by reason of faith in Jehovah God and in Christ Jesus dedicate themselves to do God's will and then faithfully carry out their dedication will be rewarded with eternal life. . ."<sup>28</sup>
3. The following are just two of the 104 questions asked of all Jehovah's Witness baptism candidates prior to baptism:
- a. "The first question is: On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will? The second is: Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?

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<sup>24</sup> *You Can Live Forever On Earth*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, pp. 250-252.

<sup>25</sup> *The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, pp. 183-184.

<sup>26</sup> *The Watchtower*, "Baptism a Christian Requirement", May 1, 1979, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> *Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. I*, Russell, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1886, p. 158.

<sup>28</sup> *Let God Be True*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952, p. 298.

Having answered yes to these questions, candidates are in a right heart condition to undergo Christian baptism."<sup>29</sup>

4. The Bible says:
    - a. Baptism is "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)
    - b. Baptism saves (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet 3:21)
    - c. Baptism washes away sins (Acts 22:16)
- F. The 144,000
1. Jehovah's Witnesses believe the number of those chosen to be redeemed in the "high calling" and who will live in heaven with Christ are exactly 144,000. The rest will live "in human perfection" and the earth forever – after the earth has been cleansed and purified.
  2. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe the number will be exactly 144,000, and no more based on their interpretation of Revelation 7:3-9.
    - a. "The Bible shows that only a limited number of persons, a little flock will go to heaven.... the rest of faithful humankind will live on earth as the subjects of these rulers."<sup>30</sup>
    - b. "... the number 144,000 is to be taken literally. It refers to those who will rule in heaven with Christ over a paradise earth, which will be filled with a large and undetermined number of happy people who worship Jehovah God."<sup>31</sup>
  3. Russell claimed all 144,000 had been chosen as part of the "high calling" by the year 1881, because he believed in the Lord's return in 1914.
    - a. "Remember, too, that the Scriptures proved to us in various ways... that the "harvest" or end of this age was due to begin in October, 1874, and that the Great Reaper was then due to be present; that seven years later, in October, 1881, the 'high calling' ceased, though some will be admitted to the same favors afterward, without a general call being made, to fill the places of some of the called ones who, on being tested, will be found unworthy."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1985, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> *The Watchtower*, Feb 15, 1984 p. 9

<sup>31</sup> *The Watchtower*, Sep 1, 2004, p.31

<sup>32</sup> *Thy Kingdom Come*, Russell, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 362

- b. Since the world has continued without the apparent return of Christ and the establishment of His earthly kingdom, the Jehovah's Witnesses faced a problem – would there be no hope of any living today to be numbered among the 144,000? Therefore, in true Watchtower tradition, the date for the "harvest" has been repeatedly changed since the days of Russell and Rutherford.
- c. Most recently, however, the Witnesses have been reluctant to set a new date for "the heavenly hope."
  - (1). "As time has gone by, some Christians baptized after 1935 have had witness borne to them that they have the heavenly hope. Thus we cannot set a specific date for when the heavenly hope ends."<sup>33</sup>
- 4. Jehovah's Witnesses also believe that only the 144,000 who are "the anointed members of the body of Christ" are permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper.
  - a. "Since sharing in the bread and wine passed during the Memorial involves all of this, it would obviously be inappropriate for those having an earthly hope to partake. Those with an earthly hope discern that they themselves are not anointed members of the body of Christ... Those looking forward to everlasting life in human perfection on earth under the Kingdom are neither baptized into Jesus' death nor called to rule with him in heaven. Were they to partake of the emblems, it would signify something that is not true with respect to them. Thus, they do not partake, though they do attend the Memorial as respectful observers."<sup>34</sup>
- 5. The Bible says:
  - a. If the number 144,000 in Revelation is taken literally then the 144,000 are: (1) Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel; (2) only men who are virgins – having never been defiled woman; and (3) men who have never lied or sinned (Rev 14:4-5).
  - b. The observance of the Lord's Supper is intended for all of the Lord's disciples to observe (Acts 2:42 "breaking of bread"; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11:23-29).

