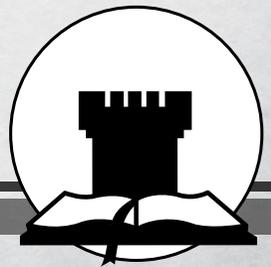




# Jehovah's Witnesses

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society



## **Some things you will learn in this session....**

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- Why the year 1914 is so important to Jehovah's Witnesses.
- Why Jehovah's Witnesses do so much door-to-door work.
- How the Watchtower controls what its members believe.
- Why Jehovah's Witnesses will not vote or salute the flag.
- Why Jehovah's Witnesses hand out so much literature—but will not accept any from you.
- What to say to Jehovah's Witnesses who come knocking on your door.

# Session Outline

## Jehovah's Witnesses

1. Beginnings
  - a. William Miller (1782–1849), Adventism
  - b. Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916)
  - c. Armageddon and the year 1914
  - d. “Judge” Joseph Rutherford (1869–1942)
2. The Watchtower Society today
  - a. Over 18 million followers
  - b. The *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines
  - c. New World Translation
  - d. The 144,000; Governing Body
3. Distinctive beliefs
  - a. No Trinity
    - Jesus is a lesser, created god

- The “holy spirit” is Jehovah’s invisible, active force
- b. Apostate “Christendom”
- c. “Anointed Class” and “other sheep”
- d. What is required to be saved?
  - Taking in knowledge
  - Obeying God’s laws
  - Belonging to and serving in Jehovah’s one true organization
  - Being loyal to Jehovah’s organization
- e. Witnesses have to work toward perfection
- f. Prohibitions
  - Refusing blood transfusions
  - No celebrating holidays, birthdays, etc.
  - No military service, no voting, no flag salute
- 4. Biblical insights
  - a. One God
    - Isaiah 43:10

- 1 Peter 1:1–2
- b. The Holy Spirit is God
- 2 Corinthians 3:17
  - Acts 5:3–4
- c. Jesus is God
- Isaiah 9:6
  - John 8:58; Exodus 3:14
  - Colossians 2:9
  - John 5:18, 23
  - Hebrews 1:6
- d. Jesus rose physically
- John 2:19
- e. Salvation is a free gift
- Romans 6:23
  - Acts 16:30–31
  - Titus 3:5

- Philippians 3:9

5. Do's and don'ts

- a. Do remember that Jehovah's Witnesses are real people
- b. Do be courteous and respectful
- c. Do know the Bible
- d. Do ask questions
- e. Don't assume that Jehovah's Witnesses know the Bible
- f. Don't assume that there is only one right way to witness
- g. Don't try to force them to admit they're wrong
- h. Don't just turn them away

## Key Terms

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**144,000/“anointed class”** According to Watchtower teaching, 144,000 is the number of Christians living between Pentecost (c. AD 30) and 1935, called the “anointed class” or “little flock,” who will live in heaven as spirits forever. (The other class of Christians is called the “earthly class.”)

**Adventism** Followers of the various movements inspired by the teachings of American preacher William Miller (1782–1849) who predicted that the second coming of Christ would take place in 1843 or 1844.

**Arianism** Originated in the fourth century AD and argues that Jesus doesn't share the same essence with God, and thus does not share in the same divine nature with eternity and authority. The Nicene, Chalcedonian, and Athanasian Creeds are primarily responses to this heresy.

**Armageddon** According to the Watchtower, this is the final battle between wicked mankind and Jehovah God to end world governments which brings about the establishment of Jehovah's "kingdom rule" on Paradise Earth.

**Christ's "Presence"** Watchtower teaching that the second coming of Jesus already took place invisibly in 1914.

**Christendom** Disparaging term used to describe "professed Christianity"—that is, all non-Jehovah's Witness religions that claim to be Christian—in contrast with "the true Christianity of the Bible." Viewed as being under Satan's control.

**Jehovah** God's personal name. Nearly all other Bibles have "LORD" for God's name in the Old Testament, but the New World Translation renders it "Jehovah"—and even "restores" the divine name to the New Testament.

**New World Translation (NWT)** The official Bible of the Watchtower Society. The Watchtower has stated that other English translations have "fallen victim to the power of human traditions.... Inconsistency and unreasonableness have been insinuated into the teachings of the inspired writings." (NWT 1950)

**Other Sheep** Another name Jehovah's Witnesses use for the "earthly class," drawn from John 10:16.

**Theocratic Kingdom** Jehovah's kingdom rule through the Watchtower Society.

**Torture Stake** The Watchtower Society teaches that Jesus was executed on an upright pole or stake instead of a two-beamed cross. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the cross is a pagan symbol and that using it in worship violates the Second Commandment's prohibition against idolatry.

