

Part 2 - What does a Jehovah's Witness believe?

(The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society)

Founder: Charles Taze Russell
Founding Date: 1879
Official Publication: The Watchtower Magazine
Awake! Magazine

Organizational Structure: Headquartered in Brooklyn, New York, the organization is led by a president and a group of men known as "The Governing Body." This group oversees every aspect of the organization including all material that is written.

Unique Terms: The local congregation is called a *Kingdom Hall*. The Watchtower sometimes refers to itself as "*God's Theocratic Organization on Earth*."

Other Names: Kingdom workers, Jehovah's Witness publishers, 'faithful and discreet slave.'

Doctrine:

1. How many Gods exist?

Jehovah's Witnesses believe in and teach the existence of one true living God.

2. Who is Jesus?

This group originated as a sect of the Adventist Movement (SDA) which holds that Christ is not truly God but a created angel. The Watchtower teaches that Jesus has not always existed, but was Himself a created being originally named Michael the Archangel.

"Scriptural evidence indicated that the name Michael applied to God's Son before he left heaven to become Jesus Christ and also after his return. Michael is the only one said to be the 'archangel,' meaning 'chief angel' or 'principal angel'" (Aid to Bible Understanding, p.1152).

"Thus, for example, the Bible shows that there is only one God, the Most High, the Almighty. And that the Son, as the First-born, the Only-begotten and 'the creation by God,' had a beginning"

(From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained, p. 164).

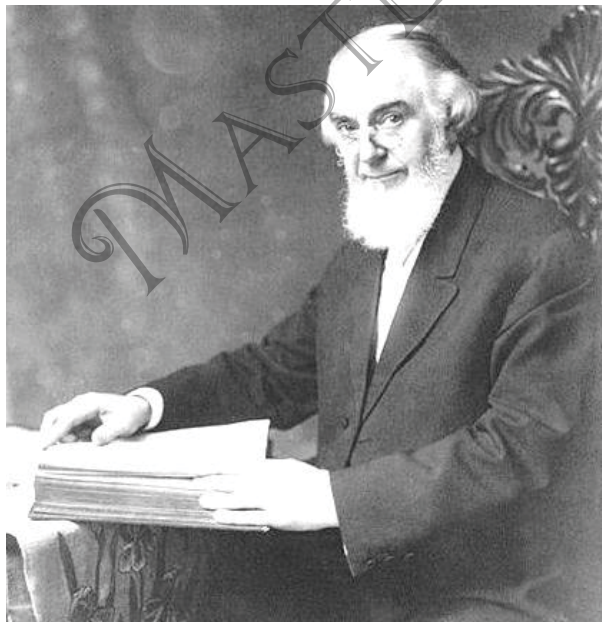
The witnesses stress very heavily that since the Scriptures speak of Jesus as the Firstborn, that He must then be created rather than eternal. However, throughout the Scriptures the term "Firstborn" does not necessarily mean the first one to have been birthed, but refers to rulership, authority and pre-eminence. For example Jeremiah 31:9 refers to Ephraim as the firstborn of Israel. However, Ephraim was a grandchild of Israel and not even the first to have been born in his own father's house (Genesis 48:14).

The Watchtower has consistently denied the deity of Christ.

"Thus the scriptures identify the Word (Jesus in his pre-human existence) as God's first creation, his firstborn Son. This son was actually a creature of God..." (Aid to Bible Understanding, p. 918).

3. Am I saved by good works?

In the Watchtower there are two classes of people with two different types of salvation: *"However, that (eternal) life will not be the same for all. The Bible plainly shows that some of these, that is, 144,000, will share in heavenly glory with Christ Jesus, while the others will enjoy the blessings of life down here on earth,"* (Let God Be True, p. 298).



Originally, the organization taught that the 144,000 of Revelation 7 applied to all followers of C.T. Russell and that the Lord would return for them when the roll was full. However, when growing close to that number, Judge Rutherford declared on May 31, 1935 that anyone coming into the organization after that day would comprise an earthly class called the "Great Crowd" (in reference to Revelation 7:9). It is their

view that the 144,000 "anointed class" will rule in heaven over the earthly class. Therefore, modern witnesses do not believe present day believers can be born again since the full 144,000 heavenly saints have already been selected.

The Watchtower organization requires complete submission to their organization's rules and ordinances to obtain eternal life.

"Make haste to identify the visible theocratic organization of God that represents his king, Jesus Christ. It is essential for life. Doing so, be complete in accepting its every aspect," (Watchtower, Oct. 1, 1967, p. 591).

"No matter where we may live on earth, God's Word continues to serve as a light to our path and a lamp to our roadway as to our conduct and beliefs. (Psalm 119:105) But Jehovah God has also provided his visible organization, his "faithful and discreet slave," made up of spirit anointed ones, to help Christians in all nations to understand and apply properly the Bible in their lives. Unless we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using, we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do" (Watchtower, Dec. 1, 1981, p. 27).