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<sup>33</sup> *The Watchtower*, May 1, 2007, p.31

<sup>34</sup> *The Watchtower*, Feb 15, 2006, p. 24

- G. The fate of the earth after the second coming of Christ.
1. Jehovah's Witnesses believe the earth will be "purified" by fire (all governments, etc. and non-Jehovah's Witnesses will be destroyed) but the earth will then be repopulated by Jehovah's Witnesses and become the eternal dwelling place for the righteous who were not numbered among the 144,000.
    - a. "When mankind reaches perfection at the close of the Millennial age, as already shown, they will be admitted into membership in the Kingdom of God and given the entire control of earth as at first designed -- each man a sovereign, a king."<sup>35</sup>
    - b. "Also, some scientists warn that the earth and all life on it may be threatened by such things as a large meteorite, an exploding star, or the exhaustion of the sun's hydrogen fuel. Scientists believe that the earth will gradually—perhaps over many billions of years—lose the ability to sustain human life. The Encyclopedia Britannica describes this as "the irreversible tendency toward disorder." Happily, the Bible assures us that Jehovah God will not allow our earth to be destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. As Creator, he has limitless "dynamic energy," so he can sustain the universe indefinitely."<sup>36</sup>
    - c. "Indeed, the Bible does promise an earthly Paradise!"<sup>37</sup>
    - d. "What is the 'new earth'? It is not a new globe, since the Bible clearly states that the earth will be inhabited forever. The 'new earth' is a new human society. It will be new because the wicked will have been cut off."<sup>38</sup>
    - e. Jehovah's Witnesses quote the following verses to prove the earth will last "forever": (Psa 37:29; 78:69; 104:5; Eccl 1:2-4). However, they ignore the fact that Psalms and Ecclesiastes are "poetic" literature (figurative) and cannot always be taken literally. They also ignore passages where "forever" (or "*time indefinite*" according to the NWT) is used figuratively to indicate "a long time" (2 Sam 7:24; 1 Kings 1:31)
    - f. *The New World Translation* of 2 Peter 3:10 reads: "*Yet Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a*

<sup>35</sup> *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, Russell, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1886, p. 296.

<sup>36</sup> *The Watchtower*, Apr 1, 2008, p.10.

<sup>37</sup> *The Watchtower*, "Does the Bible Promise an Earthly Paradise?" Oct 15, 1983, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Keep on the Watch*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2004, pp. 16-19.

*hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be discovered." (2 Pet 3:10 NWT)*

- (1). Witnesses claim "the works" mentioned in verse 10 refers to earthly governments and the "current system of things."
- (2). They believe when these things are done away, the earth, as God created it in the beginning, will then be "discovered" ( or "rediscovered) – it will be a garden-like world (like the Garden of Eden) with perfect peace and unity under the rule of God.

2. The Bible says:

- a. The heavens and the earth were never intended to last forever (Psa 102:25-26; Isa 51:6; Heb 1:10-12)
- b. The heavens and earth will pass away (be destroyed) and the earth and the works in it will melt (2 Pet 3:10-12)
- c. At the second coming of Christ, the dead in Christ will be resurrected first, followed by the living righteous, and we will all ascend to spend eternity with the Lord (1 Thess 4:13-18).

H. Concerning the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.

1. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Christ's second coming was in 1914:
  - a. "But bear in mind that the end of 1914 is not the date for the beginning, but for the end of the time of trouble."<sup>39</sup>
  - b. "Our Lord, the appointed King, is now present since October 1874, A.D., according to the testimony of the prophets, to those who have ears to hear it: and the formal inauguration of his kingly office dates from Apr 1878, A.D."<sup>40</sup>
2. However, after 1914 failed to produce the expected "end of the present system of things," Charles T. Russell and The Watchtower Society made numerous revisions to their writings in an attempt to cover up the failed prophecy.

