

# The Belief System of Jehovah's Witnesses

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Calvary Castle Rock  
Apologetics Class

# Apologetics

- ❑ *Apologetics* came from 1 Peter 3:15: “Sanctify the Lord in Your hearts, and always be ready to give a **defense** for the hope that is in you.”
- ❑ *Apologetics* is the term for giving a **defense** for the hope that is in you (from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning “**an answer**”).
- ❑ It is explaining to people not just what we believe, but why we believe it, and why it gives us hope.

# Apologetics

- This semester's Apologetics class is examining the belief systems of a few world religions: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the New Apostolic Reformation. We are also looking at modern Christian Music from a Biblical perspective.
- We hope to equip you with the truth and practical tools you will need to resist deception and help those who have been misled by the tactics of false religions.

# Apologetics

- ❑ There are worldwide religious groups that are viewed as mainstream Christian, even though in reality they are aberrant and cultic. These are a challenge to orthodox Christianity, and a spiritual threat to unsuspecting people that are deceived by their doctrines and tactics.
- ❑ When determining if a world religion is a counterfeit path to God, we compare its scriptures and doctrines to the truth of the Genuine Article - the Scriptures and Doctrines of the Bible - which are perfect, inerrant and trustworthy.
- ❑ **Truth is always threatened by subtle and seductive distortions, omissions, and additions to the Bible.**

# Apologetics

- ❑ The age we live in has religious leaders and systems that claim “there are many paths to God.”
- ❑ The Christ of Christianity, however, has made claims that run completely counter to that claim. **Christ's claims are VERY exclusive.** He earned the right to be the exclusive Savior of mankind by giving His life!
- ❑ Jesus Christ unapologetically stated: “***I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me.***” **(John 14:6)**
- ❑ Not everyone can be correct in their claims! **Truth is Absolute** – Not Relative, despite what some say.

# Apologetics

## The Scriptures of the Bible - This Sums it Up...

*“The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels... There is not one single mistake either in the Word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of Revelation, nor of providence, will there be any need to put a single note of errata. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse.”*

(Charles Spurgeon)

# Apologetics

## The Scriptures of Christianity – The Bible

- The Bible is God's special, written revelation, or self-disclosure, to mankind. It is a collection of divinely-inspired texts that demonstrate His character by describing many of His deeds through world history.
- God's Word - the Bible, shows it is supernatural by predicting future events (prophecy), and making the events come to precise fruition (world history).
- Jesus was anticipated throughout the Old Testament, and explained in the New Testament.

# Apologetics

## The Scriptures of Christianity – The Bible

- The Bible provides theology/doctrine, and ethics (rules and direction) for God's followers, who He lovingly calls “His children.”
- The Scriptures show that the God of the Bible is the One, True, Awesome God - and yet He is a personal and loving God, who knows all about His creation.
- The content of the Bible is called “Canon.”
- **The Bible is sacred – because God is enthroned on His Word.**

# Apologetics - Cults

## The Word “Cult”

The word **Cult** comes from the Latin word *cultus*, which is a form of the verb *colere*, meaning “to worship or give reverence to a deity.”

# Apologetics

## Definitions of “Cult” (*American Heritage Dictionary*)

- 1) A system or community of religious worship and ritual.
- 2) *a. A religion or religious sect generally considered to be extremist or bogus.  
b. Followers of such a religion or sect.*
- 3) *a. Obsessive devotion or veneration for a person, principle, or ideal, esp. when regarded as a fad.  
b. The object of such devotion.*
- 4) An exclusive group of persons sharing an esoteric interest.

**Cult Definition #2 is what we mean in our Apologetics discussions of world religions.**

# Apologetics

## The Definition of “Cult” (*Kingdom of the Cults*)

A group of people gathered about a specific person or persons' misinterpretation of the Bible. Cults contain many major deviations from historical Christianity. Yet paradoxically, they continue to insist that they are entitled to be classified as Christians.

