

Place Lurgan Baptist 28:10:2008

## THE CHAOS OF THE CULTS

Readings Isaiah 43:10-12 John 14:1-6

### 2. THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The Jehovah's Witnesses are described in Watchtower literature as the "*worldwide Christian society of people who actively bear witness regarding Jehovah and his purposes affecting mankind.*" ( Reasoning from the Scriptures Brooklyn Watchtower Bible and Tract Society 1989, 199. ) They tell us that no other group may lay claim to be being the witnesses of Jehovah, that is through this organization and no other that God teaches the Bible to humanity today. The growth of this organization has been phenomenal. In its first editions of the Watchtower only 6,000 copies of the magazine were produced each month but by 1982 the Witnesses' publishing complex in Brooklyn New York, was producing over 100,000 books and 800,000 copies of its two magazines .... daily. ( Larson's Book of Cults Tyndale House 1982 p 147 ) The fervour and zeal with which the members of this organization get about the task, would many of us in the Christian church to shame. David Legge in his book "**Strongholds Shaken,**" tells us that the average Jehovah's Witness spends ten hours per month in door to door evangelism. This is in addition to attending five hours of meetings during one week.

Is it any wonder that the organization is said to be growing at a rate of 4000 converts per week ? It is claimed that five "*Kingdom Halls,*" are erected worldwide, that the "*Watchtower Magazine,*" is published twice per month in 120 languages. Each issue has over 16 million copies printed and 600,000 of those copies are for the United Kingdom alone. My .... we are not dealing with some small fringe organization but with a society that is active in 235 countries throughout the world. Is there nothing for the evangelical churches to learn from these misguided people ? People are drawn by the very zeal of this movement. Folk today are looking for someone to address them with absolute authority and they find such in this movement. Now usually Jehovah Witnesses are easily identifiable. Two well dressed people will call at your door and talk to you about the end of the world. Or you may hear on television that someone has died because they refused to receive a blood transfusion.

Many witnesses carry a card stating that they are not to receive a blood transfusion in the event that they are found unconscious. ( Lev 7:26-27 Matt 15:9 ) They also refuse to serve in their country's military, they do not salute their country's flag, or celebrate Christmas, birthdays and any other holidays because they believe these to be forms of idolatry. But far more important than their practices are their doctrines they believe and teach. *What is the source of their authority ? What do they believe concerning the Lord Jesus ?* What do they teach concerning salvation. Well, I want to examine this cult in a three fold way.

## (1) THE BACKGROUND OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Incidentally, the title is taken from ( Is 43:10 ) where it is stated “ *Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord. Now let me give you some of the history of this organization.*”

### (a) *IN TERMS OF LEADERSHIP:*

The first recognized leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses was Charles Taze Russell. I suspect that if Pastor Mullan had got the hold of him he would have wanted to say a lot to him. For this group as he often referred to it, was known by many as “ *The Russellites.*” Russell was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1852, and was brought up as Congregationalist and a Presbyterian. As a child he had an awful fear of hell, and in time he came to deny not only the doctrine of hell, but the Trinity, the Deity of Jesus Christ and the person of the Holy Spirit. In 1870 Russell organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh and this group met regularly to study the Scriptures about Jehovah's Kingdom and the Second Coming of Christ. Even though Russell had no formal theological training, he became the leader of this group. In 1879 Russell began a magazine entitled “ *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence,*” since renamed “ *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom,*” commonly known as “ *The Watchtower.*”

After the death of Russell in 1916 a Missouri lawyer named Joseph Franklin Rutherford took over the presidency of the Watchtower Society which was then

known as the Dawn Bible Students Association. In 1931 he changed the name of organization to “ *The Jehovah's Witnesses.*” Now Rutherford was even more opposed to organized religion than Russell had been. He was a prolific writer, and ruled the group with an iron hand. It was under his leadership, the Jehovah's Witnesses began their strong emphasis on to door to door visitation and literature distribution. Following Rutherford's death in 1942, Nathan Knorr took over the leadership, and he probably did more to extend the Watchtower Movement than other leader. Under his presidency the membership soared from 115,000 people to over 2 million members. It was during Knorr's reign in 1961 that the New World Translation of the Bible was produced. In 1977, Frederick William Franz succeeded him as president. More recent presidents have been Milton Henschel in 1992 and Don Adams in 2000.

