

Back To Basics

Volume 5

DECEMBER 2007

Number 12

A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles

SPECIAL ISSUE: THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Johnie Edwards

Who hasn't had a knock on their door to find a couple of people affirming that they are Jehovah's Witnesses? Have you ever thought about the fact that there are really no such people today?

• **THE APOSTLES WERE WITNESSES.** Jesus said to the apostles, "And ye are witnesses of these things" (Lk. 24:48). That is, the apostles were eye witnesses. "And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The witnesses referred to in this passage were only the apostles. The word "witnesses" has no reference to a religious group known as Jehovah's Witnesses!

• **WITNESS REQUIREMENT.** To be a witness of the Lord, one had to have personal acquaintance with Jesus. To have been an apostle of the Lord, one had to have seen the Lord after His resurrection. "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). So, no one is a witness as were the apostles. Today, only the testimony of the real witnesses can be preached!

• **THEIR AUTHORITY.** While we make our appeal to the authority of the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), the Witnesses place their faith in *The Watchtower And Tract Society*. They are more loyal to that human society than to the Bible. In fact, they have their own translation known as the *New World Translation of the Scriptures*. They will not reveal the translator!

• **TAKES MORE THAN THE BIBLE.** *The Watchtower, September 15, 1910* states, "Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, we see, also, that if anyone lays The Scriptures Studies, Watchtower books, aside, even after he has read them for ten years....if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years; Our experience shows that within two years, he goes into darkness...if he had not read a word in the Bible, he would have the light of the Scriptures."

This special issue of *Back To Basics* takes a look at who the Jehovah's Witnesses are and examines some of their major doctrinal errors. This is material you will want to hold on to and have some extra copies available to pass on to others.

THE 144,000

Johnie Edwards

The group known as *Jehovah's Witnesses* teach that only 144,000 will go to heaven, the rest will live on a cleaned up earth. They call this number "the little flock." Their book, *Let God Be True* states, "...the Bible is conclusive in predicting that the final number of the heavenly church will be 144,000...All other creatures receiving life at God's hand through the Kingdom arrangement will not be a part of the church, but will live upon the earth..." (p. 113). Is all this true? We take a basic Biblical look.

- **THEIR PROOF TEXT.** We are told that Revelation 14:1, 3 teaches that only 144,000 will be permitted into heaven. Read it and see if it says that to you. "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

- **LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE?** The Jehovah's Witnesses are good at picking and choosing what they want to be literal and what they deem as figurative. They tell us that the 144,000 of Revelation 14 is a literal number. They must have

never read Revelation 1:1 where John penned, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The book of Revelation must be read and understood in light of the fact that this is a book of symbolic language!

- **IF THIS IS LITERAL LANGUAGE.** Let's agree, for argument sake, that the 144,000 is a literal number. The rest of the context then has to be taken literally as well, right? So we look:

Only Jews are of this number (Rev. 7:4; 14:4).

Just men are included (Rev. 14:4).

Virgins only are in this group (Rev. 14:4).

I wonder if the Jehovah's Witnesses are willing to accept the consequences of their doctrine?

- **ALL ARE INVITED.** The Lord's invitation to be saved is addressed to "whosoever" (Rom. 10:13-17), "all ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Mt. 11:28-30), and "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mk. 16:16). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

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Back To Basics, published by Edwards Publishers, is a 16-page monthly journal dedicated to teaching first principles. www.bcktobscs.com

Subscription Information:

One Year: \$12.00

Single Issue: \$1.00

Available in bundles of 10 or more

WILL THE EARTH BE DESTROYED OR BECOME A PEACEFUL PARADISE?

John Isaac Edwards

According to the *Authorized Site of the Office of Public Information of Jehovah's Witnesses*, "The earth will never be destroyed or depopulated but will become a peaceful paradise" (www.jw-media.org/beliefs/trueworship.htm).

• **USE OF FOR EVER.** Jehovah's Witnesses take passages from Psalms, a book of poetry, which speak of the earth abiding for ever and conclude that the earth will never be destroyed or depopulated (Ps. 37:29; 78:69; 89:36-37; 104:5). *For ever* is used two ways in the Scriptures: (1) an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity; (2) period of time, age. One must consider the context and other passages of Scripture to determine whether a thing is eternal or age-lasting. Other passages will show that the earth is only for a limited period of time and will be destroyed. Wonder why Jehovah's Witnesses do not keep the Sabbath or observe the Passover, since these were "for ever" (Ex. 31:16-17; 12:14, 17, 24)?

