

An Introduction To World Religions: *Jehovah's Witnesses And The Watchtower Society*

**Anything inside of brackets [] is information added to the material or the quotation by the lecturer-The majority of the following information is taken from other sources to aid the student in his understanding of the Watchtower Society and all source material has been noted-Pastor Todd Beaman*

The Following Information is taken from the *Watchtower Societies* official Website and is a list of their activities in Zambia. In countries with over one million people in their population Zambia is the number one country for Jehovah's Witnesses per capita.

Total Population of Zambia: 12,525,791

Total Converts to The Watchtower Society: 144,649

Ratio: 1 Witness per 87 Zambians

Number of Congregations: 2,212

Hours Spent Last Year In Witnessing: 25,062,280

Converts in 2008: 9,040

Biblical Perspective Of Why Men Error: By Dr. Layton Talbert

Romans 1—The Depravity Factor

- **Man is by (fallen) nature truth-suppressive**—“*The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness....*” (1:18-20)
 - This passage actually returns to a point made earlier regarding revelation as the only means by which we can know God's nature and will, only here the reference is particularly to general revelation (both in the creation around man and in the *imago dei* within man).
 - Via general revelation, no less certainly than special revelation, man *knows* God because of this act of general revelation. Note the verbs:
 - What may be know about God is *manifested in them*
 - God has *shown it to them*
 - His invisible attributes *are clearly seen*
 - His invisible attributes are *understood*
 - Man's response to general revelation alone renders him “without excuse”
 - What truth has God *manifested* and *shown*? What is it that is *clearly perceived* and *understood*?
 - His omnipotence
 - His deity
 - “Paul is emphatic that this knowledge of God, as given to us, is abundantly clear and is understood. There is no obscurity in God's revelation. It is not as though God masks himself.... The problem with the natural revelation of God, and on this

we need to be as clear as possible, is *not* from God's side, but from ours" (Scott Oliphint, "The Irrationality of Unbelief," *Revelation and Reason*, 67-68).

- **Man's alternatives to God's truth are empty and dark**—"they ... became empty in their thinking/reasoning and their foolish hearts were darkened" (1:21)
 - Paul elaborates on the "foolishness" factor in 1 Cor. 1
- **Man flatters himself with intellectual sophistication**—"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (1:23)
 - Scripture regularly spotlights intellectual sophistication not as a recommendation but as a caution sign
 - This problem finds specific personification in the Greek mindset highlighted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1-2
 - "So now, learning is at a great height in the world ...; and now the world, by their learning and wisdom, do [sic] not know God; and they seem to wander in darkness, are miserably deluded, stumble and fall in matters of religion, as in midnight darkness. Trusting to their learning, they grope in the daytime as in the night. Learned men are exceedingly divided in their opinions concerning matters of religion, running into all manner of corrupt opinions, pernicious and foolish errors. They scorn to submit their reason to divine revelation, to believe anything that is above their comprehension; and so being wise in their own eyes, they become fools" (Edwards, cited in I. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, 69-70).
- **Man is anthropocentric**—"And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man" (1:23)
 - 'God made man in His own image, and man has been trying to return the favor ever since.'

When you fail to factor in the dimension of native depravity in the innovations of [the Jehovah's Witnesses], you fail to comprehend the full, Scriptural picture of what is going on in the theological world around you.

1 Corinthians 1—The Foolishness Factor

- **Human wisdom is rendered null and void by God** (1:19-20)
 - 1:17-31 ("wisdom"=13x, + 7x in ch. 2) vs. "foolishness" (6x)
- **Human wisdom, by God's design, can never lead to God** (1:21)
 - Instead, what is foolish in human estimation, *by God's pleasure*, is what does lead to God.

When you fail to factor in God's estimation of human wisdom as foolishness in the formulation of [Jehovah's Witnesses Theology], you fail to comprehend the full, Scriptural picture of what is going on in the theological world around you.

Galatians 1—The Distortion/Substitution Factor

What is the relevance of Galatians for [Jehovah’s Witnesses]?

