



General Topics :: Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses

Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses - posted by beenblake (), on: 2005/9/20 11:51

I felt compelled to write a post about the Jehovah's Witnesses. There are many misconceptions about them, and many Christians seem to fear this cult when they really should not. With Christ as our Lord, what have we to fear?

What many Christians don't realize, and why so many Christians turn to this cult, is their hard core faith in bible. This religion takes the bible literally. Immediately, I can hear someone saying, "Yeah, but they have a false bible." That is not true. Their bible does have some alterations. However, in my experience they do accept and encourage the use of the King James version. The alterations they have made are but few, and like all translations, all they have done is translated the text into forming the "New World Translation." The notable difference, or obvious one, is that the "New World Translation" was translated by scholars who were not filled with the Holy Spirit, or so I suspect. And thus, their interpretations lacks one important part, which I will highlight later in this discussion.

However, I would like to first highlight some of this religion's beliefs. As many people know, I was raised one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Thus, many of what I am going to state is what I was taught during the late 1980's. The religion may have changed their stance on many things since then. God is an absolute, however, men and their religions change over time. I will do my best to provide what I was taught.

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe.....

.....literally in the bible. The earth was created in seven days or 7000 years. One day to God is 1000 years to man. They believe in all the stories of the bible. They believe the bible is true. They do an awesome job of presenting the stories accurately and vividly.

.....bible study. They are trained to be devoted to bible study and encouraged to memorize bible verses. I can remember studying the bible every night and praying every night. On time, they asked volunteers to come forward and site all the books of the bible in order..."Genesis, Exodus, etc."

.....support material. They have a wide array of support material for the bible including books that make it easy to find exactly what you need from the bible.

.....in baptism. They believe that a person needs to mature before making such a decision. Children are discouraged from becoming baptized. They believe baptism is a commitment to God to follow His commands. You become a believer when you are baptized, and are treated as such. In the process, you agree to upholding God's commands.

.....once a person is a believer, they are held to the strictest moral. If you should sin as a believer, you are taken to a body of elders. If you repent for your sin, you are forgiven. However, if you do not repent, you are rebuked. They call this process disfellowship. You are disfellowshipped from the body of the Church. If anyone is caught speaking to you, they will have sinned and can be disfellowshipped as well.

.....that people must be equally yoked in marriage. A believer must not marry an unbeliever.

....."bad associations spoil useful habits." Believers are encouraged to avoid participating in worldly activities and the world. Believers have been called apart from the world. They are not to associate with unbelievers except to spread the gospel.

.....holidays are evil. All holidays are based upon lies and have been mixed in with false religion. Jesus said to remember his death, not his birth. Jesus was not born in December. Easter is the celebration of the God Ester. Halloween is evil. Valentines is the celebration of the God of Valentine. Birthdays are selfish and all biblical accounts of birthdays were evil. John the Baptist was beheaded as a birthday wish.

.....in Matthew 24:14. This scripture is stated heavily. They believe the spreading of the good news is serious. Saturday mornings are a required or at least heavily stressed as the day of going door to door to share the gospel as stated in John 3:16. At the congregation or church I attended, they had the entire city mapped out on cards. When you arrived, you w

ere assigned to a team and given a card. You covered as much of the card as you could, and provided a report of your efforts.

.....fellowship and congregating. Bringing resources together to support the church and fellow brothers and sister is encouraged. Believers at my church met on Tuesday and Thursday nights and on Sunday morning. The whole church arrived a half hour early and leave a half hour later to have fellowship. We were all friends who spent a great deal of time interacting with each other like one big family. Many of the people were very loving and supportive.

.....offering. They believe that the offering should be kept between the giver and God. Therefore, an offering box is located at the back of the Church. People give what they can and when they can. It is a private matter. The Church lives solely from these offerings and they have reached a point where they can offer all their bibles and support material for free.

.....supporting the Church. Whenever a church is built or remodeled, the congregation is called to work together. They build churches in two days because everyone comes together to build it from all surrounding Churches. They don't need to rely on hiring people because people from Churches all over come together. They rely on the resources that believers have in each of the Churches.