• **USE OF PROPHECIES.** Jehovah's Witnesses take Old Testament prophecies like "nation shall not lift up sword against nation" (Is. 2:4) and "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb" (Is. 11:6) to paint a picture of peace, happiness, and prosperity on earth. The contexts of these passages show that the statements are describing the peaceable nature of the Lord's kingdom, which will be "delivered up" to the Father in Heaven at the end when the Lord comes (1 Cor. 15:24). By the way, why will the kingdom be delivered up, if it's going to be here on earth?

• **THE EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED.** Both Old and New Testaments state the earth will end. Genesis 8:22 indicates the earth will not always remain. Unlike the Lord whose "years shall have no end," "the earth and the heavens...shall perish" (Ps.

102:25-27), quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away..." (Mt. 24:35). Peter used the expressions *pass away*, *melt*, *burned up*, and *dissolved* to teach the annihilation of the earth and all its contents in the coming day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:10-11).

• **HOPE, EARTHLY OR HEAVENLY?** There is "one hope" (Eph. 4:4), "the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23), "laid up...in heaven" (Col. 1:5). It is not laid down on earth! Wonder why we will "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Th. 4:17), if we're going to live with Him on earth? Christian's have a heavenly hope. Jehovah's Witnesses have an earthly hope, which is really no hope at all.

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WHO ARE THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES?

Marc W. Gibson

You hear a knock at the door. You open it and there stand two individuals nicely dressed. After exchanging greetings, they begin making some general observations about the deplorable condition of our world with all its wars, violence, and religious division. They ask you to envision a future time when there will be a beautiful paradise on earth with no evil or violence. They state confidently that Jesus is coming back to this earth to rule over this paradise for a thousand years. They offer you some literature and want to set up a time to study these things further. On closer examination, you notice that the literature is published by a *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society* and that the religious group is called the *Jehovah's Witnesses*. Just what is this Watchtower Society and who are the Jehovah's Witnesses? This article will be a brief overview of the history, organization, and beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

• **CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL.** The history of the Jehovah's Witnesses begins with Charles Taze Russell, who was born near Pittsburg, Pennsylvania in 1852. As a teenager, he came to question his religious upbringing, in particular the doctrine of eternal punishment. At the age of eighteen (1870), he came under the influence of Adventism, which had come out of the Millerite movement. Here he was further influenced by teachings that promoted the non-existence of eternal torment, and other doctrines about the second coming of Christ and Biblical chronology. He began a study group in Pittsburg which eventually elected him "Pastor" in 1876. He began crystallizing his new views in writings, the most important of which was his founding in 1879 of the new publication, *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* (this eventually became *The Watchtower* publication in

1931). The *Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society* was formed in 1881 and incorporated in 1884 with Russell as president. As Russell's theology developed over the years, he wrote a series of books called the *Millennial Dawn* series, the first of which was *The Plan of the Ages* (1886). Six other volumes appeared (1889, 1891, 1897, 1899, 1904, and 1917). Russell wrote six of the seven volumes himself in which he denied eternal punishment, the Trinity, the soul of man, and advanced the notion of a millennial earth (these volumes would later be titled *Studies in the Scriptures*). In 1908-1909, Russell moved his headquarters and printing business to Brooklyn, New York, where is found the present-day *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York*. The years from 1893 until Russell's death in 1916 saw some growth in the movement, but also controversy, trials, and scandals in Russell's own life and work. The secrets of his success included his personal magnetism, usage of Scripture in a way that those ignorant of the Bible could not readily see his error, offering a message that appealed to those who did not want to believe in an eternal hell, and the propagation of his message far and wide through the printed page.

• **J. F. RUTHERFORD.** The second most important historical figure in Jehovah's Witness history is Joseph Franklin ("Judge") Rutherford (1869-1942). Rutherford was elected president of the Society in 1917. It was during his time that the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" was adopted at Columbus, Ohio in 1931, to differentiate between the Watchtower and those who had left the movement over the years to form other groups. A strong effort was being made at this time to vindicate Jehovah's "name" which is reflected in the choice of the title "Jehovah's Witnesses" (which is based on the words

of Isaiah 43:10). Rutherford wrote a number of books during his tenure, including *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (1920), in which he claimed that millions of people that were alive at that time would never die. Other doctrinal changes and developments took place during these years (refusal to salute the flag, etc.). Rutherford died in 1942 and was followed by Nathan H. Knorr who was president until 1977.