# **Apologetics**

## **The Four Basic Characteristics of a Cultic Belief System (*from Kingdom of the Cults*)**

- 1) Closed-mindedness;** Not interested in a rational, cognitive evaluation or discussion of the facts.
- 2) Antagonism on a personal level;** The cultist usually associates his dislike of the true Christian message with the messenger - and can be hostile to Christians.
- 3) Institutional dogmatism and intolerance;** Wishing to be considered “Christian,” a cult's claims are a special, supernatural revelation of truth that no others have received, and are indefensible in the light of Scripture.
- 4) Isolation/Compartmentalization;** Contradictions and inconsistencies of their theology are met with excuses, distancing or “sweeping of facts under the rug.”

# Apologetics

## The Biblical Warnings About Cults (NKJV)

**Matthew 7:15** *“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.”*

**1 John 2:22** *“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.”*

**Romans 12:9b** *“Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”*

**2 Corinthians 11:12-13** *“But what I do I continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.”*

# Apologetics

## The Biblical Warnings About Cults (NKJV)

**Galatians 1:6-8** *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”*

# Apologetics

## The Key Verse Cults Disregard (NKJV)

**Ephesians 2:8-9** “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*”

# **Apologetics**

## **The Biblical Perspective Toward Cults**

*(Kingdom of the Cults)*

**The Biblical perspective, where false teachers and false teachings are concerned, is that we are to have compassion and love for those who are enmeshed in the teachings of the false prophets, but we are to vigorously oppose the teachings, with our primary objective the winning of the soul and not so much the argument.**

# The Jehovah's Witnesses Belief System

# Jehovah's Witnesses Summary

- ★ A denomination formed in the 1870's from the Adventist Bible Student movement.
- ★ They call themselves “a nontrinitarian millenarian restorationist Christian denomination.”
- ★ The denomination is directed by a group of elders in New York known as the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. This body appoints their president.
- ★ They use their own Bible translation, “*The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*,” published 1961.
- ★ 118 thousand congregations (Kingdom Halls) with 8.5 million adherents worldwide involved in evangelism, and 19.7 million attending the annual “Memorial of Christ's Death.”

