

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

ANSWERING DENOMINATIONAL DOCTRINES “Jehovah’s Witnesses”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32). Welcome to our study of Answering Denominational Doctrines. Today we will be examining the doctrines of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion to see if they are true to the Word of God. In this series of lessons we are taking the Bible as God’s sole authority in religious matters, as all truth, and as our only guide to get to Heaven. We are going to take the Word of God and we are going to examine the teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion to see if they are true to the Word of God. These lessons are designed to help us see that there are things that people teach that are in contradiction to the Bible and that do not agree with the Word of God. If a person remains in such religious error, they cannot be right in God’s sight. The intent of these lessons is to express a love for people’s souls in order to help them get to Heaven.

The entire system of religion associated with Jehovah’s Witnesses was started by false prophets. I am going to give you the evidence and let you see it for yourself because it has been documented in their own writings as well as in history. The facts are undeniable. These false prophets made statements and prophecies that were blatant lies. Some of these false prophecies were given by Charles Taze Russell, who is believed to be one of the original founders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion. Russell published a book claiming that Christ’s Second Coming had begun invisibly in 1874. If I was going to say that something like that was going to happen, I would **have** to say that it was occurring “invisibly” because no one saw it occur. How could anyone know it had happened? How could it be proved? Russell also claimed that by 1889 the twenty-six years had all been accounted for, that governments were going to be overthrown, and that the world was going to come to an end. Did that happen? In 1889, did all governments come to an end? Of course not. Many are still in existence today. So here is a prophecy that did not come true. Jesus did not have an “invisible Second Coming” in 1874. In 1914 Russell said that Armageddon “may be next spring.” Yet spring of 1915 rolled around—and there was no Armageddon. Russell then said, “In view of the strong Bible evidence concerning the times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of all the kingdoms of this world, and full establishment of the kingdom of God, will be accomplished by the end of 1914.” The year 1914 ended, yet those things did not take place. Jesus did not come back. All governments were not done away with. There was no Armageddon. What do we learn from all of that? Here’s a man who supposedly is the founder of these ideas, which are at the heart and core of this religion, yet he is clearly seen as a false prophet. How does the Bible say that we should deal with a person like that?

In Deuteronomy 18:22 the Scripture says concerning false prophets, “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.” That is how God says we ought to deal with people who are

false prophets. We are not to listen to them. We are not to buy into what they are saying. If what they have prophesied does not come to pass, then we can know that what the people said was not said on God's behalf. Look at everything that Charles Taze Russell said. He said that Christ's Second Coming took place invisibly in 1874. He said that all governments would be overthrown. He said that Armageddon would occur in the spring of 1915. Everything would happen in 1914. Yet when all of that failed to happen, according to Deuteronomy 18:22 people would need not to worry about what he had said, and could be assured that he was not a prophet of God.

How does all of that apply to the Jehovah's Witnesses religion? If the very person who is the founder of the religion, and who is the one who came up with such ideas, is clearly seen as a false prophet, as a liar, and as a deceiver of multitudes, why would anyone want to buy into anything he says. But Russell was not the only false prophet. There also were false prophecies that came from Judge J.F. Rutherford, who also recognized as one of the original founders of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion. In 1920 Rutherford predicted the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other worthies of old "fully restored to perfect humanity in 1925." Did anyone see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or others restored to humanity in 1925? Of course not! Those things did not happen. Rutherford also said that 1940 was certain to be the "most important year yet" because "Armageddon was very near, which behooves all who love righteousness to put forth every effort to advertise the theocracy while the privileges are still open." What is he saying? God's theocracy is going to occur. Former governments of old will be done away with. And Armageddon will occur in 1940. Those things did not happen. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not come back in 1925. Armageddon did not happen in 1940. So what can we know as a result? Let's listen to Deuteronomy 18:22 again: "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." Charles Taze Russell offered up prophecies that did not come true. He was not a spokesman for God. J.F. Rutherford made statements that were not true. He also was not a spokesman for God. The Jehovah's Witnesses religion is so uniquely tied to these two men that it cannot be separated from them. If they were known to be false prophets—and they were!—then why would you believe anything that they said without checking and double checking it according to the Bible?