"Yes, there are various things involved in getting saved. We must take in accurate knowledge of God's purposes and his way of salvation (John 17:3). Then we must exercise faith in the Chief Agent of salvation, Jesus Christ, and do God's will the rest of our lives. (John 3:16; Titus 2:14) Salvation is sure for those who follow this course. But it involves persevering right to the end of our present life or of this system of things. Only 'he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved,' Matthew 24:13" (Watchtower, Sept. 15, 1989, p. 7).

4. Did Jesus physically rise from the grave?

Both the deity of Christ (above) and His resurrection are very difficult for a witness to grasp. They do not believe that He was resurrected, but that instead, through God's memory, was "re-created" as a spirit, like the angels.

"...at death he laid aside the human organism in which he ministered as a new creature for three and a half years; and in his resurrection he was no more human. He was raised as a spirit creature..." (The Kingdom is at Hand p. 258).

According to the Watchtower, the human body of Christ was destroyed, so after His spiritual recreation, He had to appear to His disciples in temporary fleshly bodies.

"...However for forty days after his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples on different occasions in various fleshly bodies, just as

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THE WATCHTOWER
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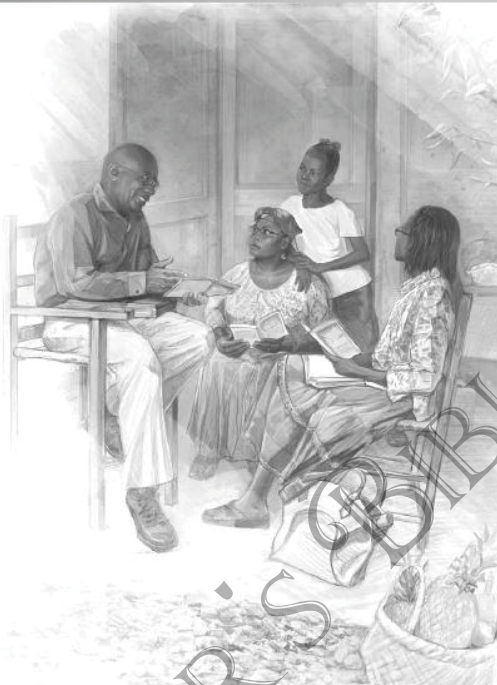
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angels had appeared to men of ancient times. Like those angels, he had the power to construct and to disintegrate those fleshly bodies at will, for the purpose of proving visibly that he had been resurrected" (Aid to Bible Understanding, p. 1394).

Because Jesus was not physically resurrected, the Watchtower teaches that His second coming will also be spiritual and invisible and in fact He has already secretly returned.

"Like other Christians he [founder Russell] was looking for the second coming of Christ. Between 1872-1876 he discovered that the Scriptures clearly teach that the Lord would not return in a body of flesh, but would return as a spirit being, invisible to human eyes, and that his second presence was due in the autumn of 1874" (The Divine Plan of the Ages, 1927 ed., p. 4).

According to the Watchtower, the true gospel is the message of His invisible Presence in 1914 when Jesus began to reign over the Kingdom.

Other Strange Doctrines:

- The Watchtower has made many false prophecies about the end of the world, predicting the end in one form or another for the years 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975 and 1989.
- Blood transfusions are rejected at ALL costs; even in the most life threatening circumstances. If a Witness received a transfusion willingly they would be disfellowshipped and shunned.
- The Watchtower denies its members any involvement in politics.
- The Watchtower rejects the celebration of birthdays, Christmas, Easter, as well as most other holidays.
- Witnesses are commanded to refuse serving in the military or saluting a national flag, which is considered idolatry.
- The Bible must not be read by itself, because it cannot be understood without the aid of the Watchtower. To do so may lead to paganism:

"Jehovah God has provided his holy written Word for all mankind and it contains all the information that is needed for men in taking a course leading to life. But God has not arranged for that Word to speak independently or to shine forth life-giving truths by itself. His Word says: "Light is sown for the righteous." (Ps. 97:11) It is through his organization that God provides this light that the proverb says is the teaching or law of the mother. If we are to walk in the light of truth we must recognize not only Jehovah God as our Father but his organization as our mother." (Watchtower, May 1, 1957, p. 274).

"After being nourished to our present spiritual strength and maturity, do we suddenly become smarter than our former provider and forsake the enlightening guidance of the organization that mothers us? 'Forsake not the law of thy mother' (Prov. 6:20-23)" (Watchtower, Feb. 1, 1952, p. 80).

"From time to time, there have arisen from among the ranks of Jehovah's people those, who, like the original Satan, have adopted an independent, faultfinding attitude. They say that it is sufficient to read the Bible exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home. But, strangely, through such 'Bible reading,' they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom's clergy were teaching 100 years ago..." (Watchtower, Aug. 15, 1981).

The Watchtower's "New World Translation"

In 1950, the Watchtower produced their own version of the Bible, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, (NWT). Hundreds of verses have been changed to fit Watchtower doctrine and the "bible" continues to be re-"translated" every few years to eliminate evidence for the deity of Christ.

Homework:

Answer the 4-question test of a cult for "The Bible," "Mormons," "Witnesses" and two other local cults. Give the supporting Scripture for your answer, or the page number of the class material.

1. How many Gods exist?
2. Who is Jesus?
3. Am I saved by good works?from the grave?
4. Did Jesus Physically rise