**Watchtower Bible and Tract Society** The Jehovah's Witness organization, which is headquartered in Brooklyn, New York. Its "Governing Body" claims to have sole spiritual authority over Jehovah's people.

## ***Talk About It***

### **Discussion Questions**

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1. Share about a conversation you had with a Jehovah's Witness. What things were discussed? Was it easy or difficult to discuss different beliefs?
2. What are some reasons why people become Jehovah's Witnesses?
3. What is required for someone to be "saved" according to Jehovah's Witness teaching? What is required according to the Bible?
4. What difficulties and challenges do you think someone might face if he or she left the Jehovah's Witnesses and became a Christian?
5. Do you feel ready to discuss your beliefs with Jehovah's Witnesses? Why or why not? What would help you feel ready?

*Get Into God's Word*

**Key Bible Verses**

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*Read Colossians 2:9–10*

Q What do these verses tell us about who Jesus is?

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*Read Romans 6:23*

Q What is eternal life as described in this verse? What does this indicate about how salvation is received?

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*Read Philippians 3:8–9*

Q What does righteousness not come from? Through what does it come?

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## *Test Your Knowledge*

### **Quick Quiz**

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1. In nearly \_\_\_\_\_ places the Jehovah's Witnesses' Bible, the New World Translation, is altered to match up with Watchtower doctrines.
  - a. 50
  - b. 100
  - c. 200
  - d. 300
2. True or False? According to Watchtower teaching, only the "anointed class" of 144,000 people has the ability and the right to properly interpret the Bible.
3. According to Watchtower teaching, Jesus was the first thing Jehovah created, and Jesus began his existence as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Adam
  - b. A perfect human
  - c. Michael the Archangel
  - d. The second Person of the Trinity
  - e. None of the above
4. True or False? According to Watchtower teaching, Jehovah's Witnesses have assurance of salvation because they were baptized in Jehovah's "one true organization"—the Watchtower Society.
5. When talking with Jehovah's Witnesses, remember to ask \_\_\_\_\_ instead of making accusations.

*(Answers **lg'E'Z'k@h**)*

*Think About It*

**Personal Reflection**

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1. What attitude do I usually have toward Jehovah's Witnesses?

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2. How have I treated Jehovah's Witnesses who have come to my door? How does God want me to treat them?

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3. What can I do to be better prepared for when Jehovah's Witnesses come knocking?

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4. Do I have a friend, coworker, or family member who is a Jehovah's Witness? If so, how can I be intentional about praying for them and looking for opportunities to tell them about the good news of the free gift of salvation?

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## *Reach Out*

### **Witnessing Tips (DO'S AND DON'TS)**

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- *Do pray before each encounter* with the Jehovah's Witnesses and invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide the conversation. Ask him to fill their minds and hearts with the truth of his Word.
- *Don't depend on evidence and argumentation alone.* Rely on the Holy Spirit to guide you. It's the Holy Spirit's job to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
- *Do approach Jehovah's Witnesses with a humble, loving attitude.* Identify with them in genuine concern, and treat them respectfully, realizing they probably wouldn't have joined had they known all the facts.
- *Don't approach them with a superior attitude,* belittle them, or act like you have something they don't.
- *Do ask the Jehovah's Witness to help you understand how to reconcile their beliefs with the Bible.* Jehovah's Witnesses are trained to teach, not to listen to you. Questions can be a powerful tool to break through their programmed responses and to get them to "think" for themselves.
- *Don't confront Jehovah's Witnesses in an argumentative manner,* trying to "teach" them. Jehovah's Witnesses believe they have "the Truth" and that you don't have anything to offer them.
- *Do challenge the Jehovah's Witnesses' trust in the Watchtower* by showing discrepancies in their own literature. Jehovah's Witnesses are not allowed to read anti-Watchtower literature, so use their literature and Scripture alone.
- *Don't engage in deep scriptural discussion too soon.* Witnesses are told they can't understand the Bible apart from Watchtower literature, so their trust in the Watchtower needs to be broken before they can begin to interpret the Bible for themselves.

- *Do pray to “Jehovah God” with Jehovah’s Witnesses* and pray about personal things that are happening in their lives. Emphasize the “Father” aspect of “Jehovah” in your prayer and how he cares for you personally.
- *Don’t pray to “God” or “Lord” without addressing the prayer to “Jehovah” at some point.* Jehovah’s Witnesses fear that if a prayer doesn’t have Jehovah’s name, it may end up in Satan’s hands. Also, don’t ask if you can pray with them for healing of sickness (unless they approach you privately). They’re taught that God doesn’t “heal” today, and anything miraculous is done by Satan to deceive the unsuspecting.
- *Do tell Jehovah’s Witnesses about your personal relationship with Jesus* and how he answers prayer and personally works in your life. Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe God cares as much for them as he does for the organization, so your testimony can make them hungry for a real relationship with the true God.
- *Don’t try to force the Jehovah’s Witness to “agree” with you.* They’re not allowed to disagree with the Watchtower, so plant seeds of doubt through your questions and let the Holy Spirit do his work.
- *Do be available, persistent, and patient.* If they’re asking questions, they’re starting to think for themselves. This is the first step in leaving the Watchtower..