.....full time ministry. A full time minister is required to meet 60 hours per week of ministry.

.....no graven images. The Jehovah's Witnesses disagree with the corruption and organization of Churches to such a degree, they do not like the word "Church." Rather, they differentiate themselves by calling their buildings "Kingdom Halls." They have a purist view of buildings. They are not to be flashy or highly decorated. They are against all idols or graven images of any kind. Their buildings are simple, much like a Puritan would have designed.

.....elders, not pastors. The Church body is called a congregation. The congregation has elders and deacons who run and oversee the Church. Elders are held to the highest moral standard. If the child of an elder becomes unruly and does not live a good life, the elder is then considered unfit to be an elder. No women may be elders. The sermons are taught by the different elders. It is not the same person every time. Everyone in the congregation is encouraged to teach. On Thursday night, everyone in the Church, believers and unbelievers, children and adults, break into small groups and are given the opportunity to stand up and preach. Women do not preach, rather, they give a skit demonstrating ministering techniques. Only the men may preach. The men are assigned a portion of scripture from the bible to preach from. Often times, they end up just reading the scripture and not much more. However, everyone in the church is able to share in the preaching and teaching. They have a role and play a part.

.....Jesus died for forgiveness of sin. If we sin, we must repent. We should pray to Jehovah and ask for forgiveness of our sins.

.....Jesus did not die on a cross. He died on a stake. They have historical proof to back this up.

.....in a new heaven and a new earth. Only 144,000 people will go to Heaven to rule over everyone who remains on earth. There will be a great crowd of people who will make it through judgement and Armageddon that will live forever on earth in perfect peace. For the first 1000 years after the judgement, the earth will be made into a paradise by the people who lived through judgement. A person makes it through judgement by upholding God's commands.

.....Hell does not exist. They believe the words translated into Hell were mistranslated. The original greek and hebrew words used actually describe a place of death. They have scholarly proof of this.

.....God is three unequal parts who are in agreement. There is the father whose name is Jehovah as stated in Psalms 83:18. There is Jesus who is the first born of all creation, created by God, an angel known as Michael. Lastly, there is the Holy Ghost. These three are not one, and thus they claim the trinity is false. Rather, they believe these three are in agreement.

.....they have been called to spread the good news of the kingdom throughout the earth. That is why they call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. They are witnesses of Jehovah. They witness to the truth. It is incorrect to say a person is a Jehovah Witness. The correct saying is that a person is one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

.....Jesus was and is not God. He is a Lord but not the Lord. There is only one God. He is Jehovah. It does not say anywhere in the bible that Jesus is God. They told us that many Christians will try to quote 1 John 5:7,8. They stated that it has

s been mistranslated to say these three are one, when it is should say these three are in agreement.

.....All religions other than the Jehovah's Witnesses are false religions. God has called them apart from all religions. They are the truth. They are the way. They follow the bible precisely and exactly. They live up to every command and every law. They demand obedience to God. The Devil has infiltrated all other religions especially Christianity. All false religion is Babylon the Great, the great Harlot.

There is more, but I that summarizes what I remember and what I was taught. I was never baptized one of Jehovah's Witnesses. We were a part of the religion for about 7 or 8 years from age 4 until age 13, when my mother and father was disfellowshipped for hanging out with another disfellowshipped person. This always bothered me. We still held their beliefs until I was 17 or 18, when my parents decided they wanted to start celebrating holidays.

So, why did I change and become Christian? I think that is the big question everyone asks. Obviously, I became Christian because of Christ. He saved me. However, I think what everyone is really trying to get at by this question is what made me decide to reject their beliefs. What did I find wrong with the Jehovah's Witnesses in that it made me want to seek something else?

What really bothered me about the Jehovah's Witnesses before I became Christian, was that they seemed to be too wrapped up in the law. They were so focused on God's commands and obeying them that they forgot the most important thing of all: LOVE.