- 1:6-7 identifies and confronts the Galatian danger—desertion (“turning away”) of the truth of the gospel for a distortion (“some who ... would pervert/distort the gospel of Christ”) of the gospel, which is, in fact, not merely “another” (*allos*) gospel but a *different* (*heteros*) gospel.
- What is the gospel?
 - *A series of historical facts with specific theological consequences* (1 Cor. 15:1-8)
 - Fact 1: Christ died
 - Judicially (“for...sin”)
 - Vicariously (“for *our* sin”)
 - Scripturally (“according to the Scripture”)
 - Fact 2: He was buried
 - for three days as verification of the factuality of his death
 - Fact 3: He rose again
 - On the third day (as He predicted)
 - Scripturally (“according to the Scripture”)
 - Fact 4: He was seen (verifying the factuality of His resurrection)
 - By Peter, then ...
 - By the twelve. After that...
 - By over 500 witnesses (most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote). After that...
 - By James, then...
 - By all the apostles. Last of all...
 - By me.
- How does one “distort” this gospel?

Metastrepho—to turn about, to change from one thing into another, to change to the opposite (cf. the only other two occurrences in the NT—Acts 2:20; Js. 4:9).

 1. *Deny* the facts
 2. *Redefine* the facts
 3. *Minimize/Reinterpret* the facts
 4. *Substitute* the facts
 5. *Add* to the facts

Satanic Strategy of Delusion

Behind all such error is the voice of Satan challenging, through the thoughts and voices of men, the veracity of God’s record of reality. His strategy is as old as Eden:

- *“Hath God said?”*—undermining the certainty and/or authority of the Bible’s contents
- *“Ye shall not surely die”*—rationalistic reinterpretation of the Bible’s intent
- *“For God knows that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil”*—confirming autonomous anthropocentrism and the priority of reason.

This is probably the most ignored or underestimated factor in the movements of men, yet certainly the most potent for all its subtlety.

Introduction to the Society: By Dr. A.L. Barry

Perhaps you have answered a knock at your door and found two people wanting to talk to you about various social concerns, or at least they say they do. From there they hand you material printed by the “Watchtower.” As you speak to them, you find out that they are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Who are the Jehovah’s Witnesses?

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are persons who are members of the organization known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, headquartered in Brooklyn, N.Y. It is very important for Christians to understand that the Watchtower Society is un-Christian. In fact, it is decidedly anti-Christian. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are definitely not merely a different Christian denomination.

How did the Jehovah’s Witnesses begin and grow?

The founding father of the Jehovah’s Witnesses was Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916). Russell came to the conclusion that Christianity was not the correct way to understand the Bible. He made contact with groups (known as Adventists) who emphasized the immediate return of Christ. Russell began a series of Bible studies and started to gather followers. Russell agreed with the Adventists’ predictions that Christ would return during 1873–1874. When that did not happen, Russell predicted more times for Jesus’ return—all of which proved to be false, of course. Eventually, in 1884, Russell officially incorporated the “Zion’s Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.” Twelve years later, the word “Zion” was dropped. In 1908, Russell moved his organization to Brooklyn, N.Y. Toward the end of his life, Russell lost considerable respect among his followers because of a number of slander cases he lost in court.

After Russell’s death in 1916, leadership of the Watchtower Society passed to Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford. Rutherford was largely responsible for the rapid growth of the Watchtower Society. He spread the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ message via phonograph machines, which he used to play his recorded sermons. These sermons were more often than not harsh attacks against denominational Christianity, with vivid descriptions of the judgment to come against anyone who did not embrace Jehovah’s Witnesses’ views.

After 1944, the Watchtower Society no longer used media but instead emphasized personal visits, marked by aggressive techniques to gain entry into homes in order to share their message. This has been the approach of the Watchtower Society since that time. Rutherford increased his control over the Watchtower Society and devised what he termed the

“theocratically controlled” organization of the Jehovah’s Witnesses movement. In 1931, the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” was officially adopted to distinguish the followers of Rutherford from those who had left to form their own organizations.

When Rutherford died in 1942, Nathan Knorr took over (1905–1977). Knorr worked tirelessly to create a better image of the Jehovah’s Witnesses in the public mind. Knorr spearheaded a massive printing effort, which continues to this day. The two magazines widely distributed in multiple languages that the Jehovah’s Witnesses are most known for are *Awake!* and *The Watchtower*.

Under Knorr’s leadership, the Jehovah’s Witnesses produced their own Bible translation, *The New World Translation*. From 129,000 members in 1942, the Jehovah’s Witnesses grew to 410,000 members in the United States alone by 1971. They number nearly 900,000 members in the United States alone, with about 3.5 million members in 200 different countries.

What is the key emphasis of Watchtower teaching?

