

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

From Ed Decker 's lecture notes

I want to deal with the very important subject of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society headquartered in Brooklyn, New York. They are more commonly referred to as The Jehovah's Witnesses.

Most of you are probably familiar with the Watchtower through their two major magazines that seem to be at every Laundromat in the world and also come to us by the way of those infamous door to door visitors.

The Watchtower Organization is best known by their mass publications. In fact, they are the largest publishers in the free world. In one recent year, they published over 44 million books, over 550 million magazines of the *Watchtower* magazine which they publish [over 12 million copies every two weeks] in 103 languages of the world.

They also publish over 10 million copies of the *Awake* magazine in about 53 languages every two weeks. They are obviously having a great influence around the world through such mass distribution of their magazines and books. No one can doubt their fiery zeal.

They have mapped out the entire United States, so that every home, every dwelling place, will be contacted at least once or twice a year by a team of their workers.

They claimed recently that in one year, over 3,200,000 members spent over 700,000,000 hours of door to door witnessing for the Watchtower. And out of that sheer grueling persistence they have been able to harvest many people who have not been grounded in God's Word and were easily led astray by this counterfeit of true Christianity.

The Watchtower Society was begun by a man named Charles T. Russell who was the founding father of The Jehovah's Witnesses. He was raised in a Congregational Church in Pennsylvania. As he grew up, Russell said there were certain things which he did not like in the Bible. He said he did not like the teaching of hell or eternal judgment, and the teaching of the Trinity. He said it wasn't rational, he could not understand it.

Russell began to develop his own theology which he began to publish in a series of volumes called Study in Scripture. Later, in 1879, he began to publish the Watchtower Magazine. In 1884, he incorporated the organization in Pennsylvania, as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and in 1909, Russell moved its Headquarters to in Brooklyn, New York, where they have remained to this day.

Russell is the founding father of the theological errors of the Watchtower. Early in his ministry, he calculated it out and determined that Jesus Christ was going to return visibly to this earth and for many years he prophesied that Christ was going to return in 1874. When Christ did not show up he changed his calculations and for many more years prophesied Christ's return in the year 1914. 1914 came and went and again, Jesus Christ failed to show up.

Russell was not to be disheartened. He redefined the second coming of Jesus Christ and said that Jesus Christ had returned invisibly as an invisible spirit, a ghost, in 1914 to help set up his organization.

He died in 1916 having proven to be a false prophet. The Watchtower Organization was then taken over in 1917 by a very dynamic leader, a man named Joseph Franklin Rutherford. It was under Rutherford's leadership that the Watchtower was built into that great theocratic giant we know today.

If you have ever talked at length with a member of the Watchtower you know that they claim to be the theocratic Kingdom of God on earth. What they mean by that is a theocracy is a government ruled by God. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they are god's government on earth, that all other governments are satanic, that they alone are the true government of god. This is why a Jehovah's Witness will never salute the flag, why they will never say the Pledge of Allegiance, and why they will never serve in the armed forces of any nation, because they believe all governments are satanic, except the true government of god, headquartered in Brooklyn, New York.

As you will see, the Jehovah's Witnesses isolate themselves in other ways from their neighbors. They don't celebrate Christmas because they deny the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And they don't celebrate Easter because they deny the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It was also under Rutherford's leadership, in 1931, that they changed their name to The Jehovah's Witnesses. He said they were doing this to vindicate the True name of Jehovah, claiming that Jesus Christ was not God, that the Holy Spirit was not God, and that Jehovah alone was God.

We have no problem with the term, Jehovah. It is simply an Old Testament identification for God. Actually, the Jews never pronounce the name of God and while writing in Hebrew, you did not use vowels, only consonants, The Jews spelled it, Yhwh, the name of God. Most likely it would have been pronounced Yahweh, but it has been anglicized as Jehovah, simply referring to the Old Testament identification for God.