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<sup>39</sup> *Zion's Watch Tower*, July 15, 1894, p. 226

<sup>40</sup> *Studies in Scriptures Series, IV*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1897, p. 621

- a. Prior to 1914: "That the deliverance of the saints must take place some time before 1914 is manifest..."<sup>41</sup>
  - b. After 1914: "That the deliverance of the saints must take place very soon after 1914 is manifest..."<sup>42</sup>
  - c. "So in 1914, unseen to human eyes, Christ's second 'coming' into the kingdom took place."<sup>43</sup>
  - d. "*The Watchtower* has consistently presented evidence to honest-hearted students of Bible prophecy that Jesus' presence in heavenly Kingdom power began in 1914."<sup>44</sup>
3. Since 1914, the Jehovah's Witnesses have repeatedly made predictions as to when the Lord will establish His visible presence on earth by bringing an end to the "present system of things":
    - a. 1915 (World War I), 1918, 1925, 1930 (Depression Era), 1935, 1940 (World War II), 1942, 1946, 1953 (Korean War), 1955 (Cold War), 1975, 2000, etc.
  4. In 1929 The Watchtower Society built a 10-bedroom, 5,100 square foot mansion in San Diego, on approximately 100 acres, which Rutherford called "Beth Sarim" (Hebrew: House of the Prince).
    - a. The mansion was to become the residence of resurrected Old Testament Biblical patriarchs or prophets (whom Rutherford called "princes") such as Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah and Samuel (and others). Rutherford claimed these Old Testament "princes" would soon be resurrected and would occupy the mansion as their headquarters in the long-anticipated kingdom. Watchtower publications repeatedly claimed the "princes" would return "any day now," "shortly," or "very shortly."
    - b. The lavish mansion, landscaped with olive, date and palm trees to make these "princes feel at home," also featured an adjacent two-car garage in which was a 16-cylinder *Fisher Fleetwood* Cadillac coupe was available to provide transportation to the "princes" – although Rutherford used it frequently.
    - c. Although The Watchtower Society claimed Beth Sarim was built for the "princes," Rutherford made this mansion his "winter residence" and lived in opulence and luxury while virtually all Witnesses lived

<sup>41</sup> *Studies In the Scriptures - Thy Kingdom Come*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, (1908 Edition)

<sup>42</sup> *Studies In the Scriptures - Thy Kingdom Come*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, (1915 Edition)

<sup>43</sup> *Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1958, p. 174.

<sup>44</sup> *The Watchtower*, 1993, Jan 15, p. 5

in near poverty. When Rutherford died (1942), and the "princes" failed to return, The Watchtower Society sold the property.

- d. Since that time, The Watchtower Society has attempted to conceal this embarrassing failed prophecy from their members and from the world. Most Jehovah's Witnesses have never heard of Beth Sarim. Today, the mansion is a historical landmark in San Diego.
5. Despite over a century of failed prophecies<sup>45</sup>, Jehovah's Witnesses continue to set dates – although they are becoming somewhat cautious about pinpointing exact dates. In 2005, *The Watchtower* reported:
    - a. "Jesus indicated that a similar day [to the Flood] is coming in our time. Those heeding the knowledge associated with this event will have the prospect of not only surviving but also living forever. In addition, the dead who are in Gods memory will be raised to life with the prospect of never having to die again. ... All evidence shows that this day is very near, which means that you may never die at all."<sup>46</sup>
  6. The Bible says (concerning failed prophecies – like those of the Jehovah's Witnesses):
    - a. *But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'* And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' – when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (Deut 18:20-22)
  7. The Bible says (concerning the establishment of the kingdom):
    - a. There are numerous Old Testament prophecies regarding the kingdom:
      - (1). The kingdom would begin in Jerusalem in the last days (Isa 2:1-4).
      - (2). The Spirit would be poured out in the last days in Jerusalem and salvation would be available (Joel 2: 28-32).