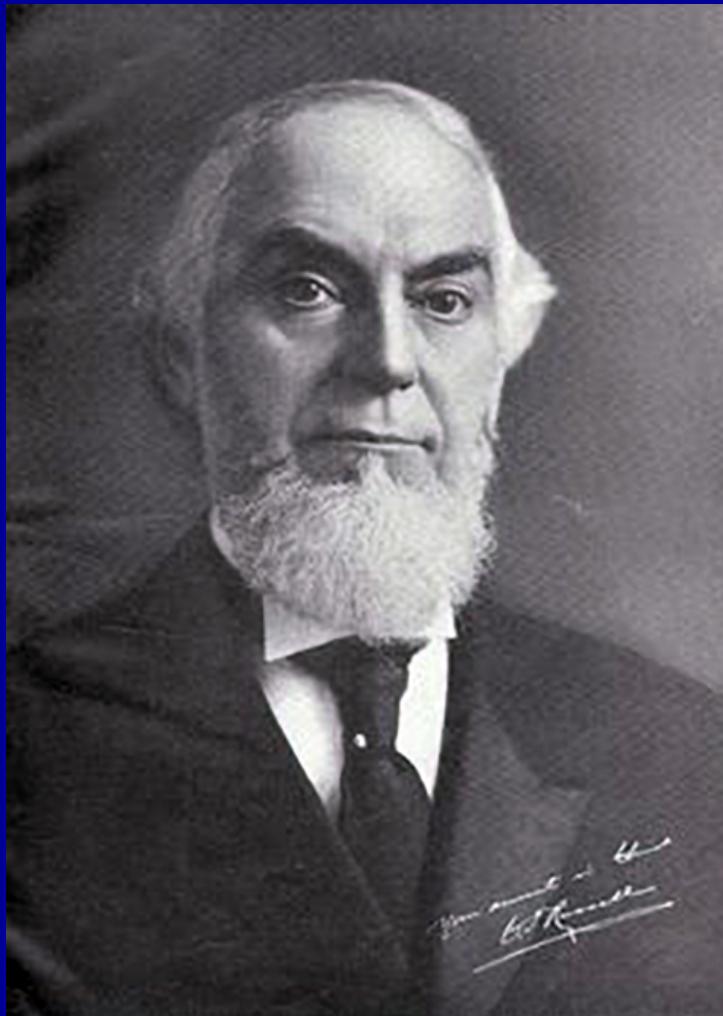
# Jehovah's Witnesses Summary

- ★ 1 in 272 in the USA, or 0.37% of the population, are Jehovah's Witnesses, which is 1.24 million people.
- ★ Also called the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Publications include *The Watchtower* and *Awake*. *Millenial Dawn* and *Russellism* are other, older names.
- ★ Volunteers, called publishers, in hundreds of countries, produce literature in 110 languages. Billions of pieces of literature have been published thus far.
- ★ Some famous Jehovah's Witnesses include: Serena and Venus Williams, Prince, George Benson and Lou Whitaker.
- ★ Some who were raised as JW's but left the religion include: Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, and the Wayans brothers.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

- Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) was the father of what today is called the Jehovah's Witnesses cult.



# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

- At an early age he rejected the doctrine of eternal torment (hell), possibly because of the severe indoctrination he received as a congregationalist. This led him to actively campaign against “organized religions.”
- At the age of 18, in 1870, he was elected “Pastor” of the Bible class he organized in Pittsburgh, PA. He used this “Pastor” title advantageously for the rest of his life. The title was assumed but not earned.
- From 1876 to 1878, he was assistant editor of a small Rochester NY magazine, but resigned in controversy over his views regarding the Atonement of Christ.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

- In 1879 he founded *The Herald of the Morning* periodical, which led to today's *Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*, has circulated over 18 million copies in over 100 languages. *Awake* is the other Watchtower periodical, with 20 million monthly copies.
- In 1884 Russell started *Zion's Watchtower Tract Society*, publishing 7 books, 6 by himself. The 7<sup>th</sup>, *The Finished Mystery*, caused a group split, with the larger group following J.F. Rutherford (more on him later), becoming known as *Jehovah's Witnesses*, though corporately as *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*.
- JW's have volunteers, called publishers, in hundreds of countries, literature in 110 languages, and billions of pieces of literature published thus far.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

- Headquartered in Brooklyn NY, the enterprise has a Bible school called *Gilead*, a modern printing facility, and apartments for employees, who receive free room and board and a small stipend for expenses.
- Upon Russell's death in 1916, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* published a very revealing obituary. The Eagle was an important local/national paper that ran 1841-1955. The following facts were extracted from the obituary and court records stemming from Russell's wife of 24 years, Maria Ackley, leaving him and suing in 1903. The suit culminated in Russell paying \$6036 in alimony in 1909.
- Russell had 99% control of a holding company which had several subsidiaries used for the Society's religious activities. He was accountable to no one.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

- ★ Russell had many money-making schemes. The litigation revealed that the *Watch Tower* advertised “*Miracle Wheat*” seed which he sold for \$1.00 a pound, asserting it would grow 5 times more wheat than normal wheat seed.
- ★ Upon learning of the “*Miracle Wheat*” Scheme, the Eagle made the facts of the scheme public, and published a cartoon portraying Russell in such a way that Russell sued the Eagle for libel for \$100,000. Before going to court the Eagle declared that the trial would show that “*Russell's religious cult is nothing more than a money-making scheme.*” The court 's decision vindicated the Eagle, and the testimony proved that Russell perjured himself beyond question.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