It bothered me that they were so focused on not sinning, and so focused on spreading the good news, that they never bothered to help people. They never bothered to give people love. They would quickly tell a person about their beliefs, however, they never stopped to offer them food or help them in any way. It also bothered me that they disfellowshipped people. It just didn't seem right. When a person sins, they need help. And yet, they cast them out of the Church. How silly is that? Jesus hung out with the worst sinners around, and yet the Jehovah's Witnesses only accepted people who are good. They cast out the sinners. It just didn't seem right. It didn't seem very loving.

Love cannot be commanded. Jesus did command us to love. However, you cannot be commanded to love. If you love someone because you have been commanded or forced, then you do not love at all. Love is a willing choice. It is something given freely. I love my brother, not because God commanded me to love my brother, but because I love him. He is my brother. Love needs no reason to love. Love loves because of love. When you love someone out of obligation or force, then you do not love that person at all. Love is not selfish. To love someone out of force is selfish. "I love you because God commanded me to love you. Because I have to love you. Because if I don't, I will be punished." This is not love. This is selfishness.

Jesus said all the laws are based on love. You must first love God and then love everyone else. He did not mean for this to be a commandment or law. He was trying to show people that the law was faulty because of this. It is impossible to love God out of fear. There is no fear in love. If you have to live up to the law, if you are forced to love in order to get to Heaven, then you have already failed. In order for a person to truly love God by choice, they had to be set free from the law. Jesus set us free from the law so that we could love God willingly. We could love God without being forced by commandments and laws.

The worst thing a person can do to God, who is Love, is obey God's commands because they feel like they have to. "I have to do this because Jesus said so" or "Do not sin or else you will be punished." That is a big mistake. God wants you to love him. He wants you to say, "I will obey your commands because I want to. Because I love you." or "Do not sin because you love God and every time you sin it hurts Him." By this, we are giving our will to God. We are giving our love to God.

I was saved many years later. Christ had to beat the old beliefs out of me. When I was saved I learned a few new truths. I learned that the Jehovah's Witnesses had many things right, or so it seems, accept the most important thing of all: Jesus Christ. They do not believe Jesus is God. They believe Jesus died for sins. They believe Jesus is our judge. They believe Jesus is in agreement with God, that He was a man, and that He is a king. They believe all things must pass through Jesus. They believe you must pray in the name of Jesus. However, they do not believe that Jesus is God.

For months before I was saved, my brother debated this with me. I told Him that I could not believe it. I could not believe Jesus is God because the bible does not say so. Now I realize that the bible is unclear about this because we have to walk by faith. If the bible told us "Jesus is your God", then how could we believe it by faith?

At some point, his words penetrated my thinking. A night came when I was surrounded by Christians who all showed me that I needed to be saved. And when I fell on my knees, I was not saved until I finally prayed to Jesus. I called out to Jesus to save me. That is when He came down from Heaven, and in all His Holiness, I could say nothing but, "I am sorry. Please forgive me."

Only God can forgive sins. That is why when Jesus said to a man He healed, "Your sins are forgiven," the Pharisees all accused Jesus of blasphemy, of claiming to be God. However, in order to repent and be forgiven of sins, we must ask Jesus for forgiveness. Not just any God, but specifically, we must call upon Jesus, for there is no other name in all the heavens by which a person may be saved.

When we are saved, we are set free from the law. Then, only then, can we truly live up to the law. Only then can we love without being forced to love. Only with the help of Jesus can we love God and love our neighbor. Before salvation, we obey God's commands to suffice our own selfishness, to be made righteous. After salvation, we obey God's command out of love.

It really bothers me when Christians start acting like Jehovah's Witnesses and start forcing laws and the bible on people. Jesus died to set us free from the law so that we could love. When you start forcing laws and commands on people then you totally deny and reject what Jesus did. You are taking back God's grace and throwing it in His face. Jesus died so that we could love God. Love, as we know, is a relationship. When we love someone, we have a relationship with that person.

