

Jehovah's Witnesses

No hell, New kingdom, Perfection restored

Officially known as the *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*, the Witnesses were founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1874. Denying the existence of hell and claiming to be an authority on the Second Coming of Christ (he wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Object and Manner of the Lord's Return*), he predicted that the Lord would return in 1874, then changed the date to 1914. Claiming that the return was not a physical one (contradicting *Revelation 1:7*), the 1914 date stuck and is the date when the Witnesses claim the "spirit of Christ" returned to earth. This return empowered the Witnesses to preach the news of the new kingdom that would be established here on earth following Armageddon and the Kingdom was temporarily established in heaven.

In 1879, Russell began publishing the Watchtower magazine which helped increase the membership in the Society. In 1961, under the leadership of Nathan Homer Knorr, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* was published. This is the "bible" that all Witnesses carry and quote from. Claiming one million members in the U.S. and 2 million worldwide, the Witnesses preach a message of hope and Jehovah's reestablishment of the perfect world intended in the Garden of Eden.

So What's the Difference (what to do they believe)?

The Witnesses deny: 1) the deity of Christ, 2) the separation of soul and body, 3) the existence of hell, 4) eternal punishment. The Witnesses claim: 1) a holy group of 144,000 chosen (by Jehovah) to rule with Jehovah and Christ as "kings and priests", 2) the annihilation of those opposed to Jehovah, 3) the resurrection of all who have not had a chance to hear the message of the kingdom to be educated during the Millennium, 4) everyone will be given a chance to reject or accept Jehovah at the final judgment.

1. **God** – Jehovah is God, the Creator. He is one. He is not triune. Man will either accept or reject Jehovah at the final judgment.
2. **Jesus Christ** – Jesus was created by God and was given divine-like power. He was formerly the angel Michael. He was "stripped" of his angelic nature and made mortal. The "man" Jesus died for the sins of the world and was raised "in spirit" to provide the opportunity for man to preach the good news of the coming kingdom. He will return and destroy all those who do not believe in Jehovah in the Battle of Armageddon.
3. **Man and sin** – Man is a living soul with body and soul as one. Death for the body is death for the soul. Therefore, everyone who has died is in a state of stasis until resurrections. No one is in heaven or hell. All are waiting to be revived. Sin is anything that displeases Jehovah.
4. **Salvation** – Salvation is achieved by worshipping Jehovah, believing in the person of Jesus and "proving" it by their works. The Witnesses, when talking to a Christian, will stress that they believe in Christ (it's hard to deny given the dominance in Scripture), and prove it by preaching the message of Jehovah and the kingdom, reciting the book of James as the reason. They do not believe in the final and singular atonement for sins accomplished by Christ on the cross.
5. **Heaven and hell** – Heaven is where Jehovah and the angels live. Christ will rule the earth from Heaven during the 1000 year period. There is no hell that exists as an actual physical place. Hell is, technically, annihilation. At the end times, hell and death will be thrown into the lake of fire. The Witnesses do recognize that hell and the lake of fire are two different things.
6. **The Bible** – The Witnesses believe that *The New World Translation* is the true translation of the Scriptures, "untainted by man's traditions". It is close to the Holy Bible, with some glaring differences, (inaccurate and deliberate rewording) in verses referring to death, Christ's deity, eternal punishment. *The Watchtower*, *The Awake*, and *The Truth That Leads to Everlasting Life* are their major publications. One point – the Witnesses know "their" bible and have a verse to back up everything they teach. To the world (and the Christian who is weak in Scriptures), they possess intimidating and seemingly formidable Biblical knowledge.