

Seven Ways Jehovah's Witnesses Distort True Christianity

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

Jehovah's Witnesses are wonderful people. But since they are constantly trying to convert Christian believers to their religion, it is important that Christians know what they believe. Jehovah's Witnesses are zealous, persistent, and sincere. In this case, sincerely wrong.

1. Jehovah's Witnesses are a "cult," that is, they believe they are right and that all others are wrong and will not be saved unless they become Jehovah's Witnesses, too.

All strands of Christianity have minor variations. What unites Christians, however, is our belief in Jesus as the unique and divine Son of God. This gives us a sense of unity with all Christians as brothers and sisters despite differences in history and style.

It is typical of cults, however, to see themselves as the only right way of serving God, and the only ones who will be saved when God judges mankind. In the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, they systematically proselytize people who attend Christian churches, categorizing Christendom as "false religion," "the Harlot," and "Babylon the Great."[\[1\]](#)

2. Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus is the fully divine Son of God.

Several heretical groups deny that Jesus is the fully divine, unique Son of God--Unitarians, Mormons, Christian Science, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses revive the ancient heresy put forward by Arius in the Fourth Century[\[2\]](#) and rejected by faithful Christians at the Council of Nicea.

For Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus is not fully God, but "a god."[\[3\]](#) They identify him as Michael the archangel.[\[4\]](#) They believe he is God's first creation, and thus a creature rather than the Creator.[\[5\]](#) The Bible, on the contrary, says of Jesus, "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."[\[6\]](#)

For Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus' resurrection was not physical but spiritual.[\[7\]](#) Like the angels, "he was obliged to materialize a body of flesh in order to make himself visible."[\[8\]](#) This is how Jehovah's Witnesses explain that Jesus' second coming--his second "presence," as they call it--"is unseen to natural human eyes."[\[9\]](#) True Christians believe that Jesus' resurrection was physical. The body was gone. He told his disciples. "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."[\[10\]](#) True Christians also expect to see Jesus return in the same way he was taken up into heaven.[\[11\]](#)

Jehovah's Witnesses deny Jesus' full divinity, his physical resurrection, and his visible return.

3. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Christian teaching of the Trinity.

In addition to denying the divinity of Jesus, Jehovah's Witnesses also deny the personhood of the Holy Spirit. "This spirit is not a person at all, but is God's invisible active force by means of which God carries out his holy will and work,"^[12] they teach. The New Testament, however, speaks of the Holy Spirit as a person who speaks, sends, reminds, convicts, and may be lied to.^[13]

Once they have dispensed with the divinity of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit, Jehovah's Witnesses are free to dismiss the idea of the Trinity: God in three persons, each of the same substance, coequal, co-existent, co-eternal. While the Bible does not use the term "Trinity," the idea is clearly there. For example, Jesus directed that people be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."^[14]

4. Jehovah's Witnesses predicted the date of Jesus' return several times. When they were proved wrong, they covered it up.

Early Jehovah's Witnesses taught that the end of the world would come in 1914.^[15] When that didn't happen, they quietly changed the prophecy in their books.^[16] To explain it away, they changed the definition of a word in the Bible that talks about Christ's "coming," to mean Christ's "invisible presence."^[17] After all, it is difficult to disprove that Christ's "invisible presence" did not take place in 1914. But Jesus said, "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man."^[18] All nations will see his coming.^[19] Next, Jehovah's Witnesses predicted that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would return in 1925.^[20] That didn't happen either.

5. Jehovah's Witnesses deny Jesus' teaching about hell.

Nobody likes to think about hell. But to twist Jesus' words to pretend he didn't teach it is dishonest. Jesus described hell (both *hades* and *gehenna*) as a place of "torment," of "agony" in the fire,^[21] where "the fire never goes out," and where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."^[22] What does it matter that Jesus taught it? Jehovah's Witnesses pronounce that it is unloving and unjust for God to punish the wicked forever.^[23] Are they going to correct Jesus?

Jehovah's Witnesses deny that a human being has an immortal soul at all. "If ... man does not have a soul but is a soul," they teach, "then there is no conscious existence after death. There is no bliss, and there is no suffering. All the illogical complications of the `hereafter' disappear."^[24] When a person dies, they believe, he (i.e., soul) goes to the grave. Those who are righteous will rise at the resurrection; the evil not will not return but be annihilated. Convenient, but certainly not what Jesus taught.

6. Jehovah's Witnesses distort the Bible's true meaning. Jehovah's Witnesses practice "proof-texting," plucking out and isolating individual Bible verses from their context. Then they use them to prove some point which may have nothing whatsoever to do with the verse's original meaning. The Bible was not written to be understood by quoting little snippets, but by reading the whole context.

Another concern is the Jehovah's Witness' *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. Translated by a committee of five, none of whom were trained in Hebrew and Greek,^[25] it changes the meaning of

the Greek and Hebrew texts in order to support spurious Jehovah's Witness doctrines. For example, their translation of Colossians 1:16 reads, "By means of him all [other] things were created...." The word "other" is added so that Jesus would be seen as a created being, and not as the divine, uncreated Creator. Philippians 1:22 in their translation reads "what I do desire is the releasing and the being with Christ," rather than "I desire to depart and be with Christ." Their strange, awkward rendering is intended to support a belief in "soul sleep," since this verse in its true form tells believers that they will be with Christ in heaven the very moment they die.^[26] In their translation, Matthew 24:3 reads "What will be the sign of your presence" rather than "What will be the sign of your coming," to support their teaching that Christ's coming is an "invisible presence." John 1:1 reads "the Word was a god," rather than "the Word was God," in an attempt to hide the full divinity of Christ.^[27] The New World Translation twists scripture to make it say what the Jehovah's Witnesses want it to say.