### (b) *IN TERMS OF LITERATURE:*

In 1879 Charles Taze Russell published the magazine that we know today as The Watchtower. This magazine is the groups main source of teaching, and is considered to be authoritative by its members. In 1886 Russell published the first volume of the Millennial Dawn, which is now known by Jehovah's Witnesses, as a series of books entitled Studies in Scripture. *Then in 1961 came the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.* Now we must not underestimate the influence of literature in relation to this organization. Do you recall that one of the traits of these cults is to avoid independent thinking ? You see, the members of this cult saturate their minds with

Watchtower Publications. They give themselves completely to a study of their own prophets and their own particular version of the Bible, The New World Translation.

***(c) IN TERMS OF LITIGATION:***

One would expect that the man who boldly proclaimed the whole church to be wrong in their teaching would be meticulously truthful himself. But when under oath in the court at Hamilton, Ontario, he was asked. “ *Do you know Greek ?* ” He replied, “ *Oh, yes.* ” When handed a Greek New Testament he proved unable to read the letters of the Greek alphabet. “ *Now,* ” asked Mr. Staunton, “ *are you familiar with the Greek language ?* ” Russell answered “ *No.* ” ( J.J. Ross, Some Facts about the Self-styled Pastor, Charles T. Russell ) He then admitted that he neither knew Latin or Hebrew. Nor had he taken any course in theology. Yet he pronounced all Bible translations unreliable and all other religions anti-Christian. ( What say the Scriptures about Hell ? p 11 )

His domestic life was far from happy and in 1913 the courts granted his wife a divorce, and he was charged with fraud and perjury. Walter Martin has reproduced many of these records in his outstanding book, The Kingdom of the Cults. ( Walter Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults pp 39-45 ) Concerning this first leader of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Martin stated “ ***As a speaker, Russell swayed many, as a theologian, he impressed no one competent, as a man he failed before the true God.*** ” (1)

**(2) THE BIBLE OF THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES**

What is the source of their authority ? On what do they base their teaching ? Well, think about,

***(a) THE CLAIM THEY MAKE:***

*1. They Claim to be God’s Voice in the World Today:*

The Watchtower magazine on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1972 asks the question,

So does Jehovah have a prophet to help them, to warn them of the dangers and to declare things to come ? These questions can be answered in the affirmative. Who is this prophet ? This prophet was not one man, but was a body of men and women. It was the small group of footstep followers of Jesus Christ known at the time as “ *International Bible Students,* ” today they are known as “ *Jehovah’s Christian Witnesses.* ”

Now that is a direct quote from the Witnesses’ literature. Do you recall what God’s Word says concerning prophets who make prophecies that do not come to pass ? Look at ( Deut 18:22 ) The Lord says if the thing does not come to pass we should not listen to the false prophets that make them. Charles Taze Russell made two predictions regarding the Second Coming of Christ and both did not come to pass. But they not only claim to be God’s voice in the world today. 1.

## 2. They Claim the Bible is their Final Authority:

In their book *Let God be True* the writer stated,  
“ *To let God be found true means to let God have the say as to what is the truth that sets men free. It means to accept His Word, the Bible, as the truth .... our obligation is to back up what is said herein by quotations from the Bible for proof of truthfulness and reliability.* ”

( *Let God be True* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed Brooklyn NY Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society 1952 p 9 ) Sounds wonderful does it not ? But is this claim followed ? Or do the interpretations of the leaders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses take precedence over the Word of God. Well, listen carefully to what Russell says. In the Watchtower, on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1910, page 298 Russell states,

If the six volumes of *Scriptures Studies* are practically the Bible, topically arranged with Bible proof texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes *The Bible* in an arranged form. That is to say, they are not mere comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself. Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see also that if anyone lays the *Scriptures Studies* aside, even after he has used 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. **On the other hand, if he had merely read the *Scriptures Studies* with their references and not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the *Scriptures*.**”

( cited by Walter Martin *The Kingdom of the Cults* p46 )  
So it’s the leaders interpretation of the Bible not the Word of God itself, that is the final authority for this organization. I submit the claim they make is dishonest. a.

