

Jehovah's Witness Beliefs in a Nutshell

History of the Watch Tower

The Jehovah's Witnesses organization is one of the most aggressive and fastest growing cults in the world. As of 2021 they report 8.6 million members worldwide. They have nearly 120,00 congregations and are represented in 239 countries and territories.

They are growing because of their zealous door-to-door evangelism. Also, because so many believers are ill prepared to make a solid defense of the scriptures, they continue unchallenged in the proclamation of their false doctrine.

The history of the Jehovah's Witnesses begins with the founder of the organization Charles Taze Russell. He was a member of the Congregational Church who came to reject the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment. In 1870, with no formal education, he began a Bible society which eventually named him pastor. In 1884, he founded Zion's Watchtower and Tract Society in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is now the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society headquartered north of New York City in Tuxedo Park, New York. Since their founding, they have grown into an organization which produces more literature in one year than the Christian and Catholic churches combined. And, of all the cults, their missionary forces are among the most well trained in evangelism.

Witnesses deviate from biblical Christianity in several areas. First, like all the cults, they deny the Trinity. In so doing they vehemently deny that Jesus is God. This is their greatest error because Jesus said, "*Before Abraham was I am.*" They believe there is one God, Jehovah and that Jesus, is actually Michael the Archangel, the first of God's creation, who became flesh at the incarnation. After the resurrection, He returned to heaven as Michael the Archangel. The Holy Spirit is not God but an active force much like electricity or fire.

Second, Witnesses deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, but instead believe He was raised as a spirit and manifested Himself several times in different materialized bodies.

Third, they deny the existence of hell and eternal punishment, but believe in total annihilation after death. Only the elite ruling class, the 144,000, are allowed to go to heaven. The faithful Jehovah's Witnesses remain unconscious after death till they are resurrected in the Millennium. Those who are not in the organization are annihilated after death.

Fourth, Witnesses have a works-oriented salvation. Salvation is not based upon a relationship with Christ, but found in the organization. One must serve the society, and depending on one's faithfulness and absolute obedience, one may be saved. To them, there is no salvation outside of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

Fifth, they believe that Jesus returned invisibly in 1914 and established His throne in heaven. At Armageddon, God will destroy all evil, and abolish all the world's governments, and establish a new Paradise on earth. Then the living and resurrected Jehovah's Witnesses will inherit Paradise earth. The 144,000 mentioned earlier will rule

with Jesus. At this time all unbelievers who have died will be raised (with some exceptions) and will study under the Witnesses during the Millennium, a period of a thousand years. Studying with them will be the unbelievers who have survived Armageddon. After the thousand years, their faith will be tested because God will release Satan from the abyss. At that point all unbelievers will have to choose between Satan or Jehovah. Those who reject Jehovah will be annihilated.

False Prophecies of the Watch Tower

One of the most effective ways to evangelize Jehovah's Witnesses is to focus on the deity of our Lord Jesus and show the contradiction between what they believe and what the Bible teaches. The goal is to break down their faith in the Society. Remember, they believe that salvation is found only in this organization. The Watch Tower Society is seen as the spokesman for God. If you can show Witnesses the serious errors of the organization, they will begin to have doubts and questions. This can sometimes lead them to leave the Society.

Showing the Society's record of false prophecy can cause their members to question the organization. This approach is effective because they claim to have the true understanding of the end times. If we can show them that the organization has been constantly wrong in the area of prophecy, this will certainly make an impact. They are, in fact, false prophets. A powerful witnessing technique is to clearly define what makes a true prophet and a false prophet using Deuteronomy 18:20-22. A true prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and predicts future things which come to pass. A false prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and predicts future things which do not come to pass. Make sure they understand this, for this is the most critical step.

Then ask them, *"Is there an organization that fits the character of a false prophet?"* That's when you say, *"Let's take a look at the Watch Tower Organization."* Mention they their publications have missed their prophecies many times. Here are just a few of those times. They said that the "Battle of the great day of God Almighty (Rev. 16:14), which will end in A.D. 1914, with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced." This 1914 prediction of Christ's return never came true.

Then the Watch Tower predicted that Christ would return in 1925. The 1918 issue of, *"Millions Now Living Will Never Die,"* p. 89 states, "Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the apostle in Hebrews 11 to the condition of human perfection." This proved to be another false prophecy.

The Watch Tower made a third prophecy of the return of Christ; this one was to occur in 1975. The August 15, 1968, issue of, *"Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?"*, p. 494, predicted the return of Christ in 1975. Once again, the Witnesses were shown to be false prophets. If the Witnesses don't believe these articles are real, tell them to look them up in their church's library.

Another interesting prophecy is found on page 154 of their book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Here they state, “*Some of the generation living in 1914 will see the end of the system of things and survive it.*” Of course, this generation has passed. When presented clearly, the record of the Watch Tower's false prophecies is a very effective tool in witnessing to these people.

Belief in Deity

There is one God Almighty--a Spirit Being with a body but not a human body. There is one God and no Trinity.

Incarnations

Christ is Lord and Savior, but not God (Jehovah) incarnate, not a God-man but inferior to God, not part of a Godhead. He was a created spirit being, God's only begotten son, sent to Earth as a perfect human. His sacrifice became the “ransom” price to redeem mankind from sin and death. God created all in heaven and on Earth through Christ, the “master worker,” God's servant. After Christ's resurrection by God, he was “exalted” to a level higher than angel.

