

Jehovah's Witnesses and Christianity

Important Words and Facts

Number of JW's in the U.S. – In 1990, about 773,00. In 1999, about 980,000.

Number of JW's in the world – about 6 million.

Charles Taze Russell – the man who began the Jehovah's Witnesses church.

When the Jehovah's Witness church started – JW's started around 1870-1884 in Rochester, NY, and then Pittsburgh, PA. Their official name is still "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania."

Jehovah's Witnesses are well known for – the Watchtower and Awake! magazines, not accepting blood transfusions, not celebrating holidays, not pledging allegiance to the flag, not joining the military or doing anything else related to the government, doing door-to-door evangelism. In 1999, JW's reported more than 174 million hours spent witnessing.

Major Teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses

JW's disagree with almost every major Christian teaching. They also disagree with many other smaller teachings. We will only focus on the main ones. The most important teaching in the Christian church is about Jesus and how He saves us. Here is a short comparison between what the Bible teaches and what Jehovah's Witnesses believe.

<u>The Bible</u>	<u>Jehovah's Witnesses</u>
God's Name The Bible lists many different names for God – God, Lord, Almighty, Everlasting Father, His special name – Yahweh, and many more. (Exodus 3:14-15, Genesis 1:1, 14:19, 17:1, 18:27, 21:33)	JW's try to insist that the only correct name for God is "Jehovah." They even take out other names in the Bible and put "Jehovah" in their place.
The Trinity There is one God, Deuteronomy 6:4. There are three "persons," the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19. They are united as one God in a way we cannot explain or understand.	JWs say there is no Trinity. They say there is only one God, but not three persons in one God.
Jesus is True God In many ways, the Bible says Jesus is true and complete God. John 20:28. What did Thomas say? Philippians 2:5-11 John 1:1	JWs say Jesus is not God. They say He is a "god," someone less than God the Father. They say God the Father created Jesus, so Jesus is not the true God, Jehovah.

Jesus' Resurrection

Jesus died and rose alive again from the dead with a real body, Luke 24:36-53. After 40 days, Jesus went up into heaven, Acts 1:9.

Christ's Second Coming

God warned us not to believe people who say Christ already came again, 1 Thess. 2:1-2. When He comes, "every eye will see Him" (Rev. 1:7), all the nations will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds (Matthew 24:30).

People's Souls are Eternal

The Bible teaches that when our bodies die, our soul continues to live forever. (Mark 12:27, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Matthew 25:46)

Hell is Real

Hell is a real place. There are so many Bible verses about this, it is hard to believe the JW's deny that hell is real and eternal. Some Bible verses are Matthew 25:41-46, Mark 9:47-48, Revelation 20:10-15.

The Result of Adam's Sin

The Bible clearly says that because Adam sinned, everyone is guilty of sin and is spiritually dead (Romans 5:12). Spiritual death means separation from God forever.

Jesus' Salvation Work

The Bible says that Jesus' death and resurrection are to fully save people (John 3:16, Romans 5:9-10, Romans 8:1)

Salvation is Free

Jesus' salvation is a gift, free! We don't have to work to earn any part of our salvation (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9).

JWs say Jesus rose alive with a spiritual body, not a physical body. They say Jesus does not have a human body in heaven.

JWs say, "he (Christ) has already arrived and is here." They say Jesus began ruling the world from heaven in 1914.

JW's believe that when your body dies, your soul dies and is gone. Your soul doesn't live forever.

JW's will say the Bible does not say hell is real, but the true reason they don't believe in hell is that they don't want to accept that it is real.

JW's will say we inherit sin from Adam. But what they mean is that because Adam sinned, our body and soul will die and disappear.

JWs say Jesus' death was only enough to make us able to live again. They say Jesus' death gives us the right to live again. But it doesn't give us actual life.

JWs say Jesus won the right to life. Now if you want to live, you must work to earn that life. God doesn't just give it to you.

All Believers in Jesus Go to Heaven

There are many, many Bible verses that promise eternal life in heaven for every person who believes in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:1-2, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Peter 1:3-5, Colossians 1:3-6). In Revelation 14, the Bible does mention 144,000 people in heaven. But that number is only a symbol, meaning all of God's people.

JWs say not everyone goes to heaven. They believe only 144,000 people will have eternal souls and live and rule in heaven with Jesus. They say everyone else who earns life will live on earth forever.

Conclusion

We have only looked at a few of the Jehovah Witnesses' teachings. This short study shows you that many JW teachings are not from the Bible. They are from people's own ideas and not from God's word. In Deuteronomy 18:14-22, God warns us not to follow people who speak for themselves and not for God. How can we know if someone doesn't speak for God? God says they will prophesy something and it will not come true. In the past, the JW's said the world will end in 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, and 1975. They finally gave up, because they were always wrong. Worse than false predictions, they don't understand who Jesus their Savior is.

It is important for us to understand their teachings are wrong. We need to announce God's truth and correct the lies and errors that other people preach.

What to do when a JW comes to your door

1. Remember to be polite. If you are mean, it makes Christians look bad. Be polite and show Christian love.
2. You don't have to listen to them. You don't need to let them come in and talk. If you don't want to talk to them, you can say, "I believe Jesus is the one true God and my Savior. I have a church, and I am not interested to hear about yours. Have a good day." Then politely close the door. Don't feel bad. Don't let them try to answer you and keep talking.
3. If you do want to talk to them, be very careful. They are very skilled at using Bible verses to "prove" they are right. They do not use the Bible right, but it is very hard for you to show that. It is best to get another Christian who knows the Bible to help you. Maybe ask your pastor to come. Ask the JWs to come back at another time. Make sure your Christian friend can come at that same time. Don't talk to them by yourself.
4. If you do talk to them again, remember these things. Pray. Ask God to give you the right words to say. Ask God to help you share your faith in Jesus. Tell them, "Jesus loves me and forgives me. That gives me hope for the future." Make sure they only use the Bible and not Watchtower or Awake magazines. Remember to always focus on Jesus and how He saves you. Remember to tell them about the hope and peace and joy you have because of Jesus.

Suggestions adapted from How to Respond to Jehovah's Witnesses, by Herbert Kern, copyright Concordia Publishing House, 1995.