

## The Challenge of the Cults JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Throughout the Scriptures God's people have always had to be aware of erroneous and false doctrines, presented under the guise of an acceptable alternative. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were constantly bombarded by such threats as propagated by apostates who had adopted and adapted various aspects of paganism. Hence, Isaiah instructed his people, **Is. 8:20** To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. In the New Testament, Jesus also warned about them ... as did Paul and Peter and John and Jude. False doctrine has always been a threat to the advancement of the truth of God.

In the early church, for example, some taught the Christians had to adopt the ancient Jewish ceremonies and rites, - the 'Judaizers' (Acts 15). Some Gentiles taught antinomianism, - now you are saved, you can do what you like because the law doesn't restrict us (Rom. 6:1-12). Some taught Jesus had returned secretly and left many Christians behind (II Thess. 2:1-3). Such doctrines from the various sects (a sect is a splinter group which breaks away from a mainline denomination or group), - and many more, - were causing havoc amongst the Church ... **Titus 1:2** For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: **11** Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake ... **16** They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. ... **II Cor. 11:13** For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. **14** And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ... **Jude 3** Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. **4** For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this process which began in the early church has never lost its ferocity and will continue to advance belligerently, as we draw nearer to the time of Christ's return for He Himself gave the warning to and through His disciples, **Mt. 24:4** Take heed that no man deceive you. **5** For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. ... **11** And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ... **15** When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) ... **23** Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. **24** For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and

wonders; insomuch that, *if it were possible*, they shall deceive the very elect. <sup>25</sup> Behold, I have told you before. <sup>26</sup> Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. ... With such advance forewarning, then, we are to **I Thess. 5:21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

When coming to consider the errors of false doctrine, there are many avenues of study we could take. We also need to be careful in our assessments because we must not label those who are not in agreement with us in everything as ‘heretics’ and false teachers. Within mainstream evangelical Christianity there are those who hold different opinions on, - for example, - baptism (believers’ or paedo), the gifts of the Holy Spirit, church membership, the doctrine of the end times, the minutiae of the doctrines of grace ... Such issues are absolutely important, but born-again believers are willing to prioritise the saving-work of Christ on the cross to bring about the salvation of lost Hell-deserving sinners ... and that, - when built upon a firm Biblical foundation, - is our source of unity. Our model is the Berean practice, **Acts 17:1** *in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

Where we *must* ‘draw the line’ is when someone teaches doctrines which are clearly and seriously at odds with what the Bible teaches. It is then, as Jude wrote, we must **earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**. ... Therefore, coming to a knowledge of what the various cults believe is secondary ... for our primary goal is to strengthen ourselves in the doctrines of our own faith ... the doctrines firmly founded in God’s Word.

We shall not be studying every little detail of the cults we choose. (From a Christian perspective, a cult is any group which follows teachings which contradict orthodox Christian doctrine and promote heresy.) Instead, we shall begin each chosen cult with a *brief* history, and then concentrate on five main foundational doctrines ...

1. The doctrine of God
2. The doctrine of Jesus Christ
3. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit
4. The doctrine of Scripture
5. The doctrine of the End Times.

We shall begin with the Jehovah Witnesses. The movement was originally known as the Russellites after Charles Taze Russell, from Philadelphia, in early 1872, - he was born on Feb. 16, 1852. He was baptized a Congregationalist, and

raised in a strict Protestant family. However, he began to deny many of the truths he was taught. In 1879, he founded “The Watchtower”, and in 1881 (Russell’s 29<sup>th</sup> birthday) formed the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. He travelled throughout the United States and Europe, organizing his followers, who were also originally called Millennial Dawnists, International Bible Students and finally Jehovah’s Witnesses. During his missionary work, he faced several scandals including separation from his wife after 18 years of marriage, and the accusation of fraud for selling “miracle wheat” for a very high price.

After his death on Oct. 31, 1916, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford, a Missouri lawyer who had defended Russell in several of his legal battles, succeeded him as president of the society. Rutherford officially incorporated the group in 1931 as the Jehovah’s Witnesses with the legal title, “The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society”, and then he went on to develop Russell’s ideas into a formal doctrinal system.

Their meeting place is called the “Kingdom Hall”. In Fife, they have “Kingdom Halls” in Kirkcaldy, Buckhaven, Glenrothes and St. Andrews. In their own figures for 2016, they claim to have over 8.3 million active members worldwide, and 119,485 congregations in 240 lands.

