

Counterfeit – Jehovah’s Witness

5/14/23

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Sunday AM

Imagine you’re at home one Saturday watching GT beating UGA in football (okay... so you fell asleep and were dreaming) – anyhow, suddenly you’re awakened by the doorbell. As you open the door you find (2) well-dressed ladies standing there who are passing out some literature and she offers you a copy of the *Watchtower/Awake Mags*. Who are these people and what do they want? They’re the JW’s.

There’s a good chance most of us at some point have experienced this encounter or, at least, we’ve met someone who is a JW. Yet if I asked you what they believe, most of us wouldn’t know. And if I asked you if the JW’s were another Christian denomination, many of us might think they are – after all, they use the name, Jesus, they’re clean-cut, and seem nice – so, they must be Christian, right? Just as we saw last week w/ the Mormons, just b/c someone uses the name of Jesus doesn’t mean they’re Christians.

**Remind** – we began the series talking about the infamous/misleading *Elephant Analogy* that speaks of (6) blind men all touching a different part of the same elephant but describing what they’re experiencing in different ways – attempting to teach that so long as you believe in something – you’ll be good w/ God. **Problem is** – while this sounds nice, when you dig in, you quickly learn this rationale doesn’t work.

(1) The vast majority of the 4200 different religions in existence today *believe their way is the only way*.

(2) Mankind, b/c of sin, can’t get along when they agree on a topic, much less when they can’t agree.

(3) The Law of Non-Contradiction definitively settles that we can all be wrong, but we cannot all be right!

**Law of Non-Contradiction** – *something can’t be both true and untrue at the same time w/in the same context*. So, this law demolishes the warped idea that all roads lead to God. Since every religion/cult has differing beliefs – it’s not possible they’re all right. In fact, it proves just the opposite – ***while we can all be wrong, we can’t all be right***.

**Meaning** – if *Islam* is right then *Daoism*, and every other way, is wrong? If the *Joseph Smith* is God’s true messenger, then *Islam* has missed the mark. But if *Jesus* is God’s only way, truth, and life as He claimed, then *there are no other avenues to God*.

To frame our studies, let’s look at Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 – *For the time will come when people will not put up w/ sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths*.

**Peter spoke to our need to clarify** – *But set apart Christ as Lord of your hearts, always being ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope w/in you, w/ meekness and fear. 3:16*

**Paul/Peter’s point** – we need to know what we believe (and why) and what others believe (and why) so that we’re able to share/defend our faith w/ others.

Today, we’re concluding our series by looking at the *JW’s* or *Watchtower Bible/Tract Society*.

**REMINDE**: a cult refers to a non-orthodox religious group who has a devotion to a person, object, or set of new ideas marked by a exclusivity/secrecy.

- **A Newer Prophet** – by some revelation, the founder has found a better way than orthodoxy
- **A Better Way** – they claim they've been given a *special revelation* from God superior to the Bible

## I The **ORIGIN** of Jehovah's Witness

The JW movement began around 1872 w/ a teenager named **Charles Taze Russell**. Russell grew up in a Congregationalist Church but had difficulty w/ the doctrines of hell/Trinity. So, at 18, after going to an Adventist Church where the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ was being discussed, he became fixated w/ the return of Christ. To solve his curiosity, he began a Bible study that led to him publishing a pamphlet entitled, *The Object and Manner of the Lord's Return*.

Despite having no theological training, Russell's pamphlet consisted of a complicated interpretation of many unrelated Scriptures combined w/ an intricate method of computing time. The end result of his labors was the statement that Christ would return in 1874. When Jesus didn't return, Russell changed the date to 1914 and determined that this return wouldn't be a physical return, but a spiritual return – that is, when Christ returned, He wouldn't be seen.

W/out question, Russell lived a colorful life w/ all kind of legal troubles due to his crazy religious schemes. Once, he was caught selling his so-called sermons that were supposed to have been preached on his “World Tour” in 1912 and that proved to be a lie. Another scheme in peddled was called “Miracle Wheat” that he sold for \$1 a pound. He claimed this wheat would grow 5x that of normal wheat. It sold for \$1.00 a pound. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, in NY, exposed this and many of Russell's schemes in court.

*Never underestimate the gullibility of the public – there's a sucker born every minute.* P.T. Barnum

In 1879, Russell began to publish the magazine – *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. This proved helpful in expanding the movement as by 1880, there were 30 congregations in (7) states. By 1881, *Zion's Watchtower and Tract Society* was established, and it was chartered in 1884.

After Russell died in 1916, Joseph Franklin Rutherford was elected leader of the JW. Under Rutherford, the organization grew in earnest as a result of door-to-door witnessing.

## II The **ORGANIZATION** of the Jehovah Witness

As w/ most aggressive cults in the world, JW's make over 200 mil. visits every year in their attempt to tell the world the "news" that Jehovah's kingdom arrived in 1918 thru King Jesus' defeat of the enemy Satan.

The witnessing tools of the organization is produced thru – *The Watch Tower Bible/Tract Society* printing 100k books/800k copies of their magazines each day.

W/ regard to participation, JW's meet 5x weekly in Kingdom Halls that members are expected to attend.

- The **Public Talk** is usually held each Sunday
- The **Watchtower Study** usually follows
- The **Theocratic Ministry School** is later in week
- There is also a **Service Meeting**
- Each JW is also expected to attend a weekly **Book Study** in addition to their field work

## III The Basic **TEACHINGS** of Jehovah's Witness

The **BIBLE** – JW's believe only the New World Translation is authoritative/reliable and must be translated as interpreted by the Watchtower Society.