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<sup>45</sup> *Over a Century of False Prophecies from Jehovah's Witnesses*, Attachments, pp. 13-20

<sup>46</sup> *The Watchtower*, Apr 15, 2005, p. 5



- b. "Our Lord Jesus Christ is a god...still the united voice of the Scriptures must emphatically assert that there is but one Almighty God, the Father of all."<sup>48</sup>
  - c. "The Logos (Christ) himself was "the beginning of the creation of God."<sup>49</sup>
  - d. "Our Redeemer existed as a spirit being before he was made flesh and dwelled amongst men. At that time, as well as subsequently, he was properly known as "a god."<sup>50</sup>
  - e. "In truth, when Jesus was on earth He was a perfect man, nothing more and nothing less."<sup>51</sup>
2. Jehovah's Witnesses quote the following Scriptures to show there can be only one God (Deut 6:4; Isa 44:6; Jas 2:19)
  3. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim Jesus is Michael the Archangel.
    - a. "As chief of the angels, and next to the Father, he was known as the Archangel, whose name, Michael, signifies, 'Who as God' or 'God's Representative.'<sup>52</sup>
    - b. "So the evidence indicates that the Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth and is known also by that name since his return to heaven where he resides as the glorified spirit Son of God."<sup>53</sup>
    - c. The Jehovah's Witnesses base this belief on the following:
      - (1). "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel..." (1 Thess 4:16) The assumption is that the Lord must also be the archangel.
      - (2). "...the LORD (translated Jehovah) my God will come, and all the saints with You" (Zech 14:5). The assumption is that Jehovah is God the Father, and Jesus as Michael, is numbered among "the saints."

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<sup>48</sup> *Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 5*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 55.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 86.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84.

<sup>51</sup> *Reconciliation*, Rutherford, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1928, p. 111.

<sup>52</sup> *Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 5*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 84.

<sup>53</sup> *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1985, p. 218

4. The Bible says:
  - a. Jesus (the Word) is God, not "a god" (John 1:1); and the Word became "flesh" (John 1:14). Jesus was God in flesh (John 8:58; Col 2:9; Phil 2:5-8)/
  - b. The prophet Isaiah said the Messiah (Jesus) would be called Immanuel – meaning "God with us" (Matt 1:23; Isa 7:14).
  - c. Jesus claimed to be equal to God the Father (John 5:18; 10:30; 14:9), and other writers of the New Testament declared Jesus is equal to God the Father (Phil 2:6; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:3).
  - d. The apostle John uses the same descriptions from the Old Testament prophets Daniel and Ezekiel to describe Jesus Christ (Dan 10:5-7; Ezek 43:2; Rev 1:13-18).
  - e. Thomas called Jesus God (John 20:28)
  - f. There are passages in the Old Testament where the word "Jehovah" is applied to more than one person of the Godhead – other than God the Father: (Gen 19:24; Zech 2:8-9, 10-11, 12).
  - g. Jesus applied Old Testament prophecies concerning "Jehovah" to Himself: (Exod 3:14 compared to John 8:58).
  - h. Others applied Old Testament prophecies concerning "Jehovah" to Jesus: (Isa 8:13-14 compared to 1 Pet 2:8; and Isa 9:6 compared to John 1:1-3; Luke 1:31-33; Titus 2:13; Rev 19:15; John 10:30; 14:9).
  - i. Jesus told Satan, "For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" (Matt 4:10). And yet Jesus not only accepted worship (Matt 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 28:9, 17; John 9:38), but the Hebrew writer says God commanded the angels to worship Jesus (Heb 1:6).
  
- J. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  1. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the fundamental Biblical teaching about the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
    - a. ". . . the King Christ Jesus was put to death in the flesh and was resurrected an invisible spirit creature. . ." <sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Let God Be True*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 122.