God wants to have a relationship with us. He wants the same relationship we have with our friends, family, and spouse. He wants us to be honest with Him. Obviously, He hates lies. And yet, why are we not honest when we pray? God knows the truth. He wants us to be real with Him. He doesn't want a bunch of fake do-gooders. He wants real people that He created. He knows we are going to sin and mess up. He knows we are struggling here on earth. And yet, we want to prove to God how good and independent we can be. Why? God loves us. He wants to love us like a father loves His children. When a child falls, a father helps the child up. Does he not? And yet, we are like teenagers outside of school running from our parents of whom we are embarrassed. God wants us to love and be loved. When we truly love God, we will share the gospel. Not because we must or because we are required, but because that is what love does. Love crawls to the highest tower and declares love. How many times have you seen little hearts with names carved into wood and trees? How many songs have been written declaring love? How many poems, books, movies, and paintings have been created because a person wants to declare their love to the world? I always think of children how they love unconditionally. Children are always expressing their love through little gifts and things. How many parents have drawings of love made by their children hanging on their refrigerators?

Jesus is love. Jesus exemplifies God's love for us. God loves us so much, He suffered for us. He died for us. He did this so that we could share in love with Him.

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that God loves the world as stated in John 3:16. They believe God gave His son. However, when we realize that God gave us so much more, He gave Himself. He suffered our punishment for us. Jesus went to Hell on our behalf. He took our spot. God gave His own life. Believing this changes everything. When we truly believe this, when we truly make Jesus our God and Lord, then we bow down to Him and repent for our sins. By this, we turn to Jesus for help and salvation. We give our will to Him.

The "New World Translation" was translated by men who do not believe this. It is a translation from men who do not know Jesus is God and Savior.

When I think of the Jehovah's Witnesses, 2 Timothy 3:5a comes to mind, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power".

I pray for all Jehovah's Witnesses, and all the lost.

I hope this helps others to better understand Jehovah's Witnesses. We should be careful not to judge them, but to love them, and let the love of Christ direct them toward truth.

In Christ,
Blake

Re: Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses - posted by GaryE (), on: 2005/9/20 14:01

Dear Blake,

Your post is very informative and helpful. Thank you for posting this.

In Christ
GaryE

Re: Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses - posted by letsgetbusy (), on: 2005/9/20 15:35

Here are some quotes from the New World Translation (JW Bible), with the KJV following:

Isaiah 7:14

NWT "Therefore Jehovah himself will give YOU men a sign: Look! The maiden herself will actually become pregnant, and she is giving birth to a son, and she will certainly call his name ImÂ·manÂ´uÂ·el."

KJV "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Isaiah 9:6

NWT "For there has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

KJV "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

John 1:1

NWT "In beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

KJV "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Colossians 1:13b and 16a

NWT "the Son of his love...because by means of him all things were created in the heavens and upon the earth"

KJV "his dear Son...For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth"

Re: - posted by beenblake (), on: 2005/9/20 16:26

The King James version of the bible makes a distinction between the two uses of LORD in the bible by using capitalized words for diety or God, and lower case for a Lord other than God. In the New World Translation, the Jehovah's Witnesses changed all uses of the capitalized version of the word "LORD" in the bible to Jehovah. It has something to do with the original Greek and Hebrew translations. They believe Jehovah is God's name (based on Psalms 83:18), and so, they changed all references of LORD to the name of Jehovah.

John 1:1 is actually a big scripture for them. They claim that Christianity falsely translated this verse. The single word "a" makes a huge difference in declaring the diety of Christ. If we leave off the "a", then in essence we are saying the Word (which is Christ) is God. Jehovah's Witnesses add the "a" to say that Christ is not God, but a God.

The large difference you'll notice between the New World Translation and other translations is that the New World Translation removes the diety of Christ. It does not recognize Christ as God, but rather as Michael, an Angel who is first of all creation, or the Son of God.

Re: Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses, on: 2005/9/22 8:41

Quote:

-----Birthdays are selfish and all biblical accounts of birthdays were evil.

Wow... glad I'm not a JW! Today is my birthday.

Krispy

Re: - posted by freedbyjc (), on: 2005/9/22 9:58

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! 8-) :-D

Re: - posted by beenblake (), on: 2005/9/22 10:55

Happy Birthday, Krispy.

May the Lord bless you this day.

Blake