- They don’t celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Easter, or any other such festivals. They will not receive blood transfusions.
- They do not believe in military service or being involved in politics.
- They do not consider the cross to be a symbol of Christianity since they believe Jesus was impaled upon a stake.
- They have no paid clergy for all their baptised members are ordained ministers and share in the preaching and teaching work.
- They do have elders known as ‘circuit overseers’ who oversee the work.

... Since we want to give no opportunity of misrepresentation, we shall constantly refer to their official website ([www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org)).

In our first study, we shall look at what they believe about God, in relation to the how we understand the Trinity, - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

They do not believe in the Trinity, “We worship the one true and Almighty God, the Creator, whose name is Jehovah. He is the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus”.

When they come to your door and you tell them you are a Christian, immediately they tell you they are Christians too, - not Protestants, - ... but Christians. They often use the formula, “we simply preach the good news of God’s Kingdom, endeavouring to help others build faith in that good news. We are interested, not in attempting to reform other religious groups, but in teaching *sincere individuals* the truth about God and his Word, the Bible.” And they invite you to study the Bible with them.

So, who is the God they believe in? They do not believe Jesus is God ... and they do not believe the Holy Spirit is either. ... Only *Jehovah* is God, and since 1931, they have insisted He be called “Jehovah”.

They agree with you that God/Jehovah is the creator but they believe He did not create the earth in six literal days for they say, “according to the Bible, the earth and the universe existed before the six days of creation. For that reason, Jehovah’s Witnesses have no objection to credible scientific research that indicates the earth may be billions of years old.” They are content to accept evolution.

What do they believe about Jesus? “We follow the teachings and example of Jesus Christ and honour him as our Saviour and as the Son of God. Thus, we are Christians. However, we have learned from the Bible that Jesus is not Almighty God and that there is no Scriptural basis for the Trinity doctrine”.

In fact, they condemn the Trinity as pagan idolatry, and they deny the divinity of Christ for Russell claimed the doctrine of the Trinity was the idea of Satan. Ironically though, when Jehovah Witnesses are baptized, they use the formula, “... In the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”. ... They also refer to Christ as “our Saviour” ...

On their website, they say, “Yes. We believe in Jesus, who said: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” We [*the JWs*] have faith that Jesus came to earth from heaven and gave his perfect human life as a ransom sacrifice. His death and resurrection *make it possible* for those exercising faith in him to gain everlasting life [*notice their Arminian language*]. We also believe that Jesus is now ruling as King of God’s heavenly Kingdom, which will soon bring peace to the entire earth. However, we take Jesus at his word when he said: “The Father is greater than I am.” So we do not worship Jesus, as we do not believe that he is Almighty God.”

Furthermore, the JW's say, "Jesus himself said that he lived in heaven before being born as a human. As a spirit creature in heaven, Jesus had a special relationship with Jehovah. Jesus is Jehovah's most precious Son—and for good reason. He is called "the firstborn of all creation," for he was God's first creation. There is something else that makes this Son special. He is the "only-begotten Son." This means that Jesus is the only one directly created by God." *[They identify Him with Michael the archangel, "it is logical to conclude that Michael is none other than Jesus Christ in his heavenly role"]*

Nevertheless, they recognise "Jesus as the greatest Witness of all, inferior to no one except Jehovah Himself. Before existing as a human being, Jesus was a spiritual creature called the Logos, or Word, or even Michael the Archangel. He died as a man and was raised as an immortal Spirit-Son. His passion and death were the price He paid to regain for mankind the right to live eternally on earth." (These teachings echo Arianism which the early Church condemned beginning at the council of Nicea in 325, - Arianism is the belief Jesus is the Son of God who was begotten by God the Father at a point in time, is distinct from the Father and is subordinate to the Father ... thus denying the Trinity).

So, Jesus is not God ... and neither is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is simply "God's power in action, his active force ... the holy spirit is not a person".

But, what does the Bible say? What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?

The Trinity is one God existing in three Persons ... and it in no way suggests three separate gods. While the term 'trinity' occurs nowhere in Scripture, it is a term used to attempt to describe the triune God, - three coexistent, co-eternal, co-equal Persons ... and thus, the Biblical concept of the Trinity.