Rutherford was also famous for his many prophecies. In fact, he prophesied that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were going to return visibly to this earth to help promote the Kingdom of God. He was so sure of this that he built a large palatial mansion in San Diego, California, for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to live in when he said they were going to return sometime before 1929.

1929 came and went and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never showed up. That's when Rutherford moved into the mansion himself and lived there until he died in 1942.

The Organization was then taken over in 1942 by a man named Nathan H. Knorr. It was under Knorr's leadership that they developed their strong missionary outreach all over the world. It was also under his leadership that they did their own translation of the Bible, which they call "**The New World Translation.**"

The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that seven Greek scholars in the Watchtower did this translation. It becomes quite obvious to anyone who knows Greek or Hebrew that there are gross errors in this translation. In an attempt to get more data on the translation, Ron wrote the headquarters in Brooklyn, asking them for the names of their scholars, in order to verify their credentials.

He received a most interesting letter back from them. It said, "We do not make known the names of our scholars because we want to maintain their humility." We have since found out who the seven were. It turns out that not one of the seven had ever studied Greek in his life, and wouldn't know an alpha from beta if it bit him.

In fact, only three of the seven had even finished high school. Of those three only one went on to College. His name was Fredrick Franz, the same man who is now the President of the Jehovah's Witnesses.. He

dropped out He dropped out of College after the first semester in 1913 because Russell told him Christ was returning in 1914. The New World Translation is a farce, It was created as a conscious attempt to make the Bible appear to fit their preconceived theology.

The new translation was just part of the problems waiting ahead for Nathan H. Knorr. You would have thought that he had learned a good lesson about false prophets from his predecessors. The man did withstand the urge for many years, but finally, in 1966 he could no longer resist and Nathan H. Knorr also began to prophesy through the *Watchtower* and *Awake* magazines. His first major prophecy was that the year 1975 was going to be the end of the age and Armageddon was going to occur. Obviously 1975 has come and gone and Armageddon did not occur. It was just too big a lie to weave a new tale around.

Many Jehovah's Witnesses understood what God had said, in Deut. 18:20-22, where He gave us the Biblical test for a Prophet.

"But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?"

If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him." (Deut. 18: 20 - 22)

In 1975 through 1977, over two and a half million to three million Jehovah's Witnesses left the Watchtower, deeply disillusioned with the organization that claimed to be the voice of God on earth, but had proven again and again to be a false prophet.

Knorr, also proven to be a false prophet, died in 1977. The organization is now run by a very aged gentleman named Frederick Franz whose been their leading theologian over the last 60 years. Yet, the Watchtower continues to grow, continues to prey upon the lost and continues to take advantage of the lost plight of man.

It's a rare door that hasn't felt the knock of the Jehovah's Witnesses more than once and it's an even rarer Jehovah's Witness who has heard the gospel message at one of those doors from the resident Christian. The reason is simply that it is a far from simple task to witness to a Witness. It's easier to just close the door and avoid the difficult task of sorting through a maze of confusing doctrines. Let's try to make it a bit simpler.

There are five important facts to remember about the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watchtower Organization.

1. They have accepted the Organization as the Prophet of God.
2. They have accepted the Organization as God's sole channel for His truth.
3. They believe that to reject the Organization is to reject God.
4. They believe that only the Organization can interpret the Bible; as individuals they are unable to do so.
5. They believe the Watchtower Magazine contains God's truth, directed by Him, through the Organization.

What does the Organization and Watchtower Magazine teach that is in conflict with Orthodox Christianity?

1. That Jesus is a created being/a creature.
2. That Jesus is actually Michael the Archangel
3. That Jesus was not resurrected bodily, but as a spirit being.
4. That Jesus returned invisibly in 1914 (secretly to the Organization)
5. That Jesus was only a man when on earth, not the Word Become flesh.
6. That the Holy Spirit is only an active force, not the person of God.
7. That Hell is simply the grave.
8. That Heaven's doors is open to only 144,000.
9. That the majority of Witnesses must remain on earth.
10. That salvation is found only through the Organization.
11. That it must be maintained by energetic works for the Organization until the end when one may merit eternal life on a paradise earth.
12. That Satan is the author of the doctrine of the Trinity.
13. That Jesus cannot be given worship, but only honor as Jehovah's first creation.