- ★ Russell similarly filed a defamatory libel suit against Rev. J.J. Ross, pastor of the James Street Baptist Church in Hamilton, Ontario, for a tract titled “*Some Facts About the Self-Styled 'Pastor' Charles T. Russell*,” which denounced Russell's qualifications as a minister, his theology, and his moral character.
- ★ Ross's pamphlet stated Russell's teachings “were the destructive doctrines of one man who is neither a scholar nor a theologian.” It said Russell's whole system was “Anti-rational, anti-scientific, anti-biblical and anti-Christian, and a deplorable perversion of the Gospel of God's dear Son.”
- ★ The suit against Ross was dismissed based on “evidence furnished by Russell himself.”

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

- ★ The previous examples are just a few of C.T. Russell's many schemes, contradictions, and outright lies which he wound up confessing to when examined under oath in court.
- ★ As a speaker he influenced many people. As a theologian though, he impressed no one learned in the Scriptures. Whenever he was cornered, he expertly played the religious martyr card.
- ★ Christian churches fought him vigorously, but lacked the unified approach necessary to silence his masterfully bold approach.
- ★ He was deported from Canada during WWI for hindering war mobilization. He was a zealous conscientious objector.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Founder C.T. Russell

 Russell preached that his writings were required in order to understand the Bible, even stating that it would be better to not read the scriptures than to ignore reading his books.

 Regarding his theology, Russell denied many of the central tenets of the Christian faith, including:

- ❖ The Trinity
- ❖ The Deity of Christ
- ❖ The physical resurrection and return of Christ
- ❖ Eternal punishment and the reality of hell
- ❖ The eternality of the human soul
- ❖ The validity of atonement

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Leader J.F. Rutherford

- ★ After Russell's death in 1916, the next leader was Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford (1870-1942).



# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Leader J.F. Rutherford

- ★ Under Rutherford's leadership the “Russellites” adopted the name “**Jehovah's Witnesses**” in 1931.
- ★ The “Judge” title came from his early legal career, when he was a special judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit Court of Boonville, Missouri.
- ★ He vigorously attacked Christendom and “organized religion,” and anyone in the JWs who questioned his authority or decisions.
- ★ In his pamphlet *Why Serve Jehovah?* He effectively stated that he was the mouthpiece for Jehovah for this age, and that his words the words of deity.
- ★ The Judge went to federal prison in Atlanta in 1918 for violating the Espionage Act. He was released in 1919.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Leader J.F. Rutherford

- ★ Rutherford's incredible charisma and deep, booming voice greatly enhanced his success as a leader.
- ★ He wrote over a hundred books and pamphlets, and his works have been translated into 80 languages.
- ★ The deposed head of the Witnesses' legal staff sued Rutherford for libel and was awarded \$25,000.
- ★ He died in 1942, at 72, in his mansion in San Diego.
- ★ Russell and Rutherford are the two key figures responsible for the establishment and success of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion. Without their forceful personalities and prolific writings the Watchtower wouldn't be around today.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## 3rd Leader N.H. Knorr

- ★ After Rutherford's death in 1942, the next president of the Society was Nathan Homer Knorr, until 1977.
- ★ Knorr continued the JW traditions, and established the Gilead Missionary Training School in New York.



# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## 3rd Leader N.H. Knorr

- ★ Knorr commissioned a new translation of the Bible, ***The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures***, (NWT) which was released in 1961, and updated many times thereafter.



# Jehovah's Witnesses' History

## Leadership

- ★ Since Nathan Knorr's death in 1977 there have been a few more presidents of the JW religion
  - ◆ 4<sup>th</sup>, Frederick Franz, until 1992
  - ◆ 5<sup>th</sup>, Milton Henschel, until 2000
  - ◆ 6<sup>th</sup>, Don Adams, until 2014
  - ◆ 7<sup>th</sup>, Robert Ciranko, since 2014

The Watchtower Governing Body in New York is responsible for determining leadership.

