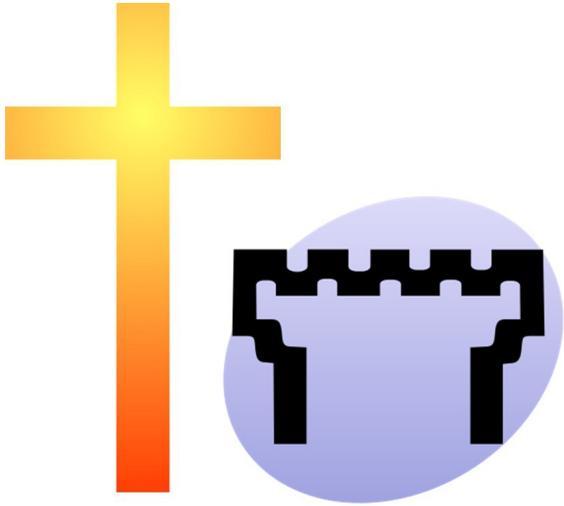


Christianity

And

Jehovah's Witnesses



In the 1870s Charles Russell founded the Jehovah's Witnesses organization. From the movement's inception, mainstream evangelical Christianity considered it to be another false cult. The controversy is over doctrine – not minor doctrine, but the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is no small disagreement, for the Bible teaches that to err in the doctrines of Christ is to err in the salvation of the soul. This brochure is written to expose the subtle errors of Jehovah's Witnesses – JW's.

Undoubtedly there are many well-meaning religious people in the JW organization; but many, after searching the Scriptures on their own, have left the JW organization. True followers of Jesus Christ can go beyond those who first introduced them to the Bible. The Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ, not men.

What are the essential differences between JW and Evangelical Christianity?

Jehovah's Witnesses claim faithfulness to the Bible; Evangelical Christianity also claims fidelity to Scripture. Is the Bible so ambiguous that it can be made to teach two contradictory religions? No, the Scriptures teach one faith. The doctrines of the Bible are clearly discernable if words are taken to mean what words mean. Disagreements inevitably arise over Biblical doctrine because people subconsciously superimpose their own theological preferences on the Bible.

Sinful humanity naturally dislikes God's truth. Therefore, people will either avoid God altogether or adapt Christianity to their own personal preferences.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

(2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Charles Russell disliked many of the core doctrines of the Christian faith because he judged them to be unreasonable. He made the classic error of all false teachers – placing human reason above God's revelation. The result was the JW religious movement which adopted the typical positions of rationalistic humanism – there is no Trinity; God did not become a man; there is no Hell; salvation is by human works.

The essential difference:

- Jehovah's Witnesses theology is based upon adapting the doctrines of Christ to human reason and opinion.
- Historic Christian Theology is based upon straightforward Biblical exposition and accepting the mysteries of God's truth, such as, the Trinity and the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Four Jehovah's Witnesses Deviations from Historic Christianity:

1. The Person of Jesus Christ

The JW's teach that Jesus was a created spirit similar to angels and men. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is God come in human flesh. Jesus said,

- He came down from heaven (John 6:38).
- He has power to give eternal life (John 10:28).
- He existed before Abraham (John 8:58).
- "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30)."

The Jews understood the significance of all of these statements and sought to put Jesus to death because He was "making Himself equal with God (John 5:17-18)." The Jews complained, "You being a man make yourself out to be God (John 10:33)."

Furthermore, Jesus performed miracles to attest to His divine nature.

What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him? (Matthew 8:27)

Jesus also received worship which, according to the first commandment, belongs to God alone. Jesus blessed Thomas for acknowledging the He was Thomas' Lord and God.

Thomas answered and said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God." Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

(John 20:28-29)

The inspired apostolic writers of the New Testament taught that Jesus is God.

Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. (Romans 9:5)

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...

(Titus 2:13)

But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever...'

(Hebrews 1:8)

For a child will be born to us, . . . and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Is. 9:6)

The JW organization uses questionable grammatical techniques to claim Biblical texts do not teach that Jesus is God. Their painstaking efforts betray their integrity. The evidence of a cult is seen whenever the natural reading of Scripture must be replaced with tedious explanations. To adjust the reading of certain texts, the JW's have even created their own translation of Scripture (The New World Translation).

One of the JW's' primary objections to Jesus' deity is Christ's separateness from the Father and, hence, an objection to the doctrine of the Trinity. How can Jesus Christ be God if he spoke to God, called God His Father, and called Himself the Son of God?

The historic Christian church also wrestled with this issue. On the one hand, we have Jesus claiming to be God; on the other hand, Jesus claimed to be a man separate from God the Father. To be faithful to the Scriptures, both truths must be confessed. Jesus is both God and Man. The apostle Paul taught that Jesus emptied Himself and took the form and appearance of a man (Philippians 2:5). This is the marvel of the incarnation. God did not create a "spirit being" to die for our sins – God Himself came to earth to die for our sins.

God is three in one. In Genesis 1:26, God refers to Himself in the plural, "Let us make man in our own image." The name of God "Elohim" is plural in form. In the New Testament, the three persons of the Godhead are addressed in unity.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

The error of the JW organization is in accepting the texts about Jesus' manhood but, out of rationalism, rejecting the texts about Jesus' deity. In every Biblical doctrine there are truths that are above human understanding. Nevertheless, we must be faithful to Scripture. The Scripture reveals that Jesus

was both “God” and “with God.” (John 1:1) God is three persons in one essence.