• **1940s TO THE PRESENT DAY.** In the mid-twentieth century, the two main publications of the Jehovah's Witnesses were *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* From 1950-1960, a new translation of the Old and New Testaments, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, was produced and it reflected the particular doctrinal views of the Witnesses (e.g. Jn. 1:1; Col. 1:16-17). This time period also saw some significant changes:

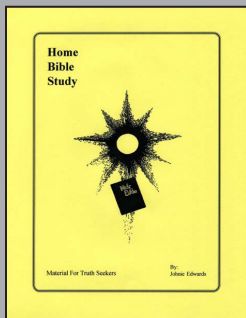
- 1) Numerous anonymous books published with only the authorized "stamp" of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- 2) Modern Kingdom Halls built for worship and organizing of large conventions.
- 3) The training of members with a developed door-to-door ministry.
- 4) Silence in handling members who leave and write critical reviews.

• **ORGANIZATION AND DOCTRINES.** All members, organized into congregations of up to 200 members, are considered ordained ministers. A body of elders watches over each congregation, with 20 congregations forming a circuit, and about 10 circuits grouped into a district. Traveling elders make periodic visits to congregations. The headquarters has a multi-national governing body of longtime Witnesses based in the international offices in Brooklyn, New York. (for more information, see jw-media.org/beliefs/membership.htm and watchtower.org). False teachings include denials of the deity of Jesus, eternal punishment, and the immortal soul of man. Error is also taught on the establishment of the kingdom, the 144,000, and the second coming, just to mention a few.

• **AVERSION TO EXAMINATION.** Usually a visit from the Witnesses will involve two individuals: an older, experienced person and one who is learning how to do such visits. It has been my experience that, when they are challenged, most of these visits are soon ended. They usually are not as well-versed in the Scriptures as they are in Watchtower literature, and are not interested in debates or discussions that would publicly contrast their beliefs with the Bible (though their early leaders debated publicly: *Russell-Eaton Debate* [1903]; *Russell-White Debate* [1908] — L. S. White was a gospel preacher and this debate is still in print; *Rutherford-Troy Debate* [1925]).

The Jehovah's Witnesses are not true witnesses of God, but are teachers of the doctrines of men which deny basic Bible truths. Their history, organization, and teachings reveal them to be a false religion of man. They may demonstrate sincere zeal and dedication, but they are *not* the true church of Jesus that you can read about in the Bible (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:15).

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THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

Donnie V. Rader

A study *about* or *with* the Jehovah's Witnesses will not be effective without knowing a little about the *Watchtower Tract and Bible Society*. Just what is this society? How did it start? What place does it have in the lives of the Jehovah's Witnesses?

• **EARLY LEADERS.** The movement was started by Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). Russell had been influenced by the Adventist thinking of William Miller who himself had predicted the return of Christ for the year 1843. Later, Miller recalculated it for 1844. In 1879, Russell started a paper called *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. Two years later (1881), he formed *Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society*. In 1896, the name was changed to *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania*. The purpose of this organization was "...the dissemination of Bible truths in various languages by means of the publications of tracts, pamphlets, papers and other religious documents..." (*Qualified to be Ministers*, 304). When Russell died, Joseph Franklin Rutherford (1869-1942) was appointed President of the society (1917). He was also known as "Judge" Rutherford since he served as a substitute Judge some years earlier. During his term, the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" was adopted (Convention of July 24-30, 1931 at Columbus, OH).

• **THE SOCIETY.** There are two societies that form the operation for the Jehovah's Witnesses. *The Watch Tower Tract and Bible Society of Pennsylvania* is the parent organization that serves as the international society. *The Watch Tower Tract and Bible Society of New York* is the United States Branch organization.

• **THE ORGANIZATION.** "From the top down the Society is composed of the chief officers, the Board of Directors, then to the Branch Servant, District Servant, Circuit Servant, Congregational Servants, Special and General Pioneers, and then the lowly Kingdom Publisher" (*Maurice Barnett, Jehovah's Witnesses Volume 1*, p. 5). Under Russell and Rutherford, each congregation was independent with its own leaders. However, by 1938 the Society was making all positions appointments of the Society.

• **THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIETY.** "It is now quite evident that, despite the claim of this movement to depend on the Bible alone, the real source of authority for Jehovah's Witnesses is the interpretation of the Bible handed down by the 'anointed class' at Watchtower headquarters. To use their own language, the Witnesses insist that the Watchtower Society is 'the instrument or channel being used by Jehovah to teach his people on earth.'" (*Anthony A. Hoekema, Jehovah's Witnesses*, p. 35).

They believe the Society leaders are inspired. Thus, you will not get a Jehovah's Witness to say he will take what the Bible alone says over and above what the Watch Tower Society says when there is a difference.