Let's do just that. Let's examine some of the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion. One of the doctrines that is in direct opposition to the Word of God is the Jehovah's Witnesses view of the Bible as final authority. Charles Russell said,

"Not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible 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, and after he has read them for ten year, 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 the references, and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the plain light at the end of two years because he would have the light of the Scriptures."

Stop and think about that. Russell said that a person needed "his book." You have to take the *Scripture Studies*, study them, and stay true to them, and you will do all right. But if you leave them, within two years you will go into darkness. If you had stayed with them, you wouldn't even have had to open the Bible. Look at all that says. It says that a man cannot get to Heaven by using the Bible alone, and that we need other books of men to be right with God because the Bible itself is not sufficient, and cannot be our only guide. That is in direct opposition to what the Scriptures teach. What did Jesus say concerning know-

ing the truth? Jesus did not say that we need *Scripture Studies* or anything else. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jesus did not give any additions. He did not say that we need the truth and *Scripture Studies*. Jesus said simply that we **can know** the truth. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." When we take what God's Word says, we do not need the ideas and additions of men. Revelation 22:18-19 tells us that we are not to add to or take away from the Word of God. We do not need the additions, ideas, or insights of any man in order to know the Bible. James 1:21 says that we are to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls." Romans 1:16 clearly teaches that the Gospel is God's "power unto salvation." Paul, in discussing the understandable nature of Scripture, said, "When you read, you can understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4). We can read the Bible. We can understand it. And we do not need anyone to say, "You'd better take this book, too, because you can't understand the Bible."

Anytime someone says that we cannot understand the Bible, cannot know the Bible, or need his help or his book to understand the Bible, we need to be very leery of that individual because the Bible says the exact opposite. We do not need anything except the Bible to get to Heaven. The Jehovah's Witnesses religion is wrong regarding the Bible not being our final authority and only guide.

Another doctrine with which we need to deal, and which the Jehovah's Witnesses promote, concerns death. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that death is an annihilation. When you are dead, you are dead all over, and that's it. Rutherford said in his book, *Reconciliation*, "Death means non-existence." He said in his book, *Deliverance*, "When a man dies, he is as dead as a dog." Is that really true? Is death annihilation? The second we die, do we cease forever to exist? Is there anything on the other side, or is death the end? Thanks to the Bible we know that we are not annihilated at death. Do you remember when Jesus was speaking with the Sadducees in Mark 12? The Sadducees had an odd idea about the other side. They did not believe in a bodily resurrection. They did not believe in an afterlife. So Jesus said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?" (vs. 24). Then He reminded them where God said in the Old Testament, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Jesus then said, "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken." Jesus clearly taught that death is not annihilation. How so? At the time of the writing of the passage in Exodus, were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dead? Absolutely. They had been dead for many years. Yet Jesus said that God is "not the God of the dead, but of the living." Jesus said that God **is** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This implies that those three men were not annihilated, but were alive somewhere on the other side.

In John 5:28-29 Jesus taught that the same is true of us. Jesus said that at the resurrection, all who are in the graves will come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of eternal death." People do not cease to exist after death. In Luke 16 we see the story of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man had everything in this life. He "fared sumptuously." Lazarus was a poor man who sought the crumbs from the rich man's table, and who had the dogs lick his sores. Both men died. The rich man awoke in torment in the Hadean realm. Lazarus also awoke, but was in Paradise. There we see that both men still existed after death. So it is true that people do not cease to exist. "Annihilation upon death" is not taught in the Bible. It is a doctrine of false teachers. Someone might ask, "Can a loving God actually send someone to Hell?" There are things we need to consider here. God did not create us as robots. God

created us as free moral agents. We have the right to choose. In Joshua 24:15 we read, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." The fact that we have a choice, and that God is the Judge, demands that God also be the Punisher. Let's put it in human terms. Let's say that a criminal committed a heinous crime by murdering someone. What would we think of a judge if the criminal appeared before him (having made the choice to murder), and the judge slammed down the gavel as he said, "You're innocent because I love you too much"? People would be outraged. They would be up in arms about such a thing. Would they ever say, "If the judge had sentenced the man to prison, he would not have been a loving judge"? Of course not. Justice demands free moral agency. And justice demands that a loving God must punish some people if free choice and free will come into play. Annihilation is not taught in the Bible.