2. Salvation (The Work of Jesus Christ)

Attaining salvation in the JW system is very similar to the works-based system of other religions. JWs teach that to enter the Kingdom of God you must practice righteousness and proclaim the Kingdom. The Watchtower states, *Salvation is a free gift from God. It cannot be earned. Yet it does require effort on our part.* Exactly how much effort is required? The JWs teach you must make a good faith effort. In practice this means the JW must keep working to ensure salvation.

Salvation in JW theology is contrary to the Biblical teaching that (1) Jesus Christ is the Savior (not self), and (2) salvation is a free gift.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

JW theology teaches that Jesus’ death on the cross provides righteousness, but that righteousness is granted to you on the basis of your merit. This is very similar to Roman Catholic theology that teaches one must merit the merit of Christ. This theology cleverly reverses Christ’s grace-based salvation.

3. The Church

The JWs teach that God’s one, true, visible organization on earth is the Watchtower Society headquartered in Brooklyn, New York. As God formerly established the nation of Israel, God has now ordained the Watchtower. The Roman Catholic Church holds to a similar view in that the church is a physical organization ruled by ordained leadership from a physical headquarters.

The Bible does not specify a particular location for the church. This “headquarters” doctrine of the church is a matter of speculation. Historic Christianity has viewed the church as a spiritual

organization ruled by Christ Himself. Local assemblies of believers are to set up pastors and are under the Headship of Christ. The church includes all who believe on the name of Christ.

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. (1 Corinthians 1:2)

People mistakenly look for the one true religious organization on earth as if there is only one organization that correctly interprets the Bible. This may provide an illusion of safety, but in the end it places trust in men rather than in God and Scripture.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:13)

4. Eschatology (The Doctrine of End Times)

Historic Christianity teaches that there is one body of Christ, the church. All believers will dwell with Jesus Christ in the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21). The JW organization teaches that there are two classes of Christians: 144,000 who will dwell with God in heaven and the rest who will live in paradise on earth. The number is taken from Revelation chapter 7 which speaks about 144,000 physical Jews to be saved in the apocalypse. The JWs see the 144,000 “Sons of Israel” as a metaphor for the entire population of heaven.

The JW organization also teaches that Jesus Christ came to set up His Kingdom in 1914. However, the Bible teaches that when Jesus returns, “every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7).” The JW gets around the physical return of Jesus by spiritualizing the word “eye”. They teach, it is not that every “physical eye” will see Jesus, but only the “spiritual eyes” will realize that He has returned to rule.

The Watchtower organization has developed many strange views of the future because the Bible is not interpreted through the plain sense of language.

Red Flags

People rarely sees or understands the formal doctrinal errors taught by cults. But God allows for every cult to have easily discernable “red flags” to warn the true seekers of God.

For example, the Mormon Church historically prohibited “negroes”; Islam permits polygamy; and Roman Catholic celibacy attracted homosexual and pedophile priests. These obvious errors are common sense clues that these religions do not interpret the Scriptures correctly; therefore, they are not to be trusted in their doctrines. Here are a few “red flags” that expose the JW organization:

1. JWs forbid Christmas and birthdays

Christ’s New Covenant allows the believer great liberty to enjoy all the good things in life. To be specific, the apostle Paul told Christians to not let anyone judge them in regard to how they celebrate a day (Romans 14:4-5, Colossians 2:16-23). Legalistic, extra-biblical commandments are a sign of a cult.

2. JWs forbid blood transfusions

At the Jerusalem Council the apostles stated that new Gentile converts should abstain from blood (Acts 15:29). The JW organization extrapolates this text to mean that a blood transfusion would be similar to eating blood. This adds to God’s law even as the Pharisees condemned the hungry disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath. Jesus responded to their legalism, “**But if you had known what this means, I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent (Matthew 12:7).**” The JWs’ man-made rules side-step the compassion of sharing life with others through a blood transfusion.

3. JWs forbid communion

The JWs teach that only the original 144,000 can partake in communion, for they are the only ones in the New Covenant. This is certainly a sign that

something is seriously wrong with JW doctrine. The Bible teaches that the New Covenant is the basis for all forgiveness, and all believers are in the New Covenant (1 Corinthians 10:25; Hebrews 9:15).

4. JWs falsely predicted the return of Christ

In their interpretation of prophetic Scripture, the JW organization has consistently claimed the wrong dates for the return of Jesus Christ, the end of the age, and the Battle of Armageddon - 1877, 1914, 1917, 1925, 1941, and 1975. The same speculative methods for interpreting Biblical prophecy are used to deduce the JW position on the doctrine of Christ and salvation. If the JWs can’t get prophecy right, can we trust them with other doctrines? Deuteronomy 18:22 teaches that the sign of a false prophet is “**if the thing prophesied does not come true.**”

With simple Bible teaching and common sense, it is very easy to expose JW errors and bring many people out of the movement. However, this is no assurance that those who exit will become true Christians. Leaving the JWs does not mean one truly loves Jesus Christ and has the humility to give up one’s self-righteousness for Christ’s grace-based salvation. There will always be some who have a personal attraction to the legalism and authoritarian structure of the Jehovah Witness doctrine and organization.

But if you love God and truth, there are good things waiting for you in true Christianity. May God lead you to a true evangelical church teaching the historic doctrines of the Christian faith.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (John 10:27)

B.E. Winship

This brochure is distributed by Harbor Bible Church in Laurence Harbor, NJ – a mainstream, evangelical church teaching historic Christianity. If you have any questions or need more direction, contact us at:
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