### **(b) THE VERSION THEY USE:**

For when the Jehovah’s Witnesses use the Bible they refer to their own version, which is *The New World Translation*. Now this Bible has come in for lots of criticism, because it reflects the peculiar doctrine of this Movement. Dr. Bruce Metzger a leading Bible scholar was asked his opinion of the New World Translation and he stated rather than a version of the Bible, *The New World Translation* is a “ *perversion of the Bible.*” Lets look for a moment at ( Jn 1:1 ) *The New World Translation* renders this verse, “ *In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.*” Do you see what they have done ? They have added the word “ *a,*” in front of “ *god,*” in order to support their belief that the Lord Jesus is not God. Now Greek scholars tell us this addition is wrong. Its interesting that as in (1:1 ) so in ( Jn 1:6, 12, 13, 18 ) there is no definite article ( the ) in the Greek before God, yet the translators of the *New World Translation* do not add the indefinite article ( a ) Why then do they insist upon it in ( Jn 1:1 ) To degrade the person of Jesus Christ.

Metzger tells us that the New Testament of the *New World Translation* contains the word *Jehovah* 237 times, when in fact the word “ *Jehovah,*” is not found in one Greek manuscript still in existence. Do you see what they

are at ? Every opportunity they are degrading the person of the Lord Jesus, from being the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father, to be a creature. I suggest that the version they use is distorted. So much for the (1) (2)

### (3) THE BELIEFS OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

What do they believe ? Well,

#### (a) *THEY DENY THE TRINITY:*

*They tell us that the Trinity is a pagan lie invented by Satan and rooted in paganism.* ( Reconciliation Brooklyn Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1928, 101 ) They say there is no Trinity. ( Let God be True pp 100-101 ) They believe that God is only the “ *Jehovah God,*” referred to in the Old Testament, and they deny the concept of one God who exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit .... that the Bible teaches. Now they often quote ( Deuteronomy 6:4 ) as proof of their views. That verse says, “ *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*” But the Hebrew word which is translated “ *one,*” does not refer to an absolute unity but to a composite unity. It’s the same word which is used in ( Gen 2:24 ) to describe the marriage relationship. Here the husband and wife are said to be “ *one flesh.*” That means, that this verse in ( Deut 6:4 ) in no way excludes the Trinity, rather the Hebrew word used for “ *one,*” indicates that more than one person is being referred to. Do you recall that in ( Gen 1:27 ) God said, “ *Let us make man in our image.*”

In ( Gen 3:22 & 11:7 ) the plural is used for God giving evidence of the Trinity. So while the word Trinity is not in the Bible, the concept of the Trinity is clearly derived from the Bible. I mean we are to baptize in a Triune name. “ *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” ( Matt 28:19 ) Now this is most interesting. You see, the distinctiveness of each of the three persons is emphasized by the use of the definite article “ **the.**” Yet the word “ **name,**” is singular in the Greek. One God, but three distinct persons within the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is called God. ( 1 Pet 1:2 ) The Lord Jesus is called God ( Jn 20:28 ) and the Holy Spirit is recognized as God. ( Acts 5:3-4 ) Peter says, we are “ *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*” In ( Heb 1:8 ) we read “ *But unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.*”

God the Father has called His Son God. So what we have now ? Well, the Father is called God, the Son is called God, and in ( Acts 5 ) the Holy Spirit is called God. Here Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of pretence. They sold a possession and gave the impression that they were giving all they got to the work of God. In fact they kept some of the money for themselves. Do you know what Peter said, “ *Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, .... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*” ( Acts 5:3-4 ) They lied to God because the Holy Spirit is a person in the Godhead along with the Father and the Son. Saint Patrick tried to illustrate this doctrine with a shamrock. It is but one leaf but it has three distinct

sections. Now don't be troubled if you cannot fully understand the Trinity. Someone has said , “ ***He who would try to understand the Trinity fully will lose his mind. But he who would deny the Trinity will lose his soul.***” (a)