Another doctrine that Jehovah's Witnesses promote has to do with the 144,000 who supposedly will be the only people to be saved. Perhaps you have been visited by members of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion. They might have asked, "Are you a part of the 144,000? They are the only ones going to Heaven. The church will have exactly 144,000, and that is all the people who will be saved." That doctrine comes from Revelation 14. And if we are going to take it literally, then Jehovah's Witnesses are going to have a serious problem. Here is what the Bible actually says. According to Revelation 7:4, the 144,000 will be only Jews. According to Revelation 14:4, they will all be male virgins. Thus, you will have Jews only, men only, and virgins only. Is that really what the Bible is teaching? What is the significance of the 144,000? It is a number describing all the redeemed of all the ages. It is not a literal number. The Bible does not teach that when the number of 144,000 is finally reached, and someone else wants to be saved, he cannot be. This is not a literal number, but is a depiction of all the redeemed of the ages. Taking this literally becomes a real problem for Jehovah's Witnesses because it says that only Jews, only men, and only virgins will be saved. That would wipe out most of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Such a doctrine is not taught in the Bible.

What about Jesus' deity? Jehovah's Witnesses once again teach false doctrine concerning this item. Rutherford said in *Reconciliation*, "In truth, when Jesus was on Earth, He was a perfect man—nothing more, nothing less." What does that mean? It means that Jesus was not divine. He was not God in the flesh. He was a perfect man, and that's it. But that is false, considering what Scripture says. In John 1:1 the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 says, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus Christ is God. He is divine. The Godhead has always been composed of a plurality. In Genesis 1:26-27 God did not say, "Let Me make man in My image." Rather, He said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image." Genesis 2:7 comments on that and says, "The Lord God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living being." There is a plurality to the Godhead. Think about what Thomas said in John 20:28. After Jesus had shown Thomas the nail imprints in His hands, and the place where the sword had pierced His side, Thomas said, "My Lord and My God!" Thomas knew that Jesus was divine. Notice Matthew 1:23, where it was said to Mary, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'" Does the Scripture say that Jesus, Who was born of Mary, was "God with us" (God in the flesh)? Absolutely. To deny the deity of Jesus is to deny the heart and core of God's sacrifice in Christianity. The very fact that God loved us so much that He sent His only Son (God in the flesh) to this Earth so that He could live and die for us, shows the extreme nature of God's sacrifice, and proves how much He loved each and every one of us. So yes, Jesus is divine. He is more than "just a perfect man." He was God in the flesh Who made a sacrifice for each one of us.

Another false doctrine that does not line up with the teaching of Scripture, and that is promoted by Jehovah's Witnesses, is that the Earth will never be destroyed. They believe that the Earth will exist forever, and that one of these days we will live in a state of utopia like the Garden of Eden where all sin will be done away with, and that will be on this Earth. In fact, in the book *Make Sure of All Things*, that very thing is said. Is that what the Bible teaches? Does the Bible teach that we will live in some sort of utopia-like state that will be a Paradise here on the Earth likened to the Garden of Eden? Absolutely not! In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." Jesus clearly taught the heavens and the Earth will one day be destroyed. If someone claims that the Earth will never be destroyed, how would they deal with 2 Peter 3:10-12? Look at the clarity of these verses, which specifically discuss the Second Coming of Christ. Peter said that, just as it was in the days of Noah, there were in his day mockers and scoffers who were asking, "Where is the sign of His coming? When will Christ return? You told us it would happen...so where is He?" Peter then makes the point that with the Lord, time is not the same as it is to us. God is not constrained by time (2 Pet. 3:8-9). He is longsuffering. But in 2 Peter 3:10-12 we read,

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?"

Look at the terminology that is used—"destroyed," "dissolved," "be on fire," and "cease to exist." The Scriptures clearly teach that this Earth on which we live will not last forever. At the Second Coming of Christ, it will be destroyed. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8 we are told that Christ will come "in a flaming fire to take vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Another problem with such an idea is that Jesus, and those who have been faithful, will not even be on the Earth any more. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 we are taught that Christ will come

"with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

Christ is not coming to reign on Earth again. The Bible never says that. The saints will be caught up with Him in the air, and we will go to the "new heaven and new earth" that God has prepared for His people (Rev. 21:3-4).