# Jehovah's Witnesses – Some Distinctives

- ❑ Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate Christmas, Easter, birthdays, or other holidays they consider pagan. Those participating can be dis-fellowshipped.
- ❑ They do not give blood or accept blood transfusions.
- ❑ They refuse military duty (conscientious objectors).
- ❑ They are not proponents of higher education.
- ❑ Their Watchtower calls their teachings “The Truth.”
- ❑ Long hair, or facial hair on men is prohibited.
- ❑ Independent Bible study or critical thinking is wrong.
- ❑ Only 144,000 “anointed” Jehovah's Witnesses will go to heaven. All others will live in a paradise on earth.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' Theology and Doctrines

# **Jehovah's Witnesses' Theology/Doctrines**

- ★ “Pastor” Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, authored many written doctrinal teachings. These were called “Russellism.”
- ★ After reviewing his history, it is quite obvious he was the creator of a religious system which he used to further his fortunes. Also, in court, under oath, he was proven to be a perjurer.
- ★ Due to the proven character of Russell, the Jehovah's Witnesses have distanced themselves from him. They state that they have no connection to Russell, and even become intensely disturbed when they are called “Russellites,” or their theology called “Russellism.”
- ★ This compartmentalism or cognitive dissonance is one of the traits of a cult.

# Jehovah's Witnesses' Theology/Doctrines

- ★ The 2<sup>nd</sup> president of the religion, Rutherford, worked for 15 years to escape the tainted name “Russellism.” In 1931 he changed the name to “Jehovah's Witnesses,” from Isaiah 43:10, to appear different.
- ★ When examining the written teachings of Russell with the official doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses, it is obvious that they are basically the same. Russell lives on in the Watchtower teachings.
- ★ For this apologetics teaching, we will primarily focus on what the Jehovah's Witnesses current doctrinal teachings are. A more thorough comparison can be found in Walter Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults*.
- ★ Nonetheless...

# **Jehovah's Witnesses' Theology/Doctrines**

- ★ Just one detailed example showing the close similarity between the two eras of teachings will be analyzed: **The Doctrine of the Triune Godhead (The Trinity).**
- ★ Every major cult and non-Christian religion that seeks to deride orthodox Christian theology attacks the doctrine of the Trinity, and JW's are the most vitriolic.
- ★ Through the entire span of JW history, one criterion has been used to judge the credibility of scripture – Reason. Russell stated that reason – or the ability to think and draw conclusions – opened man's intellect to the very character of God himself. (What - God's Word is subject to man's reasoning?)
- ★ The following comparison shows the use of “reason,” and portrays the similarity of the two sets of doctrines.

# **Jehovah's Witnesses' Theology/Doctrines**

## **The Triune Godhead (Trinity) Doctrine**

### **Russell's Teachings**

**“This view suited well 'the dark ages' it helped to produce” (Studies in the Scriptures, 5:166)**

**“This theory ...is as unscriptural as it is unreasonable” (Studies in the Scriptures, 5:166)**

### **Current JW Doctrine**

**“Does this (John 1:1) mean that Jehovah God and the ...Son are two persons but at the same time one God and members of a so-called 'trinity' or 'triune God'? When religion so teaches it violates the Word of God, wrests the Scriptures to the destruction of those who are misled, and insults God-given intelligence and reason” (The Truth Shall Make You Free, 45)**

**The confusion is caused by the improper translation of John 1:1-3... such translation being made by religionists who tried to manufacture proof for their teaching of a 'trinity'" (The Truth,<sup>39</sup> 15, 46)**

# **Jehovah's Witnesses' Theology/Doctrines**

## **The Triune Godhead (Trinity) Doctrine (Cont'd)**

### **Russell's Teachings**

**“If it were not for the fact that this trinitarian nonsense was drilled into us from earliest infancy... and taught in Theological seminaries...nobody would give it a moment's serious consideration” (Studies in the Scriptures, 5:166)**