***(b) THEY DEGRADE THE SAVIOUR:***

They tell us that Jesus is a lesser God. They say that Jehovah's first creation was His “ *only begotten Son,*” who “ *was used by Jehovah in creating all other things.*” ( Aid to Bible Understanding pp 390-391 ) They tell us that Jesus was Michael the arch-angel who became a man. ( The Watchtower 15<sup>th</sup> May 1963, p 307 The New World, 284 ) So Michael gave up his existence as a spirit creature or angel, when his life force was transferred into Mary's womb by Jehovah. There was no incarnation, God in the flesh, rather the Watchtower teaches that Christ was created as an angel, later became a human being, and then at the resurrection became an angel again. My .... Jesus Christ is not Michael the arch-angel. Indeed Michael is specifically called “ *one of the chief princes,*” ( Dan 10:13 ) The fact that is “ *one of them,*” indicates that he is not unique, by contrast the Lord Jesus is the unique “ *King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*” ( Rev 19:16 ) Moreover, the New Testament reveals Christ as the Creator of the angels ( Col 1:16 ) not as one of them.

They degrade the divine person of Jesus Christ. They degrade the definite work of Jesus Christ. They tell us that the finished work of Christ is not enough to ensure heaven. Jehovah's Witnesses must accumulate good

works to their account in order to be of the 144, 000 who they say will eventually enter Paradise. Thus they tell us that when the Lord Jesus cried “ ***It is finished,***” that's not enough. The Watchtower says that “ *to get one's name written in that Book of Life will depend upon one's works.*” ( The Watchtower 1<sup>st</sup> April 1947, 204 ) Is that what you believe this .... ? Do you believe in a works salvation ? Or is your testimony that of the hymn writer,

***I need no other argument***

***I want no other plea***

***It is enough that Jesus died***

***And that He died for me***

Incidentally, the Witnesses believe that the Lord Jesus died on a stake, not a cross. The typical Watchtower representation of this is with Christ on a single vertical stake, hands over His head with a single nail in His wrists. They tell us that the cross is a pagan religious symbol. ( The Watchtower 15<sup>th</sup> August 1987, 29 ) *How then do they handle that verse in the Bible that states that Christ had nails ( plural ) in His hands ?* Do you recall what Thomas said “ *Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side I will not believe.*” ( Jn 20:25 ) The Lord Jesus had one nail in each hand, and so He must have been crucified on a cross, and not a stake as the Watchtower teaches. Do you know what they say about the resurrection of Christ ?

*Jesus did not raise from the dead in his physical body.*

( Awake ! 22 July 1973, p 4 ) *Jesus was raised not a human creature, but a spirit.* ( Let God be True p 276 ) They teach some kind of spiritual resurrection, and deny the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They say, “ *the firstborn one from the dead was not raised out of the grave a human creature but he was raised a spirit.* ( Let God be True p. 272 ) Yet after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus said, “ *A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.*” ( Lk 24:39 ) This clearly indicates that He was not a spirit as the Witnesses declare. Do you recall what the Saviour said in ( Jn 2:18-22 ) ? Christ was going to raise up the very body the Jews would nail to a cross. My .... we believe that the precious body of the Lord Jesus which was reverently laid in that cool grave on the evening of Friday April the 3<sup>rd</sup> literally vacated that grave before six o'clock on the following Sunday morning, April the 5<sup>th</sup>. “ **Up from the grave He arose.**” Hallelujah. But you see, when you deny the Trinity, they not only degrade the Saviour,

#### ***(c) THEY DISHONOUR THE HOLY SPIRIT:***

Consistent with their Unitarian position, the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit. Here's what they say.

*The Holy Spirit is not a person in the Godhead*  
( Vol 5, p 169 ) *The Spirit of God is any power or influence which God may be pleased to exercise.*  
( Deliverance, p 150 cf. Let God be True, p. 89 )  
*The Holy Spirit is God's impersonal active force.*

( The Watchtower 1, June, 1952, p. 24 ) Yet, if the Holy Spirit a force then ....

Why is He called God ? ( Acts 5:3-5 )  
How is it that He can teach ? ( Jn 14:26 )  
How can He be the one who comforts ? ( Acts 9:31 )  
How is it possible for Him to speak ? ( Acts 28:25 )  
How can He then be grieved ? ( Eph 4:30 )  
How can He help us in our weaknesses ? ( Rom 8:26 )  
My .... contrary to the Watchtower view, the Bible indicates that the Holy Spirit is God, and is a person. Jehovah's Witnesses also tell us that salvation must be earned.