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FAILED PROPHECIES OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Steven F. Deaton

The Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society is a false religion. Its leaders have not only promoted false doctrine that is easily detected by casual reading of the Bible, but they have also spouted false prophecies for over 100 years. How someone can be deceived by this is beyond the scope of this article. What we will focus on is the failed predictions and how this proves the Jehovah's Witness religious organization to be counterfeit. What follows is a partial list of prophecies made by various Witnesses through the years. It comes from the website www.bible.ca. The complete list fills over 20 pages. We feel this is the best way to show you that the organization is led by false prophets; that is, read their predictions and simply take note that each one has failed to materialize. There are references for each quote and our comments will be interspersed.

- "In the coming 26 years, all present governments will be overthrown and dissolved" (*C.T. Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 2, pp. 98-99, 1889*). Twenty-six years from 1899 was 1925. World governments survived through this time period. The prophecy failed.

- "Remember that the forty years' Jewish Harvest ended October A.D. 69, and was followed by the complete overthrow of that nation; and that likewise the forty years of the Gospel age harvest will end October, 1914, and that likewise the overthrow of 'Christendom,' so-called, must be expected to immediately follow" (*Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 2, p. 245, 1889*). October 1914 has come and gone, and right or wrong "Christendom" is still around. The prophecy failed.

- "Complete destruction of the 'powers that

be' of 'this present evil worlds' - political, financial, ecclesiastical - about the close of the Time of the Gentiles; October A.D. 1914" (*C.T. Russell, Studies in the Scriptures, IV, p. 622, 1897*). Same prophecy, same outcome—failure.

- 1908 "In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished at the end of A. D. 1914" (*The Time Is At Hand; 1889; 1908 ed.; p. 99*). "Studying God's Word, we have measured the 2520 years, the seven symbolic times, from that year 606 B.C. and have found that it reached down to October, 1914, as nearly as we were able to reckon. We did not say positively that this would be the year" (*Watchtower, November 1, 1914, p. 325*). Yes, you did say positively that 1914 would be the year. To deny it is to outright lie. Yet, to a false prophet this is as natural as breathing.

- "There will be no slip-up...Abraham should enter upon the actual possession of his promised inheritance in the year 1925" (*Watchtower, Oct. 15, 1917, p. 6157*). "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" (*Millions Now Living Will Never Die, p. 89, 1920*). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not return in 1925. The Bible teaches that ALL men will be raised in the same hour (Jn. 5:28-29).

- "1925 is definitely settled by the Scriptures...the Christian has much more upon which to base his faith than Noah had (so far as the Scriptures

reveal) upon which to base his faith in the coming deluge” (*Watchtower April 1, 1923, p. 106*). Hold your breath—“definitely” does not mean definitely. If you think so, you are terribly wrong according to the next quote. “Some anticipated that the work would end in 1925, but the Lord did not state so. The difficulty was that the friends inflated their imaginations beyond reason; and that when their imaginations burst asunder, they were inclined to throw away everything” (*Watchtower, 1926, p. 232*).

- “The year 1940 is certain to be the most important year yet because Armageddon is very near. It behooves all who love righteousness to put forth every effort to advertise The Theocracy while the privileges are still open” (*Informant, April, 1940, p. 1*). “In the light of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy it is becoming clear that the war of Armageddon is nearing its breaking-out point” (*You may survive Armageddon into God’s new world, 1955, p. 331*). “Discussion of 1975 overshadowed about everything else. ‘The new book compels us to realise that Armageddon is, in fact, very close indeed,’ said a conventioneer” (*Watchtower, 15/10/1966, p. 629*). The Jehovah’s Witnesses were teaching in 1940 that Armageddon was “very near.” They repeated such statements in 1955 and 1966. Now, in 2007, they still believe it is imminent. Time and reality have no meaning to false teachers.

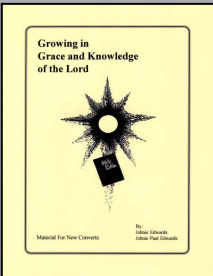
- “Of course, it is easy to say that this group acts as a ‘prophet’ of God. It is another thing to prove it. The only way that this can be done is to review the record. What does it show?” (*Watchtower April 1, 1972, p. 197*). We agree and submit your own writings as proof that you are false teachers.

- “Does this admission of making mistakes stamp them [Watchtower] as false prophets? Not at all, for false prophets do not admit to making mistakes” (*Watchtower, Nov. 1, 1972, p. 644*). Where in the Bible does one prophet of God make a mis-

take? True prophets do not make mistakes in their prophecies because their prophecies come from God Who is infallible; “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

More recently the Jehovah’s Witnesses have backed off date setting. “We do not need to know the exact timing of events. Rather...keeping busy in Jehovah’s service—not on calculating a date” (*Watchtower, Nov. 1, 1995*). Smart move, but it is too little too late. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have established themselves as a false religious organization unworthy of trust on any subject. The Bible teaches we are not to fear or give heed to such false prophets. God said, “when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass...the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Dt. 18:22). Thus, we give no credence to the Jehovah’s Witnesses and realize that if their doctrine is accepted, whether on prophecies or many other points, we will be led to damnation (Mt. 15:7-14).