- b. "Our Lord was put to death in flesh, but was made alive in spirit; he was raised from the dead as a spirit being of the highest order of the divine nature."<sup>55</sup>
- c. "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 the tree. They were merely materialized for the occasion, resembling on one or two occasions the body in which he died."<sup>56</sup>
- d. The Jehovah's Witnesses offer the following passages to prove Jesus was not bodily resurrected from the dead – raised in a body of flesh and blood: (1 Pet 3:18; 1 Cor 15:44-50).
- e. In reality, the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Bible's teaching concerning the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

2. The Bible says:

- a. If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead as the Bible says, then we must accept the following consequences:
  - (1). The preaching of the apostles is false and we are still in our sins (1 Cor 15:12-17).
  - (2). Jesus lied when He claimed that He would raise up the "temple" of "His body" in three days after His crucifixion (John 2:19-21)
  - (3). Jesus intentionally lied (or at best deceived) His disciples when He claimed He was not a spirit (Luke 24:36-43).
  - (4). Thomas was somehow deceived, and must have only *thought* he was seeing and touched the real, physical wounds in the Lord's real, physical body (John 20:24-29).
- b. In response to the passages used by the Jehovah's Witnesses denying the bodily resurrection, consider the following:
  - (1). 1 Peter 3:18: This passage does not say Jesus was raised a "spirit creature" but only affirms what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians that Jesus was resurrected in an imperishable body (1 Cor 15:34-35). All Christians will be resurrected from the dead in imperishable physical bodies in the same manner

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<sup>55</sup> *Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 5*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 454.

<sup>56</sup> *The Kingdom Is at Hand*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 259.

as Jesus was resurrected from the dead in an imperishable physical body.

- (2). 1 Corinthians 15:44-50: The Jehovah's Witnesses completely ignore the fact that Jesus claimed to have been resurrected in a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Some commentators point out an interesting fact, namely that Jesus did not say He had been raised in a body of "flesh and blood" – since His blood has been shed on the cross to redeem all mankind from sin. Jesus was clearly stating he had been resurrected with a body, even though it was not a body of flesh and blood, but flesh and bones.
- c. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is taught throughout the New Testament and a fundamental belief one must hold to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. The Bible says:
- (1). A body was placed in the tomb on Friday evening; the tomb was empty on Sunday morning; obviously Jesus' body was resurrected (Luke 23:50-55; 24:1-3).
  - (2). Peter's argument in Acts 2:27-32 was that the Holy One (Christ) did not see corruption. What corrupts in the grave? Obviously, the body, not the spirit. Therefore it was the body of Jesus that was raised so that it did not see corruption.

### **III. A Closer Look at Jehovah's Witness Doctrine of the Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit:<sup>57</sup>**

- A. The fundamental belief of all Jehovah's Witnesses concerns their erroneous teaching on the deity of Jesus Christ.
1. Every teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses hangs on their beliefs about the deity of Jesus. Therefore, by exposing the error of this one doctrine, every other doctrine they hold will be completely undermined.
    - a. The reason for this is simply because their erroneous beliefs about Jesus are repeatedly taught by the leaders of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and by their so-called "scholars," whom

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<sup>57</sup> *The Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit*, Attachments, pp. 1-12

every Jehovah's Witness believes are guided by the spirit of God, and thus divinely inspired.

2. Jehovah's Witnesses make it clear they do not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. According to the theology promoted by The Watchtower neither Jesus Christ nor the Holy Spirit is God.
    - a. "The trinity doctrine was not conceived by Jesus or the early Christians."<sup>58</sup>
    - b. "The plain truth is that this is another of Satan's attempts to keep the God-fearing person from learning the truth of Jehovah and His Son Christ Jesus."<sup>59</sup>
- B. Jehovah's Witnesses gravely err in their teaching on the nature of God, which means their entire system of faith has no foundation.
1. The Bible repeatedly teaches that having a proper belief in God and Jesus Christ is fundamental (Heb 11:6; John 8:24; 17:3).
  2. However, the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the very concept of the "Godhead."
    - a. "What, then, do the facts show as to the *Trinity*? Neither the word nor the idea is in God's Word, the Bible. The doctrine did not originate with God."<sup>60</sup>
  3. Jehovah's Witnesses also deny the Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead. The person of the Holy Spirit is consistently rejected throughout The Watchtower's *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT).
    - a. They believe the Holy Spirit is "the invisible active force of Almighty God which moves His servants to do His will."<sup>61</sup>
    - b. To promote this error *The New World Translation* deliberately mistranslates such passages as: "*also, do not be grieving God's holy spirit, with which you have been sealed for a day of releasing by ransom*" (Eph. 4:30 NWT);
    - c. However, despite the efforts of *The New World Translation* to deny the Holy Spirit as a "person", the NWT slipped in the following verse: "*But the helper, the holy spirit which the Father will send in*