#### ***(d) THEY DEFINE SALVATION BY WORKS:***

In the book “ *Let God be True,* ” they state,

***All who by reason of faith in Jehovah God and in Christ Jesus dedicate themselves to do God's will and then faithfully carry out their dedication will be rewarded with everlasting life. ( Rom 6:23 ) However, that life will not be the same for all. The Bible plainly shows some of these, that is 144,000 will share in heavenly glory with Christ Jesus, while the others will enjoy the blessings of life down here on earth. ( Rev 14:1 Micah 4:1-5***  
Let God be True p. 298 )

Do you see now why the Jehovah's Witnesses display such zeal in spreading their teaching from house to house ? My .... they are doing it to earn salvation. They teach a salvation by works, not by faith. They say,

*Only their church members will be saved.*

( The Watchtower, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1979, p. 30 ) *Good works are necessary to salvation.* ( Studies in the Scriptures vol. 1 pp. 150, 152 ) You see, they see works as being part of the requirement for obtaining salvation rather than being a result of salvation. The Bible clearly states the means of salvation in ( Eph 2:8-9 ) “ *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.* ” When Christ shed His blood on the cross, He satisfied God’s demand for righteousness. As a result, all who place their faith in Christ have the benefits of His death applied to them. They are justified, declared righteous before God. Do you know something ? The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that you don’t know until death whether you have done enough to be “ **rewarded with everlasting life.** ”

How many door to door contacts does it take for a person to merit the favour of God ? How much literature do you have to distribute to gain heaven ? According to the Bible a believer can know for sure he has everlasting life from the moment of his salvation. John says, “ *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* ” ( 1 Jn 5:11-13 )

**As soon as my all I ventured  
On the atoning blood  
The Holy Spirit entered  
And I was born of God**

Like many cults the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the wicked will not be punished forever but will be annihilated.

**(e) THEY DENOUNCE ETERNAL PUNISHMENT:**

They clearly state

*There is no hell fire where the wicked are punished*  
( Let God be True pp 79.80 ) *The doctrine of eternal torment is as false as its author the devil.*  
( Creation, p 341 )

Yet the Saviour Himself said “ *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* ” ( Matt 25:46 ) At the end of the Tribulation two individuals known as “ **the beast,** ” and “ *the false prophet,* ” will be “ *cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.* ” ( Rev 19:20 ) Following this event Christ will reign on earth for 1,000 years ( Rev 20:1-6 ) During “ *a little season,* ” at the end of the 1,000 period Satan will be loosed from the bondage he was in during the Millennium and will gather a group to fight against God and His armies. ( 20:7-9 ) But Satan and his forces will be defeated. Then according to ( Rev 20:10 ) “ *the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and*



*brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*

Do you see that though a thousand years will have passed, the beast and the false prophet will still be in the lake of fire. They have not been annihilated. Should that not burden our hearts for the lost ? Should this not stir us out of indifference and seek to win them for Christ lest they come to this place of torment ? Of course when we think of the future we see that,

***(f) THEY DATE THE LORD’S RETURN:***

The Watchtower Society is date-setting organization. It believes that God still makes new revelations through “ *prophets,*” today. In the eyes of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, a false prophet is a person who prophesies something that does not occur. By this definition, they are guilty of being false prophets many times over. Listen to some of their predictions.

*Our Lord the appointed King is now present since October 1874 ( Studies in the Scriptures vol, 4 p 621 ) The battle of the great day of God Almighty ( Rev 16:14 ) which will end AD 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth’s present rulership, is already commenced.*

( The Time is at Hand, 1908 edition p, 101 ) *Why are you looking forward to 1975 ? ( Watchtower, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1968, p 494 )* Ed Gruss a former Jehovah’s Witness, examined predictions of the Watchtower Society back to 1877. He concluded,

***“ When I looked at the many events the Jehovah’s Witnesses had predicted and the specific dates they had set, I found that in every case the prediction had proved to be false.”*** ( Dave Hunt The Cult Explosion p. 208 ) A Jehovah Witness might say that the organization is still learning. If that is so, then how can they trust what they are now being now by the Watchtower ? Will, what they are now being taught change also ?

Bless God, the Lord Jesus is Coming Again, but we are not to be date setters. The Bible says, “ *Watch therefore for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*” ( Matt 24:42 ) In light of His Coming Again are you saved ? Christian, are you ready ? Or would you “ *be ashamed before Him at His coming ?*” ( 1 Jn 2:29 )