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DOES MAN HAVE AN IMMORTAL SOUL?

T. Sean Sullivan

There are many who seem to believe that he does not. Among those who will not believe are the Jehovah's Witnesses. In this short article, let's consider three things on this subject.

• **WHAT THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BELIEVE.** The Jehovah's Witnesses religious organization and its controlling influence, The Watchtower, have long disputed against the Biblical fact that man has an immortal soul. Consider this quote from *Happiness - How to Find It, Brooklyn, NY: The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1980*: "[Many] hold to the unscriptural doctrine that man has an immortal soul. 'Is that teaching so bad?' some may wonder. Do not forget that Satan's first lie was that sin would not bring death; the teaching that man has an immortal soul tends to further Satan's lie. It has led millions of persons into fearful dealings with demons who pose as the souls of the dead. And the doctrine makes the Bible truth about a coming resurrection meaningless (p. 171)."

The Watchtower further states that the soul is merely by definition the "life" of a being. In the booklet, *What Happens to Us When We Die?* (Brooklyn, NY: The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1998), the explanation of the term "soul" as used in the Bible is given this way: "The word 'soul' as used in the Bible refers to a person or an animal or to the life that a person or an animal enjoys. Because the soul is simply life of a being, the soul ceases to exist after death" (p. 20).

Again this Watchtower pronouncement upon the Jehovah's Witnesses is entirely unfounded and unverifiable by the Scriptures. They have simply declared what they want to be true without Scriptural backing. The Watchtower has

undermined the teachings of the Scriptures by declaring that mankind is without an immortal soul. They have made their declarations; we now need to move on to consider the "light of truth" on this matter.

• **WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES.** The New Testament contains less than one quarter of the Biblical references to "soul." However, the New Testament definition provides a greater amount of information to the reader. This being the case, "Does the New Testament teach that man has an immortal soul?" Beginning in Matthew 10:28, Jesus proclaims that man is composed of "both body and soul." In Hebrews 4:12, the writer declares that man has both soul and body. Later, in the Hebrew letter, the writer clearly refers to the "soul" of man in Hebrews 10:39. The Bible portrays man as a physical being, with a spiritual counterpart known as an immortal soul.

• **OUR IMMORTAL HOPE.** The famous patriarchs of old are, by Jesus, proclaimed as alive long after their mortal lives were over (Mt. 22:32). Our souls will go on after physical death and will forever be in either the comfort of God's care (1 Th. 4:17; Rev. 14:12-13) or the torments of condemnation (Mt. 25: 46; Rev. 14:9-12). Knowing that we are answerable and we have an immortal hope beyond this life, we must prepare for that time (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Th. 5:1-10). Our hope is found in the joys of an eternal Kingdom called Heaven (Jn. 14:1-6); a place where our immortal souls will abide after we put off our mortal bodies if we are prepared (1 Cor. 15:50-58).

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WHEN WAS THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED?

Jeremy Sweets

The teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses are predicated upon their prediction of the events of the last days. The second coming of Christ was said to have occurred in 1874, ushering in a forty year period. At the end of that forty year period, in 1914, the battle of Armageddon would take place and the kingdom of God would be established. Charles T. Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses stated that "the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished at the end of A.D. 1914" (*Russell, The Time Is at Hand, 1889 ed., p. 99*). The current website for the Jehovah's Witnesses states, "Jesus Christ began to rule as King of God's Kingdom in 1914" (www.watchtower.org/e/20060715/article_02.htm, accessed on 10/23/07). As with any teaching, let us turn our attention to God's word to consider the matter. The kingdom of God refers to God's reign over His subjects. In its most general sense, God exercises universal dominion over all creation (Ps. 24:1-10; 104:19; Dan. 4:34-35). More specifically, God reigns over His special, chosen people. The kingdom of God would be realized in the church under Christ (Mt. 16:18-19; Rev. 1:4-6) and ultimately in Heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-10; 2 Tim. 4:18). Consider when the kingdom under Christ was established.

• IN THE DAYS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

Daniel interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar, outlining four successive world powers. In the days of the fourth kingdom, the Roman empire, God would establish a kingdom that would never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44).

• **NEAR THE TIME OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, JESUS, AND THE APOSTLES.** At the time of Jesus, the

kingdom of God was proclaimed to be near (Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mk. 1:15; Lk. 10:9-11). *Near* is a relative term, but the time frame is further clarified as coming in the lifetime of the disciples (Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1).