The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe or teach some of the very basic tenets of Christian doctrine. They deny:

1. The Trinity.
2. The Omnipresence of God.
3. The Deity of Christ.
4. The dual nature of Christ.
5. The bodily resurrection of Christ.
6. The visible return of Christ.
7. The person of God the Holy Spirit.
8. The Promise of Heaven to all believers.

9. The necessity of the New Birth for all believers.
10. The Lord's Supper for all believers. (only for the 144,000).
11. The Eternal Security of the believer.
12. The conscious Eternal Punishment of the lost.

The Bible Teaches the Truth...

1. That God exists in a Trinity of three eternal and coequal persons:

Father: *"To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Romans 1:7)

Son: *"Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"* (John 20:28)

Holy Spirit: *"Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?"*

Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:3,4)

"For there are three that testify." (1 John 5:7)

2. Jesus is no less than God in human flesh:

"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9).

3. God, the Holy Spirit, is the third member of the Holy Trinity:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matt. 28:19;

"While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2).

4. Jesus Christ rose bodily from the grave:

"The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body." (John 2:20,21)

"Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." (Luke 24:39).

5. Jesus is visibly coming again to set up His Kingdom on earth:

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." (Matt. 24:30)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen." (Rev. 1:7).

6. Salvation is in the person of Jesus Christ and comes through faith in Him:

"They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved --you and your household." (Acts 16:31).

7. It's the work of God for man, not a work of man for God:

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Titus 3:4-6)

8. Jesus was and should be worshipped:

"A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:26-28)

"When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route." (Matt. 2:10-12)

"Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Matt. 14:33)

Witnessing to a Witness

We need to remember that *anyone* who denies the divinity of Jesus Christ and carries the heavy burden of a false, religious spirit is going to be going through a lot of highs and lows. True believers, empowered by the companionship of God, the Holy Spirit have a constant presence of the Lord about them that seems to act like a magnet at times.

When a Watchtower member comes to your front door and you open it, what are they thinking about? What do they think when you talk about Christianity? First, it's impossible to offer them any hope of heaven.

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach and believe that only 144,000 people are going to make it to heaven. They teach that only 144,000 people are going to make it to heaven and the odds are that the visitor at your door isn't one of them.

This wonderful news came from Joseph Franklin Rutherford, the second President. After he became President in 1917, they were prophesying that Armageddon was right around the corner. And order to increase the membership, he began to tell his followers that only 144,000 people were going to make it to heaven.

The door to door crews began to tell their prospects that they had better join the Watchtower before its too late because Armageddon is right around the corner and the ranks of the 144,000 were filling fast.

For many years they preached this. However, in 1934 they ran into a terrible problem. In 1934, the Organization grew larger than 144,000 people and Armageddon had yet to occur.

The Watchtower was in a quandary about what to do with all these extra people. Rutherford saved the day when another revelation from God came forth that said that everyone who became a Jehovah's Witness before 1934 would go to Heaven. Everyone who became a Jehovah's Witness after 1934 would stay here on earth and live in a new paradise.

That is why today when you talk to most Jehovah's Witnesses they have absolutely no hope of ever going to heaven. They believe it because Rutherford told them so. That is so sad.

Perhaps the most cultic doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses is their doctrine concerning Jesus Christ and the trinity.

Let's look at their book, *Let God Be True*.