The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ movement’s primary concern is the end-time (eschatological) renewal of human society. They believe that Jesus Christ will return to establish a new kingdom, which they call a “theocracy,” in which Jehovah God will bring total tranquility to the earth. They believe this utopia will come only after the Battle of Armageddon, in which the present world order will be destroyed. The Jehovah’s Witnesses view all earthly institutions, organizations and governments as evil. They believe that only the Watchtower Society is capable of speaking truthfully about God in the world today.

What do the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe about Jesus?

The Jehovah’s Witnesses movement is surprisingly similar to the ancient heresy known as *Arianism*. The Christian church rejected this false teaching about Jesus. The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus is “a” god, but not the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. They believe there was a time when He actually was created by Jehovah God. They do not believe Jesus is true God, as does historic Christianity. They do not believe the Holy Spirit is God, but only an impersonal force. Thus, they do not believe in the Holy Trinity.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Bible, *The New World Translation*, goes out of its way to mistranslate various verses of the Greek New Testament. An example of this type of mistranslation is found in John 1:1. The Greek text says, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” *The New World Translation* translates the Greek this way: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was a god.” You can see how through such deceptive translating, the Jehovah’s Witnesses attempt to mislead people.

How do Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that people are saved?

Based on misinterpretations of passages from the Book of Revelation, the Watchtower Society believes that Jehovah God extends salvation to two different groups of people. First, there are the 144,000 who shall inhabit heaven. The rest of those saved will inhabit earth in the new kingdom that Christ will establish when he returns after the Battle of Armageddon. They believe that the only persons who will be numbered among the 144,000 are those who have adequately met specific requirements and have lived well enough in imitation of Christ. For Jehovah's Witnesses, salvation is not an accomplished fact by Jesus Christ, given as a free gift, but only something that is earned by doing good works. Chief of these works is aggressive personal visitation of non-members. This explains in large part why the Jehovah's Witnesses are so zealous for personal visitation.

What are some other distinct Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs and practices?

Many people hear about Jehovah's Witnesses when they learn that a Jehovah's Witness has refused a blood transfusion. The Watchtower Society forbids members from receiving blood transfusions because they believe this is a form of "eating blood," which was forbidden to the Old Testament people of God. Jehovah's Witnesses also believe it is wrong to serve in the military, to vote, to salute the national flag, or to express any sort of citizenship in this world, since they believe the world will be destroyed and replaced by Christ's kingdom.

Jehovah's Witnesses do not observe Christmas, Good Friday, Easter or family birthdays, believing these celebrations to be pagan festivities. The average Jehovah's Witness makes personal visits on people in their homes for an average of ten hours per month.

[There are some 145,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in this country making calls like this.] Those Witnesses who are "pioneers" devote 100 hours a month to this work of calling on homes. Since their record of calls is the only record kept of their membership, this work is vital for them.

How can Christians reach out to Jehovah's Witnesses?

We need to recognize that Jehovah's Witnesses are besieged by the Watchtower Society with literature that trains them in how to share their false theology and to contradict Biblical truth. They immediately have many Christians at a disadvantage, since they are well prepared and ready to speak to you, while their visit takes you by surprise. Entering into an extended and detailed discussion with Jehovah's Witnesses is best done by those Christians who have carefully prepared to do so. It is possible, however, for all Christians to give a clear and simple witness to their faith when speaking with a Jehovah's Witness.

It is important not to permit them to sidetrack you when you speak to them. While every conversation is definitely going to be unique, here are some things that need to be said to Jehovah's Witnesses: "I trust in Jesus, not in an organization (John 3:16). I know I have eternal life (1 John 5:13) and that I am saved by Jesus forever. I am not saved by what I do. I do good works out of love for God (Ephesians 2:8-10). I will pray that you too come to know the peace and joy I have been given in Christ Jesus my Lord (Romans 5:1)." You may also be able to plant a seed of doubt in the mind of a Jehovah's Witness about the Watchtower Society. Invite them to your church and invite them to speak to your pastor.

Urge them to read the Bible, and not to rely on their Watchtower Society materials. Challenge them to lay these materials aside for one week or one month and read only the

Bible. After you have shared the Word with them, pray for them, asking God the Holy Spirit to work faith in their hearts, so that like Thomas, they may look to Jesus and say, "My Lord and my God"(John 20:28).