• WHEN JESUS ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN.

Daniel prophesied that the kingdom of God would be established when the Son of Man had ascended to God (Dan. 7:13-14). Christ's ascension indicated the coming of the kingdom (Lk. 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11).

• **WITH POWER AND THE GIVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The kingdom would come with power and the giving of the Holy Spirit (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8). These promises were fulfilled in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4).

• BEFORE THE SPREAD OF THE CHURCH.

After Pentecost, the kingdom was proclaimed in conjunction with forgiveness of sins in Christ (Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). Paul and John also spoke of the kingdom of Christ as being already in existence (Col. 1:13-14; Rev. 1:6).

These Scriptures point to Pentecost around A.D. 33 as the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, almost 1900 years before the claims of the Jehovah's Witnesses. If Russell's predictions of 1914 referred to the kingdom of Christ, he was too late. If his predictions refer to the future heavenly kingdom awarded at the end of time, his words did not come to pass (Dt. 18:21-22).

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ETERNAL TORMENT OR ANNIHILATION?

David McPherson

Most all religious groups are willing to agree in the existence of heaven and hell. As for heaven, the majority will accept that it is an eternal state of bliss. What becomes a point of controversy for many is hell. Is it eternal torment or annihilation? Is hell endless agony or a short term total destruction?

• **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ON HELL.** Charles T. Russell, founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization, taught that hell is simply the grave. He also explained the second death as extinction. The alteration of these Biblical terms is still embraced by modern day Jehovah's Witnesses. In their Watchtower book, *Let God Be True*, the Jehovah's Witnesses organization says of hell, "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" (pp. 72-73).

Following death and the grave, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that most of those in hell will be cast into the second death. To them the second death is "the death from which there is no resurrection. They will be burned up root and branch, as completely gone forever as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah" (*The Watchtower Magazine, July 1, 1967, p. 409*).

Ultimately, the wicked will be judged unworthy of further life, be thrown into the "lake of fire" or "second death," thus being destroyed forever. They will become extinct. They will cease to exist. The wicked will be annihilated, become nonexistent. This is their "punishment," so the Jehovah's Witnesses say.

Can such actually be the case? What saith the Scriptures?

• **THE BIBLE ON HELL.** The Bible, God's word, is truth (Jn. 17:17) and must be considered on this and all matters. Regarding hell, we read that it is

a place of everlasting punishment. Jesus said of the wicked, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Mt. 25:46). *Punishment* for the wicked is as continuous as *life* for the righteous.

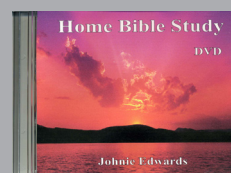
Destruction for the unrighteous is on-going, never-ending. Paul taught that those who know not God and obey not the gospel "...shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Th. 1:9). This is not a one-time, quick devastation. Rest from the pains of hell will never be found.

The torture of the wicked will be ceaseless. They shall be "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). Such a description cannot harmonize with the man-made doctrine of annihilation.

Hell is not the grave, but the continual dwelling place for the ungodly. It is just as long or short as heaven. Both are ageless and inescapable. The Jehovah's Witnesses doctrine of annihilation is false and must be exposed. God help us avoid that "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41). It is real. It is hot. It is eternal.

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QUESTIONS FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Joe R. Price

Questions can be an effective way of teaching the truth. Jesus often asked questions to focus the issue, convict sinners, and expose error (Mt. 21:24; 22:42-45; Jn. 8:43). When Jehovah's Witnesses come to your doorstep, they often ask a question to begin their conversation with you about their teachings. It is wise and helpful for you to have your own list of questions to ask Jehovah's Witnesses. They need to answer your Bible questions. Watch to see whether they give you a Bible answer or a Watchtower answer; whether they "rightly divide" the word of truth or twist it to their own destruction (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:16). Here are a few questions for Jehovah's Witnesses to answer:

• **WHY DO YOU CALL YOURSELVES JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES INSTEAD OF CHRISTIANS?** The Israelites were God's witnesses to the world that there is no God besides Him (Is. 43:10-15, 1). *Witnesses* was not a name God gave Israel; it was a description of what they did; Israel bore testimony of the only true God. However, the disciples of Jesus Christ were given "a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name," and that name is "Christian" (Is. 62:2; Acts 11:26).

• **WHAT HAVE YOU WITNESSED?** Jesus said a witness testifies concerning what he has seen and knows (Jn. 3:11). Have they seen God? No, John 1:18. Have they received a new revelation from God? No, Hebrews 1:1-2. They are not witnesses of Jehovah.