(Excerpt from *10 Q&A on Jehovah’s Witnesses* Rose Publishing, [www.rose-publishing.com](http://www.rose-publishing.com))

## What about the 144,000?

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**According to the Watchtower Society, there are two very different classes of Christians.** One is a special group of 144,000 people known as the “anointed class” (also called the “heavenly class,” “little flock,” or “faithful and discreet slave”). They lived between Pentecost (c. AD 30) and 1935, and will one day live in heaven as spirits forever. Only members of this special class...

- are part of the new covenant and have Jesus as their mediator.
- are “born again” and have “adoption” as God’s children.
- are true members of the “Christian congregation,” the church.
- may partake of the “memorial emblems” of Jesus’ Last Supper (Communion) once a year.
- spiritually guide God’s organization today and will rule from heaven over the earth.

There is also a much larger group, the “earthly class” (also called the “other sheep” or “great crowd”). This includes virtually everyone who has become a Jehovah’s Witness after 1935, along with people throughout time who weren’t wicked but never heard of Christ. They will have a chance to live forever as human beings in a paradise on earth.

The heavenly and earthly classes will remain eternally separated. The earthly class will never see the Father or Jesus.

**But according to the Bible, there is no “two-class” system.** Christ is the mediator between God and all people who are redeemed in him (1 Timothy 2:5–6). Everyone who has faith in Christ is already “born again” (1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 5:1). Everyone who knows God as Father through Jesus Christ has the “adoption as sons” (Romans 8:14–17; Galatians 4:4–6) and is his child (John 1:12–13). All baptized believers are part of the church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

All true believers will live together in the new heaven and new earth. Scripture teaches that when believers in Christ die, they go immediately into God's presence (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21–24). All believers from all ages will be resurrected with immortal bodies like Christ's (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:42–54; Philippians 3:21) and live together in the new heaven and new earth (Matthew 5:5; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). Believers in Christ will “reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). (Note: This “reign” may refer to God's intention for people to exercise dominion on earth [Genesis 1:26, 28] or to Christians ruling over the redeemed from past ages.) All of the redeemed will see the Father and Jesus (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 21:3–4).

**So, who are the 144,000?** The Bible only refers to “144,000” in Revelation chapters 7 and 14. Christians who interpret the number literally also take the twelve Israelite tribes of 12,000 literally (Revelation 7:4–8). It makes no sense to take the number 144,000 literally but not the twelve groups of 12,000 that the text adds up to get 144,000. Christians who take the twelve tribes in this passage as symbolizing the church consistently regard the number 144,000 as symbolic. But there is no basis in Revelation 7—or any other Bible passage—for dividing Jesus' followers into two classes.

(Adapted from *10 Q&A on Jehovah's Witnesses* Rose Publishing, [www.rose-publishing.com](http://www.rose-publishing.com))

## Traits of God and Jesus

The Watchtower teaches that Jesus is a lesser god than Jehovah. However, Scripture portrays Jesus as co-equal with God the Father, demonstrating Jesus' deity.

<b>Traits Unique to God (Jehovah)</b>	<b>Traits of Jesus</b>
Creation is “the work of his hands”—alone (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 102:25; Isa. 44:24)	Creation is “the work of his hands”—all things created in and through him (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10)
“The first and the last” (Isa. 44:6)	“The first and the last” (Rev. 1:17; 22:13)
“Lord of lords” (Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:3)	“Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16)
Unchanging and eternal (Ps. 90:2; 102:26–27; Mal. 3:6)	Unchanging and eternal (John 8:58; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:11–12; 13:8)
Judge of all people (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 94:2; 96:13; 98:9)	Judge of all people (John 5:22; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1)
Only Savior; no other God can save (Isa. 43:11; 45:21–22; Hos. 13:4)	Savior of the world; no salvation apart from him (John 4:42; Acts 4:12; Titus 2:13; 1 John 4:14)
Redeems from their sins a people for his own possession (Ex. 19:5; Ps. 130:7–8; Ezek. 37:23)	Redeems from their sins a people for his own possession (Titus 2:14)
Hears and answers prayers of those who call on him (Ps. 86:5–8; Isa. 55:6–7; Jer. 33:3; Joel 2:32)	Hears and answers prayers of those who call on him (John 14:14; Rom. 10:12–13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 12:8–9)
Only God has divine glory (Isa. 42:8; 48:11)	Jesus has divine glory (John 17:5)
Worshiped by angels (Ps. 97:7)	Worshiped by angels (Heb. 1:6)