Basic Teachings and Beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses taken from *Fast Facts On Jehovah's Witnesses* (Ankerberg and Weldon) and *Jehovah's Witnesses: Their Claims, Doctrinal Changes and Prophetic Speculation. What does the Record Show?* (Edmund C. Gruss)

*** When the Watchtower is being quoted from you will see WT and the date in which it was published.**

Two Classes of Believers

"The first class, the "anointed class," are the 144,000 specific Jehovah's Witnesses (God's Elect), and only they are "born again." This class is explained by the Witness theory that since A.D. 33 Jehovah God has been choosing 144,000 special individuals as a specific class of people to rule with Him in heaven. (No one in the Old Testament times can be part of this class because before Christ no one could be "born again.") The 144,000 have different responsibilities, a different way of salvation, and a different destiny than the second class of individuals, which are the "other sheep," the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses...The elect are also referred to as the "faithful and discreet slave" of Matthew 24:45 (NWT). Although they number 144,000, their most crucial segment is the small group of leaders of the Watchtower headquarters at Bethel who write and publish the literature of the society. While they will one day rule in heaven with their elder brother, Jesus, they now rule the "other sheep" here on earth, seeing themselves in a servant role...It appears that virtually all of the 144,000 have already been selected, so that among the millions of Witnesses today, the average person has virtually no expectation of being one of "the elect". ...Thus, the vast majority of Witnesses have no desire to be "born again," and they do not expect, or intend, to go to heaven. They expect to live on a "paradise earth" forever, assuming they pass the many future and quite difficult divine tests required of them." (Fast Facts p20-21)

Exclusivism

"Since their beginning, Jehovah's Witnesses, like the Mormons and scores of other religions, have claimed to be the only organization on earth through which God directs His will and purposes. Most importantly, only through the Watchtower Society and its publications can one find the true meaning of the Bible. The Watchtower Society is "God's sole collective channel for the flow of Biblical truth to men on earth." (Fast Facts p21)

Claim to Divine Revelation and Illumination

"One JW stated to a Christian, "Your Bible was finished 2000 years ago, but our Bible has 32 pages added to it every week." (Fast Facts p23)

A former Jehovah's Witness wrote this, "In retrospect, I can understand how easily we were attracted by this organization that claimed to be the only organization on earth guided by God's 'holy spirit,' and the only organization capable of understanding the meaning of the Holy Scriptures (the Watchtower, July 1, 1973, p 402)." "When questions arose, other Watchtower publication were cited as references because it was claimed that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was God's 'sole collective channel for the flow of Biblical truth to men on earth' in these last days (the Watchtower, July 15, 1960, p439) We were taught that we must adhere absolutely to the decisions and scriptural understandings of the Society because God had given it this authority over his people (the Watchtower, May 1, 1972, p.272)." "To gain...eternal life, I was told, certain things were necessary: 1) I should study the Bible diligently, and only through Watchtower publications..." (Fast Facts p24)

“The Watchtower recognizes the truth as belonging to Jehovah, and not to any creature. The Watchtower is not the instrument of any man or set of men, nor is it published according to the whims of men. No man’s opinion is expressed in The Watchtower. God feeds his own people...” (WT, 1 Nov. 1931, 327).

“Without a doubt the Lord uses his angels to cause the truth to be published in the Watchtower, and the faithful followers of Christ Jesus who hear and give heed to the message of truth from the Lord and render obedience thereto are thus a spectacle or theater to others, both men and angels, who observe that these faithful ones are maintaining their integrity toward God....Certainly God guides his covenant people by using holy angels to convey his messages to them” (WT, 1 Feb. 1935, 41).

“It is unlikely that someone who simply reads the Bible without taking advantage of divinely provided aids could discern the light. That is why Jehovah God has provided the ‘faithful and discreet slave,’ foretold at Matthew 24:45-47. Today that ‘slave’ is represented by the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses” (WT, 1 May 1992, 31).

“Let us face the fact that no matter how much Bible reading we have done, we would never have learned the truth on our own” (WT, 1 Dec 1990, 19).

Authoritarian

"As anyone knows who has talked in depth with a Witness, dissent, criticism, or independent questioning and reading of "unauthorized" literature is not permitted. One may ask the questions, but one may not question the answers. To do so is to invite disfellowship...this carries a potential sentence of eternal annihilation at the judgment, and thus is not something to be taken lightly...In fact, responsible members will be careful to "not be so foolish" as to place "their own human reasoning" above the divinely guided pronouncements of the Watchtower Society." (Fast Facts p24-25)

Biased Emphasis on “Reason”

"Jehovah's Witnesses claim undying allegiance to the Bible. But it is clear that this allegiance is only to the Bible as interpreted by the Watchtower Society based upon its own premises."