• **IS JESUS TRULY "GOD WITH US" (IS. 7:14; MT. 1:23)?** The Bible clearly says Jesus is fully God as well as fully human. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe it. They assert that Jesus is a created being less than Jehovah. They say Jesus is "a god," not "the God." John 1:1-3 forever establishes that Jesus is God. The Witnesses have corrupted the passage in their *New World Translation*. In John 8:58, Jesus identifies Himself as eternal God, the "I AM" of Exodus 3:13-15 — Yahweh (Jehovah), "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...this is my name forever" (v. 15). Those who diminish the deity of Jesus do not honor the Father who sent him (Jn. 5:23; 1 Jn. 2:23).

• **WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?** Although the Witnesses baptize people, they do not believe it is for the remission of sins. They believe in salvation by faith only. For example, "What, then does Christian baptism signify? It is not a washing away of ones sins, because cleansing from sin comes only through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7). Rather, it is a public demonstration, testifying that one has made a solemn dedication to Jehovah God and is presenting himself to do His will" (*The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, pp. 183-184). In contrast to this error, the Bible says that water baptism is "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), to "wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16), and to "be saved" (Mk. 16:16).

• **DID CHRIST BUILD THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY, AND IF SO, HOW?** The Bible clearly says Jesus built His church, and adds those being saved to it (Mt. 16:18; Acts 2:47). His church is never called the *Watchtower Society*, and Christians were never called *Jehovah's Witnesses*. Teaching about the church of Christ is conspicuously absent from Watchtower literature. In contrast, the New Testament stresses the importance of the church:

Jesus died for it, purchasing it with His blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). Jesus built the church and He is its Savior (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23). The church is the house of God, the temple of God, the body of Christ, the kingdom of God, and the bride of Christ (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19-22; Col. 1:18; Mt. 16:19; Eph. 5:25-27). The church is part of God's eternal plan to make known His wisdom of saving sinners in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:10-11). None of this is emphasized by Jehovah's Witnesses.

• **IS THE GOSPEL FOR ALL, OR ONLY FOR THE ELECT (THE 144,000)?** In truth, the Witnesses believe that very little of the New Testament is for all men today. Most of it, they believe, addresses the 144,000 (the only ones they believe will live in heaven eternally with God). However, Jesus said to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). He said to "make disciples of all the nations" (Mt. 28:19).

• **WHO ARE THE 144,000?** The number 144,000 is used figuratively by the Holy Spirit through the apostle John. It depicts all of the redeemed as known by God, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and identified as His people (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5). Generally, Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe they are part of the 144,000, but of the "great multitude" they say will live forever on a paradisiacal earth. To them, it is prideful presumption to think they will go to heaven; only the 144,000 are there. The Bible teaches that all the redeemed are the 144,000, the elect of God (Eph. 1:4-7; Col. 3:12). This number figuratively describes all of God's people, whom He knows and protects. In Revelation 7:1-10, the 144,000 are on the earth, not in heaven, while the great multitude is standing before the throne of God and the Lamb.

• **DOES THE SOUL SURVIVE DEATH?** The Witnesses believe man is a soul, but does not possess a soul. *Soul* is a comprehensive word that may speak of physical life as well as the spirit of man that is made in the image of God (Gen. 2:7; 1 Th.

5:23; Heb. 4:12). Jesus made a distinction between man's body and his soul in Matthew 10:28. Witnesses believe death ends our existence, yet Jesus told of Lazarus and a rich man who consciously existed beyond death (Lk. 16:19-23).

• **IS HELL REAL AND ITS PUNISHMENT ETERNAL?** The Witnesses deny it, yet Jesus repeatedly affirmed that hell is hot and its terrifying punishment eternal. Sinners will be "cast into hell" (Mt. 5:29-30). It is a place of condemnation (Mt. 23:33). The fire of hell is not quenched and its agony will not be eased (Mk. 9:43-48). The punishment of sinners in hell will last just as long as the righteous will experience eternal life (Mt. 25:46).

• **WILL THE HEAVENS AND EARTH BE DESTROYED?** The Bible says they will "pass away" and "melt" with a great noise and fervent heat; all will be "burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Nothing of this physical world will remain; only a new realm for the righteous (heaven) and for the wicked (hell).

Many more Bible questions could be asked of Jehovah's Witnesses. They reject the word of truth and deny Jesus Christ is eternal God. They must come to repentance toward God and faith in Jesus to be saved (Acts 20:21). These questions can help them do so.