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<sup>58</sup> *Let God Be True*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952, p. 92.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>60</sup> *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, p. 25.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108

*my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you" (John 14:26 NWT).*

4. Unfortunately, while the Jehovah's Witnesses attack the word "*Trinity*" (a word that does not appear in the Bible) they fail to admit that the word "*Godhead*" speaks of the *triune nature* of God – God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
    - a. Even though the Bible does not use the word "Trinity," the concept of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are clearly taught in Scripture. Most choose to avoid using the term "Trinity" simply because it's better to use Scriptural terms for Scriptural concepts (cf. 2 Tim 1:13).
- C. The term "Godhead" describes the "divine nature" of deity, and may also be interpreted "Godhood."
1. It refers to the qualities and characteristics and divine attributes of God – just as we would use the term "manhood," "womanhood," or "childhood" to describe the qualities, characteristics and attributes of men, women and children respectively.
  2. The Bible clearly affirms the "Godhead" in two passages: Acts 17:29 (called "Divine Nature" in all but the King James Version); Romans 1:20; and Colossians 2:9. Oddly enough the word "Godhead" or "Divine Nature" is translated in these passages by three different, though closely related, Greek words: *to theion*, *theiotes*, and *theotes*.
    - a. Among the Greeks *to theion* was used to refer to, "the Divine Being," and to therefore designate the one true God apart from the deities of paganism. It is used by Paul (Acts 17:29) in an address made to a pagan audience who thought of God in terms of idols made of gold and silver.
    - b. The Greek term *theiotes*, in Romans 1:20, again speaks of the qualities, characteristics and nature of God. In this passage, Paul couples the word "Godhood" with "power" – which is an attribute characteristic of deity – absolute power over all creation, since God made everything.
    - c. The word *theotes* occurs in Colossians 2:9 where Paul declares that "all the fullness of the Godhead" dwells in Jesus Christ "bodily." The phrase "fullness of the Godhead" means everything (without exception) that is included in the "Godhead" – the totality of all the qualities, characteristics and attributes of "Godhood" – dwells in the person of Jesus Christ. In other

words, even after His incarnation (after becoming flesh and dwelling among us), Jesus Christ was no less God than God the Father. In other words, regardless of the words we use to describe and define God the Father, we can use those same words to describe and define Jesus Christ as well as the Holy Spirit.

However, the Jehovah's Witness' *The New World Translation* renders Colossians 2:9 as: "*Christ; because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily.*"

- D. Jehovah's Witnesses are quick to point out that the Bible teaches there is only one God (Deut 6:4).
1. Throughout the Old Testament there are instances of the word *God* being found in the *plural* in the original language.
    - a. The Witnesses argue that it is the *Pluralis Majestatis*, or using the plural to denote great, lofty, and supreme majesty.
    - b. Such a use may be found in some of the eastern languages, and Hebrew *may* have such a use. But, it is not true that *every* plural noun is used that way.
  2. Concerning the plural nature of the One God, consider the following:
    - a. **Genesis 1:1** states: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
 

The word *God* in this passage is from *Elohim*, and is the plural form, while the verb *created*, from *bara*, is singular. In other words, this *plurality* joined in the *singular* creation of heaven and earth. We can take further note that other passages, as well as verse two of this chapter, show that each of the persons of Godhead had a part to play toward the common end of creation.
    - b. **Deuteronomy 6:4** - "The Lord our God is one Lord."
 

