MYTHBUSTERS

UNDERSTANDING
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

PASTOR DAVID SIMS
Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15-16).
Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916)

• Founder of modern day Jehovah’s Witnesses

• At age 17, Russell heard convincing argument that hell did not exist

• At age 18, he organized Bible class (1870)
In 1879, Russell began the “Watchtower publication”
The Watchtower Society Begins

- 1884 – Incorporated as Zion’s Watchtower Tract Society
- 1893 – First major convention in Chicago with 360 in attendance and 70 baptisms
- 1909 Russell’s wife divorced him and he moved headquarters from Pittsburgh to Brooklyn
After Russell’s death, there was a lack of leadership, and several groups broke off.

Judge Joseph Rutherford, became the organization’s leader in 1917.
“Judge” Rutherford (1869-1942)

- 1919 – began *Awake*!
- 1920’s, 30’s – implemented use of radio and phonograph records
- 1933 – over 400 radio stations were carrying Rutherford’s Bible lectures
“Judge” Rutherford (1869-1942)

- 1931 – New name: Jehovah’s Witnesses

- Under Rutherford’s charismatic leadership, membership grew from 10,000 (1916) to 100,000 (1942)

- 1942 – Rutherford’s era ends with his death. Power now vested in the governing council.
Fast Facts about Jehovah’s Witnesses

JW’s, like Mormons, for the most part are very nice and moral people! JW’s currently devote over 1.4 billion man hours each year spreading their false doctrine!

JW’s are a rapidly growing cult! In 1940, there were 58,000 JW’s in the USA, now there are well over 1 million. There are about 7 million active JW’s in the world today (96,000 in 1940).
The Watchtower Society (WTS)
The Watchtower Society (WTS)

The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that God personally established the Watchtower Society as His visible representative on earth. They claim that it is through the WTS and no other that God teaches the Bible to mankind today. People cannot correctly understand doctrine apart from the WTS.

JW’s believe that the Watchtower is God’s lone voice, a prophet, for God – to speak for and interpret Scripture on God’s behalf.
The Watchtower Society (WTS)

“Is it not the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society the one and only channel which the Lord has used in dispensing his truth continually since the beginning of the harvest period?” (The Watchtower, 15 January 1919, p. 6414).

“Jehovah’s organization alone, in all the earth, is directed by God’s holy spirit or active force.” (The Watchtower, 1 July 1973, p. 402).
The Watchtower Society (WTS)

Jehovah’s Witnesses are expected to obey the Society as the voice of God. (*The Watchtower*, 15 June 1957, p. 370).

“‘We must recognize not only Jehovah God as our Father but his organization (The Watchtower Society) as our Mother.’” (*The Watchtower*, 1 May 1957, p. 274).

The Watchtower is “an organization to direct the minds of God’s people.” (*The Watchtower*, 1 March 1983, p. 25).
The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that there is no accurate knowledge of God and no salvation apart from the Watchtower Society!

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that “it is through the columns of The Watchtower that Jehovah provides direction and constant scriptural counsel to his people.” (The Watchtower, 1 May 1964, p. 277).
The Watchtower Society (WTS)

The Watchtower claims that “unless we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using (WTS), we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do.” *(The Watchtower, 1 December 1981, p. 27)*.

Jehovah’s Witnesses are to submit to the teachings of the Watchtower Society because it is God’s “sole visible channel, through whom alone spiritual instruction is to come.” *(The Watchtower, 1 October 1967, p. 590).*
But if the Watchtower Society came into being in the late 19th century (a historical fact) does this mean that God was without a witness and no one was able to hear the message of truth or salvation for eighteen centuries?
The Watchtower’s Bible Translation

New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures
The Watchtower’s Bible Translation

The JW’s use a Bible translation called the New World Translation (NWT), published in 1955. This translation has manipulated and altered many Bible passages in order to support the Watchtower’s theology (i.e. Zech. 12:10; Col. 1:15-17).

The NWT is simply a systematic re-writing of existing Scripture in support of its preconceived doctrinal positions. It has no scholarly integrity.
The Watchtower’s Bible Translation

Jehovah’s Witnesses are not to think for themselves concerning Bible interpretation, rather they are programmed to memorize responses and to submit without question to the teachings of the Watchtower Society.

“If we have love for Jehovah and for the organization of his people we shall not be suspicious, but shall, as the Bible says, ‘believe all things,’ all the things that The Watchtower brings out.” (Qualified to be Ministers [Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1955], p. 156).

Dr. Bruce Metzger, professor of New Testament at Princeton University, calls the NWT “a frightful mistranslation,” “erroneous,” and “reprehensible.”

Dr. William Barclay concluded that “the deliberate distortion of truth by this sect is seen in their New Testament translation…. it is intellectually dishonest.”
The Watchtower Society kept the translation team nameless in order “to protect their humility.” However, when their names became known, it was discovered that four of the five men had no Hebrew or Greek training (only a high school education). The fifth member claimed to know Hebrew and Greek, but upon examination under oath in a court of law in Edinburg, Scotland, he failed a simple Hebrew test. [See transcript].
Peculiar & Failed Beliefs!

Charles Russell’s pyramid gravestone
A History of Failed Prophecies!

Fact: The founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Charles Taze Russell, and the Watchtower Society originally taught and believed that the Great Pyramid in Egypt was God’s “Bible in stone.”

After teaching this for nearly fifty years (1879-1928), the Watchtower Society changed its position, calling the Great Pyramid “Satan’s Bible”?
1874: Early in its history the Watchtower Society claimed that Jesus returned in 1874.


This is embarrassing to them since they also claim that Christ’s second coming occurred in 1914.
A History of Failed Prophecies!