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Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

The Jehovah's Witnesses

T or F

- _____ The Jehovah's Witnesses are true witnesses of God today.
- _____ In the New Testament, disciples were called Christians; not Jehovah's Witnesses.
- _____ The Bible teaches that only 144,000 will go to heaven.
- _____ The earth will never be destroyed, but will become a peaceful paradise.
- _____ The Watchtower Society is the pillar and ground of the truth.
- _____ When a man says a thing will happen but it does not come to pass, he is a false prophet.
- _____ Man is both body and soul.
- _____ The full establishment of the kingdom of God took place in 1914.
- _____ The wicked will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
- _____ Jesus is a created being less than God.

**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

WHEN THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES KNOCK

Craig Thomas

If Jehovah's Witnesses (JW's) have never knocked on your door...just wait, they will. What do you do? Hopefully, you'll realize an opportunity has presented itself to: A) sow the seed of the kingdom (Lk. 8:4-15), B) reach a lost soul with the gospel (Mk. 16:15), C) "give a defense...for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15), and D) "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). I recommend doing five things.

• **PREPARE BEFOREHAND.** JW's are difficult to deal with, even more so if you are not familiar with their false doctrine. But, a multitude of books and websites are dedicated to exposing their error. First, I recommend *The Interactive Bible*. It has an excellent section exposing JW errors (www.bible.ca/jw.htm). Familiarize yourself with their most notable errors so you can readily spot them.

• **GET THE STUDY INTO THE BIBLE AND OUT OF WATCHTOWER LITERATURE.** When the JW's knock on your door, they have a plan. They will want to teach you a series of "canned" lessons from one of the Watchtower books. Go along at first. But at some point in the initial visit, pick a topic where their error is obvious and steer the study into the Bible and away from the Watchtower literature. This will not be easy! They are nearly unwavering in their preference of their own literature versus the Bible. So be firm! Also be prepared for the fact that their version (*New World Translation*) has been "doctored" to support their false teachings. Don't despair, use these differences to further demonstrate JW errors.

• **STEER THE STUDY ONTO THE DEITY OF CHRIST.** I believe the most egregious JW error is their teachings on Christ (1 Jn. 4:2-3). JW's deny Christ's deity by teaching Jesus is an angel, "As chief of the

angels and next to the Father, he [Christ] was known as the Archangel (highest angel or messenger), whose name, Michael, signifies, 'Who as God's or God's representative'" (*Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. V, p. 84*). This is in direct contradiction to plain Bible teaching (Mt. 1:23; Heb. 1:4, 6, 8). JW's also teach Jesus is not eternal, but is a created being, "At the time of his beginning of life he [Jesus] was created by the everlasting God, Jehovah, without the aid or instrumentality of any mother. In other words, he was the first and direct creation of Jehovah God" (*The Kingdom Is At Hand, p. 46*). Or, "...He [Jesus] was the first of Jehovah God's creations" (*Let God Be True, p. 32*). This too contradicts plain Bible teaching (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17). Like all false doctrine, this one ends up "coming back on itself"!

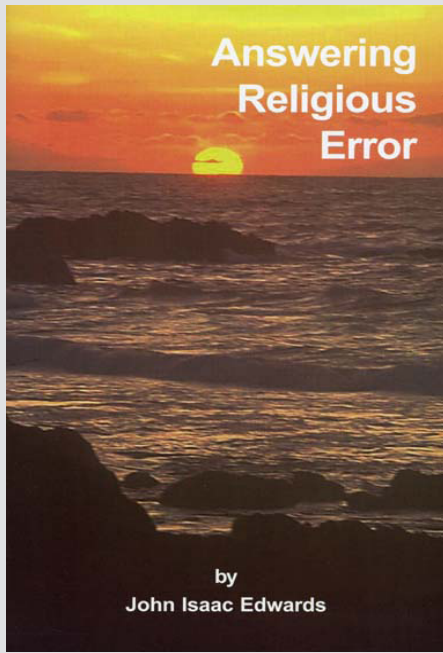
• **EXERCISE PATIENCE.** As you study with a JW, it is critical to realize you are dealing with one deceived by a false religion. Be firm, but exercise extreme patience. Show them you really care about their soul and you are not just out to win an argument. It is also very likely they are a neophyte in their false religion. So, as it becomes evident you are trying to teach them, they will most likely call in more experienced JW's. Be prepared!

• **DON'T EXPECT IMMEDIATE RESULTS.** I have been involved in the conversion of a Jehovah's Witness so I know it is possible. It is critical to remember our duty is to "plant" and "water" and rely on God to give "the increase" (1 Cor. 3:5-7). Trust the power of the truth (Rom. 1:16-17) when it is planted in a "noble and good heart" (Lk. 8:15). You may never know it, but fruit will be borne!

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