“Indeed, members who have tried to reconcile, or “reason out,” confusing and conflicting Watchtower Society policies, prophecies, doctrines, and biblical interpretation find themselves in trouble both with reason and the WS.” (Fast Facts p25)

Organizational Structure

“The organizational structure of the Society begins at the top with Jehovah God. He communicates his will and biblical interpretation to the Watchtower upper echelon (the president and his close associates, known as the Governing Body), who then pass it on to others, where it finally reaches the printing presses and is sent out as Watchtower literature.” There are six steps of the conversion process used by the WS. These steps are:

1. Placing WS literature into the hands of the household.
2. Calling again to encourage the person to read and study the literature, using current event to spark interest. *Awake!* Magazine especially is used for this purpose.
3. Starting a weekly home “Bible” study on the literature received. (These are not true Bible studies but studies of Watchtower Society literature offering its prejudiced interpretation of the Bible.)
4. Inviting the potential convert to an area study group where the person can be engaged in a carefully controlled dialogue with Witnesses.
5. Inviting the prospect to attend a “Watchtower Study” at a Kingdom Hall.
6. Starting the person on a similar program of reaching his neighbors, under Watchtower Society care and guidance.

7. Having the person now in regular attendance at Watchtower Society meetings dedicate himself to God's service through water baptism, which officially makes the person a "minister" of Jehovah and a representative of the Watchtower Society." (Fast Facts p26-27)

What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Teach About Christianity?

Professor Gruss writes, "The work of the Witnesses among nominal Christians and new converts has caused the [Church] much trouble. With a missionary background, William Kneeder, in his booklet *Christian Answers to Jehovah's Witnesses*, rightly states that their "work is parasitic on established Christian work and very confusing to new Christians and to those not well-grounded in the reasons for their beliefs." It is unfortunate that most Christians and pastors are not sufficiently aware of the Witnesses' history, their doctrines, and their methods to deal intelligently with them." (Fast Facts p31)

What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Teach About The Bible?

They believe the Bible is a closed book to all non-Jehovah's Witnesses believers. Only the WS can interpret it correctly.

What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Teach About God And the Trinity?

There are five principal reasons why the Trinity is rejected by the WS.

1. The Trinity was not part of the early church but a development from paganism.
2. The Trinity is not found in the Bible.
3. The Trinity was invented by Satan to malign Jehovah's name and to deceive and confuse people.
4. The Trinity is a doctrine of polytheism, teaching three gods.
5. The doctrine of the Trinity "is irrational". (Fast Facts p41-42)

What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Teach About Jesus Christ?

"The Watchtower "Jesus" has existed in three different stages, even, in a sense as three different persons: 1) The Archangel Michael (also "the Word"), 2) the man Jesus of Nazareth, and 3) a new superior, re-created Archangel Michael. (Fast Facts p43)

What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Teach About Salvation In General?

Those saved and those that have the potential for salvation. 1) the 144,000 elect of God, 2)The Jehovah's Witnesses "earthly class" (All other JW's) 3) the rest of mankind. (Fast Facts p51)

The unsaved receive no form of salvation at all. These individuals will be annihilated.

What Are Some Tips For Talking With Members?

Here are numerous passages from their own NWT that can be used.

Salvation by faith alone. Titus 3:5; Eph 2:8,9; 2 Tim 1:9; Rom 3:28, 4:5, 5:9, 6:23; John 6:29, 5:24; 1 John 3:14

Christ as God (for example, Redeemer, Creator). John 1:3; John 5:18,23 with 19:7; Zechariah 11:13; John 1:2; Matt 3:3; Micah 5:2 with Psalm 102:12 and Isaiah 40:28.

Who is the Eternal Light? In Isaiah 60:19-20, it is Jehovah. In Revelation 21:23, it is Jesus (compare Revelation 22:5)

Who sits in the center of Jehovah's Throne? In Revelation 7:10-12, it is Jehovah. In Revelation 7:17 it is Jesus.

The Deity of the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:3-4; Hebrews 10:15; Hebrews 3:7; Isaiah 6:8-9 with Acts 28:25-26; Isaiah 40:28 with 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; Isaiah 63:10 with Psalm 78:17.

Immediate judgment at death (no second chance). John 5:28-29; 13:18

Jesus Christ, the Son, is God. John 5:18, John 20:28; compare Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1.