Another doctrine that is not according to the Scripture that often is promoted by Jehovah's Witnesses is the idea of Hell. They say concerning Hell that it is "only the grave." There is no place of punishment. God will not actually punish anyone for eternity. People will not burn and be in torment like you see in the Bible. That is just figurative language, so we are told—and it will not happen. The problem is that the same passage in Isaiah 66 that Jesus used in Mark 9 to talk about Hell is also used in Revelation 21:3-4 to talk about Heaven. You cannot have Heaven without Hell, and you cannot have Hell without Heaven. In Mark 9:43-44 Jesus said that Hell is a place where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." God promises that ungodly people will be punished on the other side. So yes, the Bible does teach that Hell is a real place, and that we must be sure that there will be there who go there. We also must make sure that we do not go there.

Another error taught by Jehovah's Witnesses concerns baptism. In the book, *Make Sure*, the following is taught: "Baptism has nothing to do with the remission of sins." What a blatant statement that is. It is very clear. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that baptism has nothing to do with the remission of sins. It does not matter if you are baptized or not because your sins will not be washed away by baptism. What does the Bible say about baptism? Here's what is amazing. God, in His infinite wisdom, has already refuted this error in much of the exact language that false teachers use. Jehovah's Witnesses say that baptism has nothing to do with the remission of sins. Let's see what God has to say. In Acts 2:38 Peter stood up to proclaim the Gospel. The Jews realized that they had just crucified their Lord and Savior. They asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (vs. 37). Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Jehovah's Witnesses say that baptism has nothing to do with the remission of sins. God said that baptism is **for** the remission of sins. Who will you believe? Are you going to believe Charles Taze Russell, J.F. Rutherford, and the Watchtower Society (all of whom say that baptism has nothing to do with remission of sins)? Or, will you believe the Bible, which says that baptism is "for the remission of sins"? Acts 2:38, of course, is not the only place where we read such a thing. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He who believes, and is baptized, will be saved. He who does not believe shall be condemned." Both belief and baptism are essential to salvation. Do you remember what Saul was told? In Acts 9:4-6 we see the Lord appearing unto Saul. He asked,

" 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord? Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what do You want me to do?' Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' "

What was it essential for Saul to do? In Acts 22:16 we see Ananias coming to Saul to say, "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Baptism is the point at which our sins are washed away. In 1 Peter 3:21 we read, "Baptism does also not save us." It is not baptism alone. But combined with hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17), believing in Jesus as God's Son (Jn. 8:24), confessing Him before men (Acts 8:36), repenting of our sins (Lk. 13:3), baptism makes us right in the sign of God because we have done what God wants us to do.

I want to ask you today if you are going to buy into the things which false prophets started (as confirmed by their failed prophecies), and the false doctrines they teach that are in clear contradiction to Scripture? Or, will you obey God and the Bible? If you are not a child of God, or if you have gotten caught up in this error, we are begging you to come out of this religious error. Obey the Gospel, and become a New Testament Christian. Put all of these ideas (like the idea that you cannot understand the Bible) aside, and simply obey the Gospel of Christ. Won't you do that before its everlastingly too late?

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES”

1. What important statement did Jesus make in John 8:32?
2. According to the material presented in this lesson, who were the two founders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion?
3. State two “prophecies” made by one of the founders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion that have to do with the years 1874 and 1889, and that did not come true.
4. What does Deuteronomy 18:22 say about a prophet?
5. What “prophecy” did one of the founders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion make about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob that related to the year 1925, but that did not come true?
6. What claim did one of the founders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion make about his book, *Scripture Studies*, in relation to the Bible?
7. What does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 have to say about God’s Word?
8. What does Psalm 119:160 say about God’s Word?
9. What does James 1:21 say about God’s Word?
10. According to material presented in this lesson, what do members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion believe regarding life after death?
11. In Mark 12:24-27, what point was Jesus making about life after death?
12. What doctrine do members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion believe based on Revelation 14?
13. According to material presented in this lesson from Revelation 7 and 14, what is wrong with the doctrine mentioned in question #12 above?
14. What do members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion believe regarding the deity of Jesus Christ?
15. According to Matthew 1:23, what was Jesus Christ to be, once He was born to Mary (as indicated by His name)?
16. According to material presented in this lesson, what do members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion teach about this Earth?
17. What does 2 Peter 3:10-12 say will happen to the Earth at Jesus’ Second Coming?
18. What do members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses religion teach about Hell?
19. In Mark 9:43-44, what did Jesus have to say about Hell?