In a rather well-known distortion of scripture, Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions on the basis that the ancient Jews were forbidden to eat the blood of animals (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 7:26-27; Acts 15:29; etc.). It should be obvious to any reasonable person that eating blood (a pagan practice) has nothing to do with receiving someone's blood donated to save your life. Unfortunately, from this kind of scripture twisting, many lives have been lost.

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that true religion remains "untainted by worldly politics and conflicts. It is neutral in time of war."^[28] As a result, they do not participate or serve in our government. Nor do they help defend our country and freedoms when threatened. Perhaps they forget faithful Daniel, who was prime minister of the Babylonian empire under several pagan kings, and the military leaders who followed Jehovah, such as David, Gideon, and Joshua in the Old Testament, and the centurions and soldiers who were believers in the New Testament.

7. Jehovah's Witness teaching denies full Christian privileges to present-day believers.

When the Jehovah's Witnesses began in the 1880s, they believed that a literal 144,000 people, and only a total of 144,000, would go to heaven (the "heavenly Kingdom class," they call it). That worked when they were a small sect. But as the movement grew, their cumulative numbers swelled to more than 144,000. In 1965 we are told that less than 12,000 of this original 144,000 still remained alive.^[29] What about the next generation of Jehovah's Witnesses? They think of themselves as the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9 who will rule with Christ on the earth.

The problem is that the wonderful promises of the Bible--being born again by the Holy Spirit, the comfort of partaking of the Lord's Supper,^[30] and the joy of heaven--these promises are "already taken." Present-day Jehovah's Witnesses believe they will never experience them.

How sad to have the most precious promises of the Bible be reserved for someone else. How sad to believe in a Jesus stripped of his deity, his physical resurrection, and his visible return. How sad to believe that you were born a generation too late to go to heaven when you die. How sad to read, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again,"^[31] and know that doesn't mean you. To ponder "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ"^[32] and wonder if you are excluded. How sad.

[1] *Mankind's Search for God* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1990), p. 370.

[2] In *Mankind's Search for God* (pp. 274-275), the author describes Arianism as a "Biblically supported viewpoint."

[3] John 1:1 in the Jehovah's Witnesses' own *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

[4] *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1969, p. 307; December 15, 1984, p. 29. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 5, p. 84; *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 49. Hebrews chapter 1 explains that Jesus is superior to angels.

[5] *Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1965), p. 122.

[6] Colossians 2:9 (NIV). A careful study on the divinity of Christ can be found in Bruce M. Metzger, "The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ," *Theology Today*, April 1953, pp. 65-85.

[7] *Studies in the Scriptures, Series 2* (Allegheny, PA: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1889), p. 129; *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1953, p. 518; August 1, 1975, p. 479.

[8] *Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 332.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Luke 24:39 (NASB).

[11] Acts 1:11.

[12] *Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 269.

[13] See Acts 5:3-4; 13:2,4; 21:10-11; John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-14.

[14] Matthew 28:19 (NIV). See also 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 6:11-12; 12:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18-19; 1 Peter 1:2; etc.

[15] *Studies in the Scriptures* (n.d., probably 1907 edition), Series 2, "The Time Is at Hand" (Allegheny, PA: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1889), p. 99, says, "... we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God will be accomplished at the end of A.D. 1914."

[16] *Studies in the Scriptures* (1907 edition), Series 3, "Thy Kingdom Come" (Allegheny, PA: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1891), p. 228 reads: "That the deliverance of the saints must take place some time before 1914 is manifest.... Just how long before 1914 the last living members of the body of Christ will be glorified, we are not directly informed." The 1916 edition changed this to read: "That the deliverance of the saints must take place very soon after 1914 is manifest.... Just how long after 1914 the last living members of the body of Christ will be glorified, we are not directly informed." This is deception, clear and simple.

[17] *Mankind's Search for God*, p. 353. The Greek word *parousia* means physical "presence," "coming," "advent" (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [University of Chicago Press, 1957], p. 635). There is nothing "invisible" about it.

[18] Matthew 24:27 (NIV).

[19] Matthew 24:30 (NIV).

[20] Jehovah's Witness President Joseph F. Rutherford, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, pp. 89-90. His sermons were quoted to that effect by the press also: *Los Angeles Morning Tribune*, February 25, 1918; *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 16, 1920, p. 8; *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 14, 1925.

[21] Luke 16:23 (NIV), describing the rich man in hades.

[22] Mark 9:48 (NIV), describing gehenna.

[23] *Mankind's Search for God*, p. 377.

[24] *Mankind's Search for God*, p. 128. This also leads them to the doctrine sometimes called "soul sleep," that a believer does not go immediately to be with Jesus in heaven, but await in the grave for the resurrection.

[25] Four of the five members of the translation committee had only a high school education. The fifth--Fred W. Franz--was shown under oath (Edinburgh, Scotland, November 24-25, 1954) to lack Hebrew translation knowledge. He dropped out of the University of Cincinnati after his sophomore year. (Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993], pp. 97-98.)

[26] See Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1965), p. 68.

[27] See Metzger, p. 75 to understand their error in translating the Greek.

[28] *Mankind's Search for God*, p. 377.

[29] *Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie*, p. 337.

[30] Communion is received only at Passover, and only by those who are part of the 144,000 (*Mankind's Search for God*, p. 357).

[31] John 3:3 (NIV).

[32] Romans 8:9 (NIV).

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