The Watchtower
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

1914
The Generation That Will Not Pass Away.
1914: Despite the fact that early WTS literature claimed Christ returned in 1874, they began promoting another return in 1914.

They prophesied that “1914 would mark the overthrow of human governments and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth.”
In 1888, Charles Taze Russell said that “Within the coming 26 years all present governments will be overthrown and dissolved. The full establishment of the Kingdom of God will be accomplished by the end of A.D. 1914.” (Studies in the Scriptures, vol. 2 [Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1888], p. 98-99).
After many predictions and the fact that Jesus obviously did not return, the WTS claimed that Jesus did return, but that it was an invisible return: “Christ Jesus came to the Kingdom in A.D. 1914, but unseen to men.” (The Truth Shall Make You Free [Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1943], p. 300).

Is a prophet allowed to change his mind after the fact?
A History of Failed Prophecies!

1925: Watchtower leaders taught that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would return in 1925 as “princes” and live in an estate in San Diego known as Beth-Sarim (“House of Princes”).

Under the leadership of Watchtower Society leader, Judge Rutherford, this prophecy became widely publicized.
A History of Failed Prophecies!

Beth-Sarim ("House of Princes")
A History of Failed Prophecies!

The Watchtower magazine said, “There will be no slip up. Abraham should enter upon the actual possession of his promised inheritance in the year A.D. 1925.” (The Watchtower, 15 October 1917, p. 6157).

As the date approached, a 1923 Watchtower issue reiterated, “1925 is definitely settled by the Scriptures.” (The Watchtower, 1 April 1923, p. 106).
A History of Failed Prophecies!

Once again, their date came and went! Many JW’s became disillusioned and left the organization. Ironically, Judge Rutherford moved in to the estate in San Diego where he would live out the rest of his life.

Since this prophecy did not come to pass, doesn’t this mean the WTS is a false prophet?
1975: The Watchtower Society continued its erroneous teachings by predicting the end of man’s existence on earth in 1975. They taught that Armageddon would occur and that Christ would set up his millennial Kingdom in 1975.
A History of Failed Prophecies!

In October 1966, The JW’s magazine AWAKE said, “In what year, then, would the first 6,000 years of man’s existence and also the first 6,000 years of God’s rest day come to an end? The year 1975.”

This was reiterated in 1974, “The end of this system is so very near! Is that not reason to increase our activity?” (Our Kingdom Ministry, [Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1974], p. 3).
The Bible’s test of a true prophet

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak ... that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’—when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him (Deut. 18:20-22).

The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe the 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7 and 14) are an elite class of born again anointed followers of the WTS.

Initially it was going to comprise all JW’s, but in 1934, when their numbers exceeded 144,000, Judge Rutherford then explained that there were two classes – those who would live with God in heaven and those who would live in a restored paradise on earth. Again this is **not** in harmony with Scripture!
The JW’s view of Christ

Their beliefs: Jesus is not God, but a created being - Michael the archangel. Jesus was the first thing that God created. God then created all other things through Jesus.

The Watchtower Society teaches that “there is scriptural evidence for concluding that Michael was the name of Jesus before he left heaven and after his return.” (The Watchtower, 15 May 1969, p. 307).
But did you know . . . at one time the Watchtower Society actually endorsed the worship of Jesus! In 1880, *The Watchtower* magazine said that “To worship Christ in any form cannot be wrong.” (*The Watchtower*, March 1880, p. 83).

Twelve years later, they said, “Yes, we believe our Lord Jesus while on earth was really worshipped, and properly so.” (*The Watchtower*, 15 May 1892, p. 1410).
The JW’s view of Christ

Years later, the Watchtower changed its position concerning the worship of Jesus stating that “It is unscriptural for worshipers of the living and true God to render worship to the Son of God, Jesus Christ.”

(The Watchtower, 1 November 1964, p. 671).

The Watchtower Society warned, “Do not erroneously conclude that Christians are to worship Christ.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the Holy Spirit is not God, but rather a force like electricity. The Watchtower Society notes, “The Holy Spirit is not a person and is not part of a Trinity. The Holy Spirit is God’s active force that God uses to accomplish his will. It is not equal to God, but is always at his disposition.” (Should you Believe in the Trinity, [Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989], p. 23).
A Theology of Denial

Jehovah’s Witnesses deny many of the essential doctrines of the Scripture:

• Deny the deity of Christ
• Deny the deity of the Holy Spirit
• Deny the Trinity
• Deny the bodily resurrection of Christ
• Deny hell and eternal punishment
• Deny salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!
Peculiar Practices

The JW’s are not to participate in:

Blood transfusions, military service, flag saluting; birthdays, holidays, wearing crosses.

Note: avoid side issues and deal with central issues such as Jesus – His deity and the salvation we have through Him!
Watchtower Salvation

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe they will enjoy paradise on earth if they: 1. Take in knowledge; 2. obey the commandments; 3. do good works (distributing WTS literature); 4. baptism into the Watchtower Society; 5. persevere to the end.

“It’s complicated and cannot be answered in one meeting, but would take many many meetings over months to teach this, and then, even then, you couldn’t know that you were saved.” -- Jehovah’s Witness
What does the Bible say about Salvation!

A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16).
Biblical Salvation

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16-17).

Does the Bible say anything about WTS?
So what should we do?

Pray for them; share the gospel with them; love them.

Reveal the truth about the lies, errors, and history of the WTS and the NWT in a non-argumentative way.

Know your Bible, know their beliefs/ errors. Be Bereans (Acts 17:11).

Resist the temptation to prove them wrong. You may win the battle, but lose the war!
So what should we do?

Remember that Christ loves them and died for them too! We have the truth! You are to know it and share it in love!

But set apart the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and respect (I Peter 3:15).
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