

UNIT 2

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES (WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY)

I/ History

- February 16, 1852 –
- 1870 –
- 1879 –
- 1904 –
- 1908 –
- October 31, 1916 –
- 1917-42 –
- 1931 –
- 1961 –
- 1976 –

Watchtower False Prophecies

Christ's Return

1874 –

1914 –

The End of the World

1914 –

1915 –

1918 –

1925 –

1940's –

1975 –

A. Charles Taze Russell

“He never attended the higher schools of learning, knows comparatively nothing of philosophy, systematic or historical theology, and is totally ignorant of the dead languages, and yet he is successful in making his disciples believe that the most difficult passages in the Old Testament and the book of Revelation are as simple as a sunbeam to him. ‘Pastor’ Russell was never ordained and has no church affiliation. He would not be given a place in the pulpit of any evangelical church on the American continent or any other country where he and his religious views are known...He is an eccentric individual and advertises on the bill-boards in a most grotesque fashion. Judging from his advertisements of himself, many do not think him normal, and so are persuaded that he is self-deceived...Russell has published a set of books, bound in six volumes, including about two thousand pages, which he now calls ‘Studies in the Scriptures.’ The title is misleading and is intended to deceive the Christian public. The teaching of these books subverts the faith of Christians of all evangelical denominations and substitutes for the truth as it is in Christ the destructive doctrines of one man, who is neither a scholar nor a theologian. The whole system of Russellism is anti-rational, anti-scientific, anti-Biblical, anti-Christian and a deplorable perversion of the Gospel of God’s dear Son. There is nothing in the English-speaking world to compare with the system presented in the books for error...They contradict almost every fundamental of Christian faith...The system of error which he represents is a combination of Unitarianism, Universalism, Restorationism, Second Probationism, Swedenborgianism and Annihilationism. Every reader is warned against this false teacher and his teaching as dangerous in the extreme. It is safer to stand by the Lord Jesus than by any human teacher. It is safer to take our system of truth from the Bible than from the Watchtower. It is safer to take the creeds of Christendom than the vagaries of one man.” –Rev. J.J. Ross, June 1912

B. Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford

II/ Doctrine

The Watchtower leadership sensed that within the midst of Christendom were millions of professing Christians who were not well grounded in “the truths once delivered to the saints,” and who would rather easily be pried loose from the churches and led into a new and revitalized Watchtower organization. The Society calculated, and that rightly, that this lack of proper knowledge of God and the widespread acceptance of half-truths in Christendom would yield vast masses of men and women, if the whole matter were wisely attacked, the attack sustained and the results contained, and then reused in an ever-widening circle.

—W. J. Schnell, *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*

A. God

i. The name of God

“May people know that you, whose name is Jehovah, You alone are the Most High over all the earth.” —Psalm 83:18 (New World Translation)

ii. The Trinity

“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.”
—*Let God Be True*, 1946 ed., p. 102

B. Revelation

i. *The Watchtower and Awake!*

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.” —Matthew 24:45-48

“Furthermore, not only do we find that *people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself*, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the SCRIPTURE STUDIES aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years *he goes into darkness*. On the other hand, if he had merely read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES with their references, and had *not read a page of the Bible, as such*, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.” —*The Watchtower*, September 15, 1910

“We acknowledge as the visible organization of Jehovah on earth the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and recognize the Society as the channel or instrument through which Jehovah and Christ Jesus give instruction and meat in due season to the household of faith.” —*The Watchtower*, April 15, 1939

“Avoid independent thinking...questioning the counsel that is provided by God’s visible organization...seek for dependent Bible study, rather than independent Bible study.” —*The Watchtower*, January 15, 1983 & 1911

ii. *The New World Translation*

C. Humanity and sin

i. Man is a "living soul"

ii. Hell is the grave

"Yes, good people go to the Bible hell...Sheol and Hades refer no to a place of torment but to the common grave of all mankind." –*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, 83

D. Salvation

i. Salvation by works

ii. Two classes of Christians

a. The 144,000 (the "anointed class" or "little flock")

b. The "other sheep"

E. Jesus

- i. Michael the Archangel
- ii. Jesus, the perfect human
- iii. The resurrection
- iv. The deity of Christ

“Jesus never claimed to be God. Everything he said about himself indicates that he did not consider himself equal to God in any way – not in power, not in knowledge, not in age...In every period of his existence, whether in heaven or on earth, his speech and conduct reflect subordination to God. God is always the superior, Jesus the lesser one who was created by God.” (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* online ed.)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was *a god*.”
—John 1:1 (NWT)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; because by means of him all *other* things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All *other* things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all *other* things, and by means of him all *other* things were made to exist”
—Colossians 1:15-17 (NWT)

An old heresy with a new name...

“The Watchtower has never failed to echo the old Arian heresy...Jehovah’s Witnesses know beyond doubt that if Jesus is Jehovah God, every one of them is going to a flaming hereafter; and hell they fear above all else.” –Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*

F. Other teachings

- i. Medical treatment
- ii. Higher education
- iii. Holidays, politics, war

iv. Disfellowshipping

“A disfellowshipped person is cut off from the congregation, and the congregation has nothing to do with him. Those in the congregation will not extend the hand of fellowship to this one, nor will they so much as say ‘hello’ or ‘good-bye’ to him...[The congregation members] will not converse with such a one or show him recognition in any way. If the disfellowshipped person attempts to talk to others in the congregation, they should walk away from him. In this way he will feel the full power of his sin...The disfellowshipped person who wants to do what is right should inform any approaching him that he is disfellowshipped and they should not be conversing with him...What if a person cut off from God’s congregation unexpectedly visits dedicated [Witness] relatives? What should the [Jehovah’s Witness] Christian do then? If this is the first occurrence of such a visit, the dedicated Christian can, if his conscience permits, carry on family courtesies on that particular occasion. However, if his conscience does not permit, he is under no obligation to do so. If courtesies are extended, though, the Christian should make it clear that this will not be made a regular practice...The excommunicated relative should be made to realize that his visits are not welcomed as they were previously when he was walking correctly with Jehovah.” –*The Watchtower*, 1963

WATCHTOWER DOCTRINES DISTINGUISHED FROM CHRISTIANITY*

	Watchtower View	Christian View
Authority	Watchtower Society	Bible alone
God	No Trinity	Trinity
Jesus’ Identity	A lesser god	God Almighty
Jesus’ Death	Died as a man	Died as the God-Man
Jesus’ Resurrection	Spiritual	Physical
Second Coming	Spiritual and invisible, in 1914	Physical, yet future
Salvation	By works	By grace
People of God	Two peoples – heavenly and earthly	One people
Hell	The grave (no eternal punishment)	Place of eternal punishment

*from Ron Rhodes, *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions*

III/ Evangelism

A. Reasoning from the Scriptures

B. The gospel

“What the Watchtower means by ‘free gift’ is that Christ’s death only wiped away the sin inherited from Adam. They teach that without this work of atonement, men could not *work their way toward salvation*. But the ‘gift’ of Christ’s ransom sacrifice is freely made available to all who desire it. In other words, without Christ’s sacrifice, the individual wouldn’t *have a chance to get saved*. But in view of His work, the free gift which removed the sin inherited from Adam, *the individual now has a chance*. –Duane Magnani, *The Watchtower Files*

C. A personal relationship with Jehovah