"The justice of God would not permit that Jesus as a ransom be more than a perfect man. And certainly not the supreme God almighty in the flesh. Some insist that Jesus, when on earth, was both God and man in completeness. This theory is wrong. The Holy Spirit is not a person and is therefore not one of the Gods of the Trinity." (page 87)

That's another common mistake they make in defining the Trinity, they define it as three separate Gods. However, Christianity is not polytheism.) But going further on they say, "The Trinity doctrine was not conceived by Jesus or the early Christians. 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. The obvious conclusion therefore is that Satan is the originator of the Trinity doctrine."(Ibid., page 92)

Then concerning his death and resurrection they say, "He was put to death a man, but was raised from the dead a spirit being. The man Jesus is dead, forever dead." (page 122)

So King Christ Jesus was put to death in the flesh and was resurrected an invisible spirit creature." How do you deal with someone who comes to your front door and brings this theology? How do you share your faith with them?

Recently, a pair of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on Ron Carlson's door. He is my coauthor in our book, **Fast Facts on False Teachings**. After the usual greetings, Ron invited them in on the condition that they would answer a few of his questions regarding the Jehovah's Witnesses.

They said they would be glad to answer any questions that he may have. They were sitting across the kitchen table from Ron when he said, "You know, I guess I really only have one question. Throughout your literature, you continually say that the Trinity is not taught in Scripture."

"That's right," the older of the two responded with a warm smile. "Nowhere in the Bible will you find the word Trinity."

But Ron countered, "The Trinity is taught throughout God's Word."

"Sorry, nowhere in the Bible will you find the word Trinity." He replied.

Ron answered, "Well you won't find the word Trinity. That's a Latin term. It only means three in the unity of one. It's simply a term used to describe what God has revealed to us. You use the term theocratic kingdom more than any other term in your literature. Can you show me one place in the Bible where theocratic kingdom is found? It's not in there."

"I'll tell you something," Ron continued, "If you stop using the term theocratic kingdom, I'll stop using the term trinity."

The elder Witness paused before he answered. "But the Trinity is not rational, you can't understand it."

"Well sir," Ron answered, "who told you that because you could not understand something it's not a reality? Let me ask you a question. Do you fully understand Einstein's formulation? The basis of his theory of relativity, the motion of all bodies in a circular universe moving relative to each other? Which he later developed into the quantum theory of light which was the foundation stone for his unified field theory? Do you fully understand that?"

They look warily and silently at Ron. He said, "If you tell a physics professor at the University you understand it he will probably flunk you because he doesn't understand it. I can guarantee you that if an atomic bomb went off outside this building right now that you would have immediate, scientific verification of it, whether or not you ever understand it."

They remained silent. Ron continued, "The question is not what our three pound brain can understand. The question is what has God from His infinite eternal perspective has chosen to reveal to us concerning His own nature?"

Ron paused and looked at both men. "You do believe the Bible, don't you?" "Oh yes, we believe the Bible" they responded. "

Ron was warming to the task. He said, "That's good! Why don't we go to God's Word then and see what God has to say about the trinity. Why don't you put away all your magazines and books, and I will put away all my lexicons, concordances and dictionaries. Why don't we just go to God's Word and see what God has to say."

Jehovah's Witnesses main denial and stumbling block is the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. For that reason, we in ministering to Jehovah's Witnesses, we need to deal with that specifically.

There are many passages that show the clear teaching of the deity of Jesus Christ. Jehovah Witnesses love the book of Revelation more than any other Book in the Bible. And since they love it so much, you might as well use it with them.

Ron brought out his Bible and smiled. "Let's begin and you will see something very interesting develop here," he promised.

Ron turned to Revelation 1:8.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Ron asked them, "Who is speaking here? I am the Alpha and Omega, says who?" The younger man answered, " Says the Lord God - Jehovah - God!".

"You are absolutely right, " Ron answered. "We believe that the Alpha and Omega is Jehovah God, just as it says."

Ron continued, "Turn to Revelation 21: 5-7. "

"He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. "

Here again we see the identification that Alpha and Omega is Jehovah God. The Watchtower visitors smiled broadly and immediately agreed with Ron. " You are absolutely right," said the elder of the two. " We believe that Alpha and Omega is "Jehovah God. That's what it says."

