

Jehovah's [Not So Christian] Witnesses

By Leonard C. Albert

It was raining this particular Easter Saturday morning. We heard a knock at the side entrance of our home. We had two visitors from the area Kingdom Hall. The older one was a nice-appearing girl of about 18 years old. The younger one was a boy of about ten. The girl had invitations for us to join them at the Kingdom Hall for a "Memorial of Christ's Death" service the next day. It was pouring rain, it was Saturday, but here they were with a very personal invitation to visit their church. At the time I wondered how many Christians would be out on this rainy morning inviting people to attend Easter services at their church.

Who are these people? They are a group of people who follow the teachings of their founders, Charles Taze Russell, and his successor, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford. They date back to 1870 when Russell organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. From humble beginnings they now are a major cultic group with worldwide influence.

It doesn't take long after studying this group to realize that these people have some strange teachings. According to them, Jesus is really Michael the Archangel, the first and greatest creation of Jehovah God, who came to earth and lived as a man and died and rose a spirit, who came back invisibly in 1914 and established his headquarters in Brooklyn, New York! They deny the trinity, eternity of the soul, deity of Christ, eternal torment in hell, person of the Holy Spirit, bodily resurrection of Christ, and salvation by faith in Christ just for starters. They think that the cross is pagan, they don't believe in celebrating birthdays or holidays, they don't salute the flag or serve in the armed forces and most of them won't take a blood transfusion. They think heaven is about filled up and only the anointed 144,000 people (all JW's they say) are going there. They hope to escape annihilation at the hand of Jehovah and live in a reign of peace on "paradise earth."

What do they believe? Here are some of their views on major Christian theology:

- 1) **Holy Trinity.** In *Let God Be True*, published in 1952 by the *Watchtower*, it says on page 102, "...Sincere persons who want to know the true God and serve Him find it a bit difficult to love and worship a complicated, freakish-looking, three-headed God."
- 2) **Deity of Christ.** In the Jehovah's Witness publication *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, page 164 reads, "The Bible shows that there is only one God...greater than His Son...and that the Son, as the first-born, only begotten and 'The creation by God' had a beginning."
- 3) **Jesus Christ was Michael the Archangel.** In *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, page 218 they say, "...the Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth."
- 4) **Holy Spirit.** *Watchtower* article, July 15, 1957, states on page 432, "God's Holy Spirit is not a God, not a member of a trinity, not co-equal, and is not even a person. It is God's active force...and...may be likened to a radar beam."
- 5) **The Existence of Hell and Eternal Punishment.** In *Let God Be True* pages 72 and 73 it says, "It is so plain that the Bible Hell is the tomb, the grave, that even an honest little child can understand it, but not the religious theologians."

- 6) **The Soul of Man.** Again, in the Watchtower book titled *Let God Be True* on page 66 it says, "...It is seen that the serpent (the Devil) is the one who originated the doctrine of the inherent immortality of the soul."

What do they practice? Most of their dogma comes from their printed magazine called the *Watchtower*. Since the first issue in 1879 the magazine has not missed an issue. The *Watchtower* has a circulation larger than any other magazine in the world. Each issue has a print run of more than 42 million copies. *Awake!* is second with a circulation of 41 million copies each issue. They now have a strong online presence as well.

Here are just a few of their practices:

- 1) They believe that only the Watchtower Society can interpret the Bible. Individuals cannot.
- 2) Most of them do not expect to go to Heaven. They teach that there are two classes of Christians: A "little flock" who are born-again children of God (this would be the 144,000), and the "great crowd" or "other sheep", who will live in "Paradise" on earth after the destruction of the unbelievers. Only the "little flock" will go to heaven.
- 3) They are told that salvation must be earned through works—that in order to get their name written in that Book of Life it will depend on one's works.
- 4) Witnesses are forbidden from saluting the flag or engaging in political activities because they see that as an act of worship.
- 5) They do not celebrate birthday parties, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, or Easter because they say they are unbiblical celebrations.
- 6) Blood transfusions are strictly prohibited except in extreme cases. They base this practice on Acts 15:20, 21, 25 and similar verses advising Christians to "abstain from blood."

Why is their Bible translation different? They have their own translation of the Bible (we believe it is false) called *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* and they believe it should be used over any other version. In a publication titled *What Has Religion Done For Mankind*, (printed in 1951) page 351 says, "Outstanding among Bibles is the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures...Accuracy, uniformity, clarity, and up-to-date language mark this excellent work. Bible study aids without equal make this an indispensable help to sincere searching students of God's Word." I have been studying this translation for over 50 years and I can tell you conclusively that it contains many errors. Greek scholar Bruce Metzger said that "the Jehovah's Witnesses have incorporated in their translation of the New Testament several quite erroneous renderings of the Greek." (*Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ, Theology Today*, April 1953). They have altered the scriptures to fit their own theology. This version is not to be trusted.

What goes on in their church? I have been to their Kingdom Hall. The service is slow, methodical, and boring. Everything they do reflects their theology—even their songs. The words of one that we sang still ring in my ear: "From house to house from door to door we separate the sheep from goats." All evangelical Christians are the "goats." They only use books printed by the Watchtower and they follow them to the letter. They have the questions and answers printed. When they say they study the Bible they really do not—they study books with the answer to the questions printed on every page. There are no discussion topics. The Witnesses do not allow you

to question the authority of these books. No real bible study goes on. After the service they meet for a little fellowship. The night I was there, they gathered around me and asked where I was from etc. I told them that I “found the truth.” To them this means a person has become a Jehovah’s Witness. Then I said, “I have found Jesus!” “He is the way, the truth and the life!” We had quite a discussion that night!

Are they growing and, if so, why? Well, here is the answer to the first part of this question from their own website:

Fast Facts—Worldwide*

- **239**—Lands where Jehovah’s Witnesses worship
- **8,699,048**—Jehovah’s Witnesses
- **5,666,996**—Free home Bible courses conducted
- **19,721,672**—Attendance at the annual Memorial of Christ’s death
- **117,960**—Congregations

*Source: www.jw.org “2022 Grand Totals”

In 2022 they baptized 145,552 into their 117,960 Kingdom Halls. This means that last year they added to their churches nearly 400 new people each day. Also, in this time frame, they spent 1,501,797,703 hours doing “field work.” Let that sink in...they spent one and a half billion hours on the streets and going from “house to house.”

They are growing not because of a biblical *message* but because of a biblical *method*. They are doing exactly what the Luke 14:23 tells us to do: “And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” (KJV). The only problem is that they have the wrong message. We must show them Jesus and His deity.

It is so tempting to try to debate all their funny teachings. I mean really! How can saluting a flag be idolatry? There is nothing Biblically wrong with having a birthday party or celebrating Christmas or Easter. But think it through—what if you could convince a JW that all these teachings were false? Would he or she be saved? The truth is that only Jesus can save the lost! We must pray for them, share our testimony of a personal relationship with Jesus with them and share the joy we have in serving the Lord Jesus—not the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.