*JW's may do no independent thinking and must absolutely adhere to the decisions and scriptural understanding of the Watchtower Society. The Watchtower, 5/1/72, p 272*

**Problem** – The NWT was translated w/ bias w/ an intentional/systematic effort to produce a version of the Bible to agree w/ their doctrine. **IOW** – knowing their beliefs were contrary to the Bible, *Watchtower Society* altered the NWT to agree w/ their beliefs instead of adjusting their beliefs to the actual Bible.

The **TRINITY** – Watchtower emphatically denies the veracity of the Trinity calling it a **3-headed god**.

*Sincere persons who want to know the true God and serve him, find it a bit difficult to love and worship a complicated, freakish-looking, three-headed God. The clergy who inject such ideas will contradict themselves in the very next breath by stating that God made man in his own image; certainly no one has ever seen a three-headed human creature. Let God Be True, 2nd ed., p. 101-102 – Rutherford*

*Beyond a doubt, the Trinity doctrine has confused and diluted people's understanding of God's true position. It prevents people from accurately knowing the Universal Sovereign, Jehovah God, and from worshipping him on his terms. Should You Believe the Trinity, 1989, p. 30*

A favorite question **JW's** are trained to ask when going door-to-door is, “Who ran the universe for the three days Jesus was dead and in the grave?”

Answer – **God did**. While Jesus' physical body died, He didn't cease to exist. The triune God continued to rule the universe.

**Christianity** has always taught that God exists in three coequal/coeternal persons – Father, Son, and H.S. This is a fundamental teaching of Christianity.

**JESUS** – JW's teach that Jesus wasn't God in the flesh but the reincarnation of the Archangel Michael. They teach *Jehovah God* created Michael before the foundation of the world; Michael was His only begotten son by virtue of the fact he was the only creature directly created by Jehovah. It was this created Michael who became the JW Jesus.

*Before our Lord came into the world he was a created angel and none other than the archangel Michael.*

*Since actual conception took place, it appears that Jehovah God caused an ovum or egg in Mary's womb to become fertile, accomplishing this by the transfer of the life of his first-born son (Michael) from the spirit realm to the earth. Aid to Bible Understanding, p. 920*

**Christianity** teaches that Jesus is God incarnate and the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity who entered time and space to redeem the fallen Creation to Himself. Jesus is not the manifestation of the Archangel Michael – as Michael is a created angelic being.

**SALVATION** – JW's teach salvation is not the result of Jesus' death on the cross but is the result of good works and the reward for doing God's will by living out the JW cause.

*The ransom by Jesus Christ doesn't guarantee everlasting life, or blessing to any man. It merely releases the accepting sinner from the first condemnation and places him again on trial for life.*

Meaning, the cross was not sufficient to atone for the sins of humanity. BTW - Russell also taught that Jesus didn't rise from the dead but that His body disintegrated never to exist again. So, what was raised and appeared to the disciples was a spirit form but not an actual resurrection.

**Christianity** says salvation is wholly an act of grace gifted by God to all people on the basis of the physical death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus – it is a free gift of God and cannot be obtained on the basis of human merit or works.

*In Christ (Christ alone) we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sin.* Ephesians 1:7  
The **H.S.** – JW's teach the H.S. isn't a part of the Trinity but the impersonal, active force of Jehovah.

The H.S. is *an influence or power* exercised by the one God, but this rules out the Spirit existing as *a being or personality*.

*But the H.S. has no personal name. The reason for this is that the H.S. is not an intelligent person. It is the impersonal, invisible active force that finds its source and reservoir in Jehovah God and that he uses to accomplish his will even at great distances, over light years of space.*

Let Your Name Be Sanctified, 269

**Christianity** – the H.S. is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person of the trinity coequal w/ the Father/Son. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for God's grace by convicting the unbeliever of sin and drawing him to salvation. Once in Christ, the H.S. indwells the believer to insure forgiveness and then guides and empowers the believer to live a life honoring to God.

**AFTER LIFE** – the JW's divide their members into two classes – the *anointed class* who constitute the 144,000 who will reign w/ Christ and provide guidance for those in the *great crowd* of witnesses whose hope is to survive Armageddon and spend eternity in a paradise on earth.

A few years ago, the JW's had a theological crisis when their membership grew to exceed 144,000. They resolved it by saying the 144,000 will be specially chosen ones from all the JW's, and the rest will rule on a restored earth which will be like Eden.

**DEATH** and **HELL** – JW's teach that after physical death there's a *second chance* but no **HELL**

*All who died w/out Christ will have another chance. They will have the gospel preached to them, and if they do not then wish to accept the invitation, they will be annihilated.*

JWs deny the immortality of the soul believing the soul can't exist apart from the body, but that a corpse remains in an unconscious state in the grave waiting for the resurrection – **soul sleep**.

They also teach that the *second death* is annihilation and extinction – meaning the wicked will cease to exist and will not suffer everlasting torment. They claim that a doctrine of a burning hell is *wholly unscriptural, unreasonable, contrary to God's love, and repugnant to justice*.

**Christianity** – teaches those who've trusted Christ will receive eternal life w/ God. The unsaved will receive just punishment for their sins, resulting in separation from God in hell. Thus, the soul lives forever either w/ God or apart from Him.

There you have it, a side-by-side comparison of the different major religion/cults in our community. And I think it is clear that our differences are so distinct that we cannot all be right and on the path to the same God – but rather, *our differences are so clear we need to be able to substantiate the truth*.

**WTM** – let me remind you that your job and my job is to **WHAT** we believe and **WHY** and to have a pretty good understanding of what others believe and why so that we will be prepared to give an account of the hope that is w/in us and be able to identify a heretical teaching when it comes our way.