After Death

No soul remains after death. Soon, Jesus Christ will return to resurrect the dead, restoring soul and body. Those judged righteous will be given everlasting life on a paradise earth. Those judged unrighteous will not be tormented but will die and cease to exist.

Salvation

You must show faith in God and in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Adhere to the practices, requirements, commandments, laws, and sacraments of the faith. “Witnessing” and active sharing of their faith with others is fundamental. Avoid behaviors that God dislikes, including celebration of birthdays and holidays originating from false religions.

Contemporary Issues

Abortion is wrong. Homosexuality is a serious sin. Gender roles are defined: Men are the head of the household and women are loving caretakers who assist the husband in teaching the children. Divorce is permitted under certain circumstances, but Jehovah hates remarriage unless the divorce occurred as a result of adultery. Service in the armed forces or any form of allegiance to government is prohibited; one must show allegiance only to the Kingdom of Christ. Blood transfusions, along with ingesting blood, are considered wrong, as God said the soul is in the blood. Bone marrow transplants are left to the individual conscience. (Note: other forms of medical treatment are acceptable.)

The Bodily Resurrection of Christ

Another witnessing point for this group is the bodily resurrection of Christ. Witnesses believe that Christ's crucified body was disintegrated by Jehovah never to exist again. Accordingly, Jesus was raised as a spirit who then materialized and appeared in several different fleshly bodies as the angels had done. Indeed, it was in this form that He appeared to His disciples, i.e., He wasn't in a human body; He just appeared to be human.

He ascended into heaven as a spirit and once again became Michael the Archangel. This doctrine can be easily disproved.

First, in Luke 24:36-43, Jesus clearly states in verse 39 that He is not a spirit but a man of flesh and bone. He even ate food to prove that He was not a spirit but had a physical body. In John 20:24-27, Jesus shows Thomas His wounds. Jesus is clearly demonstrating to His disciples that the body previously on the cross had been resurrected. If Jesus had a different body than the one on the cross, He would have been deliberately deceiving the disciples.

Next, turn to some passages where Jesus predicts the resurrection of His body. In John 2:19-21 Jesus says, "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.*" See Acts 2:26-27, another prophecy of the Messiah's bodily resurrection. The prophecies and Jesus' appearances prove a bodily resurrection.

Witnesses cite 1 Peter 3:18 and 1 Cor. 15:44-50 to back up their belief. In 1 Peter 3:18 we read, "*Christ died once and for all... he being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the spirit.*" This verse does not prove Jesus is a spirit. This verse says that Jesus was raised in the Spirit and by the Spirit of God who gives life. Romans 8:11 states that the Holy Spirit was involved in raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus was not raised as a spirit but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Also notice that in John 2:19 it the Bible says that Jesus raised Himself up and in Roman 6:4 the Word says the Father raised Him up! Think about these three passages of scripture: they prove that there is a Holy Trinity. How could the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus do the same thing? The three are one!

According to 1 Cor. 15:50, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Since Jesus is in heaven, Witnesses say He must be a spirit. They are correct in saying that the earthly body cannot enter heaven. However, when Jesus rose, He had a glorified body (Luke 24:39). Therefore, He can dwell in heaven because of His glorified state.

The Holy Spirit

Another avenue of effective evangelism with Jehovah's Witnesses is the subject of the deity of the Holy Spirit. As mentioned earlier, the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the Holy Spirit is not a person because they see the Holy Spirit as a force--much like electricity or fire. Here is what Jehovah's Witnesses say about the Holy Spirit.

In their book *You Can Live Forever In Paradise on Earth*, they state, "As for the 'Holy Spirit,' the so-called third person of the Trinity, we have already seen that this is not a person but God's active force."

In their magazine *Why Should You Believe in the Trinity?* they state, "*To a certain extent it (Holy Spirit) can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations.*"

Here are some verses that are effective in proving the deity of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church about the amount they sold their land for and

the amount they gave to the church. Peter confronts them on this issue and states in 5:3, *“Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit...?”* Peter later states in the next verse, *“You have not lied to men but to God.”* Here the Holy Spirit is called “God” both in our Bibles and in the Witnesses' Bible. The thought here is that you can only lie to an intelligence, a person—not to electricity!

In Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit speaks, *“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.”* It is obvious only an intelligent person can communicate in language.

When you put all these facts together, the fact that the Holy Spirit is called God, He can be lied to, He speaks, and He can be grieved, the evidence shows that the Holy Spirit is a person, not an inanimate force.

Close

Jehovah's Witnesses, like those in any other works-based group, desperately need to hear the message of grace. Though there is no “sure-fire” method for witnessing, perhaps the thoughts and suggestions mentioned above might prove helpful. Salvation is a miracle of God. Only God can open eyes blinded by the god of this world. Only God can cause those who are dead in sin to live. Prayer for these and others bound in false cults and doctrine are so vital and necessary. Former Jehovah's Witness, Joan Cetnar says this, *“Talk to God about the person more than you talk to the person about God.”* These are words worth remembering.