"Turn to Revelation 22," Ron continued, "beginning with verse 13."

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Again, the visitors responded that it referred to Jehovah God, the Father.

Ron said, "There's just one more verse, do you think you could help me with it?"

"Oh," they said, "We'd be glad to." They openly smiling now as Ron appeared to grasp their understanding of Jehovah God.

Ron was on a real roll, now. He said, "It's Revelation 1:17-18. Will you read it for me?" he asked.

They turned in their Watchtower Bible and the elder one began to read.

"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

Ron said, "Stop. I've been trying to figure out who the first and the last is. Tell me who he is."

They said, "We just saw who the first and the last is. The first and the last is Jehovah God."

Ron said, "You mean to tell me the first and the last is Jehovah God?"

They said, "Of course he's Jehovah God."

Ron replied, "Well, keep reading."

"I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

There was a hush that followed. Ron then asked them, "When did Jehovah die?" When did God die?" There was no answer as the men stared silently into their scriptures.

Finally the man who did most of the talking said, " I have never seen *that* before."

"Well," Ron answered, "Is this your own Bible, published by the Watchtower?"

He said, "Well yes, but I've never seen that before."

Ron again asked them, "So, tell me. When did Jehovah die?" They just kept looking at the verse.

At last, he quietly answered, "But Jesus died."

Ron said, "Oh, you mean Jesus is Jehovah God?"

He said, "Well, no. He can't be."

"Why not," Ron asked?

"Well, if Jesus *is* Jehovah God, that would change everything else in the Bible. Everything else we believe about him."

" You know, that's what I thought too," Ron answered."

The older man stood. "We have to leave now."

Ron said, "Sir, could you find out for me when Jehovah died? Would you go back to your Kingdom Hall and ask your overseer when did Jehovah die? When you get the answer could you bring your Watchtower leaders back to my house so they could tell me? I would really appreciate that." Needless to say, they never returned.

Jesus Christ was one hundred percent God and he was one hundred percent man. You see, the Jehovah's witnesses can deal with the humanity of Christ, but will not submit to His divinity. Where does that leave them? The Apostle, Paul helps clarify this point for us.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11).

Paul is telling us that though Jesus Christ is eternally God by nature he did not cling to his prerogative as God's equal, but he chose to humble himself and take on human flesh. Christ did not give up his divine

nature. But while on earth Jesus Christ chose to temporarily self impose limitations upon his divine attributes.

While on earth, Jesus Christ chose not to be omniscient. He chose not to be omnipotent and he chose rather to live as a man and to submit himself fully to the will of the father, to do the father's will on earth. When he died on that cross, he was the perfect sacrifice, the infinite sacrifice, the eternal lamb of God who shed his blood once for all time for the remission of sins.

It doesn't matter what the Jehovah's Witnesses believe about Jesus. One day, every single one of them, including every leader who perpetuated this gross heresy, will have to meet the Master. ON that day, *"every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Whether it's at the banqueting table of joy or at the great white throne judgment of the damned, every knee will bow.

Our prayer is that God would open up the hearts and minds of these people who are ensnared in this foolishly created, manmade system and organization, as they believe the lie and try to earn their salvation through the watchtower, apart from Jesus Christ. We pray that they would come to know the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who loves us and desires that we come into a personal relationship with Him. We pray for the lost members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, people ensnared by lying leaders.

The Word of God says : *"Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray."* (Isa. 9:16) The King James Version says that they are *destroyed*. What an ignoble end for a misled people who only seek to serve God. What a tragedy.

We thank God for Jesus Christ, who took our sin and nailed it to the cross and covered it with His shed blood as the infinite payment, the eternal lamb of God once for all time. We thank the Lord for the Holy Spirit, who comes and lives in us and gives us new life. To God be the honor and glory and praise.. We worship Him alone and we thank you, Lord we love you, Lord. "Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

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