**“How the great Adversary (Satan) ever succeeded in foisting (the Triune Godhead) upon the Lord's people to bewilder and mystify them, and render much of the Word of God of none effect, is the real mystery. (Studies in the Scriptures, 5:166)**

### **Current JW Doctrine**

**The obvious conclusion is therefore, that Satan is the originator of the 'trinity doctrine'" (Let God be True, 101)**

**“The testimony of history is clear: The Trinity teaching is a deviation from the truth, an apostatizing from it” (Should You Believe?, electronic version)**

# **Doctrine of the Triune Godhead (Trinity)**

- ★ The Christian response to the Watchtower assault on the Trinity can be found in the NKJV.
- ★ Two persons (the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the trinity is revealed more fully in the New Testament in John 14:26, John 16:7-14, etc.) are both called Jehovah – translated LORD (Gen 18:20, Gen 19:24, Isaiah 9:6, and Micah 5:2), and both are one with the Holy Spirit in composite unity (Deut 6:4).
- ★ God the Father was in Heaven, God the Son died on the cross, and God the Holy Spirit comforts the church until Jesus comes again. This is the Triune God whom Jehovah's Witnesses ridicule, berate and blaspheme in the name of “human reason.” (*The Kingdom of the Cults*)

# The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT)

- ★ *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, (NWT) was released in 1961, and updated thereafter.
- ★ The NWT's most notorious rendering is: John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” This served to remove Jesus from the Godhead, and institute polytheism.
- ★ Other changes were made in the NWT to specifically serve the JW's theology.

# New World Translation of the Bible (NWT)

- ★ Jehovah's Witnesses try to convince people that their NWT of the Bible is “the latest American translation” and it should be accepted in questionable areas of theology as “the best and most recent renderings of the original languages.”
- ★ The informed person, however, knows that the Watchtower's translation is accepted as sound only by the Watchtower and those who have not checked out its many perverted renderings.
- ★ The underdeveloped countries of the world are starving for materials – but they are inundated with Watchtower bibles and literature. The JW's have poured a lot into propagandizing these countries, and seen tremendous growth in this segment of the world. Conversely there is a dearth of apologetic literature.

# Other Jehovah's Witnesses' Doctrines

- ★ Jesus is not Jehovah God; he is the first and only direct creation of God and the agent through which Jehovah made all other things. (Counter with Is 7:14, 9:6, Micah 5:2, Matt 1:23, John 1:14, 8:58, 17:5, Heb 1:3, Phillip 2:11, Col 2:9, Rev 1:8,17-18)
- ★ Jesus was raised from the dead, not with a physical body, but as a mighty spirit creature. And, the second coming of Jesus was an invisible spiritual presence that began in 1914. They say that since He did not rise physically neither did He return physically. (Counter with John 20:24-26, & Luke 24:25, 39-44, John 2:19-21)
- ★ The dead exist only in God's memory: The wicked will not be punished with conscious torment but will be extinguished forever. (Counter with Ez 18:4, Is 66:24, Matt 5:22, 8:11-12, 10:28, 13:42, 50, 17:1-3, 22:13)

# Other Jehovah's Witnesses' Doctrines

- ★ Jesus was a created Angel, Michael. (Counter with Hebrews 1:3, 1:6)
- ★ The Holy Spirit is not God. He is just an impersonal force (see Trinity discussion).
- ★ There are other doctrines from the Jehovah's Witnesses for which time limits their discussion in this class.
- ★ In addition, there have been many erroneous “prophecies” made, including:
  - The beginning of the end in 1799, then chg'd to 1914.
  - Christ's invisible presence in 1874, then chg'd to 1914.
  - Battle of Armageddon ends in 1914, 1925 and then “still future.”
  - And many others!

# Jehovah's Witnesses / Watchtower

## W.J. Schnell (*Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*)

“The Watchtower 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 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”

**Now Let's Transition To  
Discussions and Q&A With Some  
Friends Who Are Former Jehovah's  
Witnesses**