Both appearances of the term *Lord* here are from the tetragrammaton for *Jehovah*. The term *God* is from *Elohim*, the plural form as we noticed. The term *one* is from *echad*, and indicates a *united one*, not an absolute singular. There is a term for absolute one, *yachid*. (Gen 22:2-13 Jer 6:26, Psa 25:16, Zech 12:10, Judg 11:34. The term *only*).

*Echad* used as a *united one* is found in such passages as (Gen 1:5; 2:24 and many others)

- c. The passage above (Deuteronomy 6:4) then reveals that "Jehovah our *Elohim* is a united Jehovah." This fits the facts about *Elohim*, and, as we shall note shortly, the term *Jehovah*.
3. Notice other passages that use the plural for *God*, connected with plural verbs, adjectives, or pronouns:
  - a. **Genesis 1:26** – *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... Note the plural pronouns. The Jehovah's Witnesses argue that He was speaking to angels. Yet, we are not made in the image of angels. Verse 27 says: God created man in His own image, the image of God.*
  - b. **Genesis 3:22** – *Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us. . ."*
  - c. **Genesis 11:7** – *"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language..." (Note verse 6 for the plural noun "Lord")*
4. The Godhead is seen in the following passages: Matt 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14.
- E. All three persons of the Godhead are called God:
  1. The Father is called God (Eph. 4:4-6).
  2. The Son is called God (John 1:1-3; 10:30; 20:28; Phil 2:5-9; Col 2:9; Heb 1:8).
  3. The Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-4).
- F. Since Christ is called "the first-born of all creation," Jehovah's Witnesses argue that He is a created being (Col 1:15; Rev 3:14).
  1. Colossians 1:15 – *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*
    - a. The idea of the Greek word translated "first-born" is not being used to suggest Jesus was the first to be created before all creation, but rather that Jesus Christ holds a place of pre-eminence, first place. (See Col 1:18)
  2. Revelation 3:14 – *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God...'"*

- a. Jehovah Witnesses contend this proves God created Christ first, before anything or anyone else.
- b. The Greek word "*arche*" may be correctly translated "*origin*", and this is its meaning in Revelation 3:14.
- c. However, Revelation 3:14 is not saying Jesus had a "beginning" or an "origin," but rather Jesus Christ is the Origin, the Source, the Creator of all.

Note: For a full discussion of the deity of Jesus Christ and the true nature of the Godhead see the follow: *Jehovah's Witnesses – The Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit*, by Maurice Barnett (Attachments page 1)

### **Conclusion:**

- I. A close examination of the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, clearly demonstrate the true nature of this cult.
  - A. Jehovah's Witnesses have consistently promoted false prophecy, anti-Biblical theology, and have blatantly misrepresented the truth.
    1. However, worst of all, Jehovah's Witnesses and The Watchtower Society have denied the deity of Jesus Christ – relegating Him to the position of "a god," and even claiming He is nothing more than the created being Michael, the archangel.
    2. Despite their numerous efforts to prove their doctrines through the Scriptures, Jehovah's Witnesses have finally had to resort to coming out with their own Bible, *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.
      - a. Every notable Greek and Hebrew scholar in modern times has emphatically denounced the *New World Translation* as an unscholarly, distorted and perverted version that serves only one purpose – to give the appearance of credibility to the false and demonic teachings promulgated by this religious organization.
    3. We must never forget the words of the apostles Paul and Peter:
      - a. Galatians 1:6-9 – *I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have*

*preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

- b. *2 Peter 3:14-18 – Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

### **Study Questions:**

1. List some of the most fundamental beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses that are in direct contrast to Biblical truth.
2. In your own words explain the doctrine of Arianism.
3. List some truths Jehovah's Witnesses teach and how they pervert these truths.