Firstly, the Bible teaches there is only one God, **Dt. 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one Lord ... **Is. 45:5** I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me ... **4** there is none other God but one ... **Gal. 3:20** Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one ... **I Tim. 2:5** For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ...

*Baptist Confession*, The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is

immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty. (1 Corinthians 8:4, 6; Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 48:12; Exodus 3:14; John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Deuteronomy 4:15, 16; Malachi 3:6; 1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:23; Psalms 90:2; Genesis 17:1; Isaiah 6:3; Psalms 115:3; Isaiah 46:10; Proverbs 16:4; Romans 11:36; Exodus 34:6, 7; Hebrews 11:6; Nehemiah 9:32, 33; Psalms 5:5, 6; Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1:2, 3.)

Secondly, the Trinity consists of three Persons, **Gen. 1:1** In the beginning God [*Elohim ... plural*] created the heaven and the earth ... **26** And God said, , Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness ... **3:22** And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil ... **11:7** Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language ... **Is. 6:8** Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me ... **Is. 48:16** Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me ... **61:1** The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me [*compare with Lk. 4:16*] And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. **17** And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, **18** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, **19** To preach the acceptable year of the Lord/ ... **Mt. 3:16** And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: **17** And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ... **28:19** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ... **II Cor. 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all ... three distinct Persons in the Trinity. ...

*Baptist Confession*, God, having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all

things, and he hath most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth; in his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain; he is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands; to him is due from angels and men, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them. ( John 5:26; Psalms 148:13; Psalms 119:68; Job 22:2, 3; Romans 11:34-36; Daniel 4:25, 34, 35; Hebrews 4:13; Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:18; Psalms 145:17; Revelation 5:12-14 )

Thirdly, each member of the Trinity is distinguished from the other ... For example, the Father and the Son, **Ps. 2:7** I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. The Holy Spirit is distinguished from the Father, **Num. 27:18** And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him, and the Father is distinguished from the Son, **Ps. 45:6** Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. <sup>7</sup> Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows ... **Heb. 1:8** But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. <sup>9</sup> Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Also, in the New Testament, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit, **Jn. 14:16** And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; <sup>17</sup> Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. ... This is the same Holy Spirit referred to by the Psalmist, **Ps. 51:10** Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Therefore, Jesus did not consider Himself to be either the Father or the Holy Spirit ... and yet, **Jn. 10:30** I and my Father are one ... **Jn. 8:58** Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, *I am* ... If He was not one with the Father, - in the Trinity, - was Jesus speaking to Himself on all those occasions when He spoke to His Father! ... No, of course He was not ... for the Second Person of the Trinity was speaking to the First Person of the Trinity ... co-equal, co-eternal, co-existent.

... The Father is made of none, - neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father, - neither made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, - neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

They are not somehow *merged* into each three, but three separate and distinct Persons in One. ...

*The Baptist Confession*, In this divine and infinite Being there are three substances, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him. ( 1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Exodus 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:14,18; John 15:26; Galatians 4:6).

Fourthly, there is subordination within the Trinity. Scripture shows the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son, and the Son is subordinate to the Father. This is an internal relationship which does not deny or weaken the deity of any Person of the Trinity. This is an area which our finite minds struggle to comprehend, because of its limitations to understand the infinite God ... and the only means by which we can accept this truth is by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, - He has shown it to us, **Job 42:3** Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

This 'submission' is seen in relation to the Son, **Lk 22:42** Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done ... **Jn. 5:36** But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me ... **21** Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you ... **1 Jn. 4:14** And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ...

This 'submission' is also seen in relation to the Holy Spirit, **Jn. 14:16** And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ... **26** But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,

whatsoever I have said unto you ... **15:26** But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me ... **16:7** Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you ... **13** Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. **14** He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Fifthly, the individual members of the Trinity are tasked with different responsibilities. For example, the Father is the ultimate source or cause of the universe, **I Cor. 8:6** But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him ...

The Father is also the fountain of Divine revelation (**Rev. 1:1** The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass), and salvation (**Jn. 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. **17** For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.) And it was the Father Who directed the earthly work of Jesus, **Jn. 5:17** But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work ... **14:10** Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

The Son, therefore, is the agent through whom the Father works ... for example, **Jn. 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The same was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... **Col. 1:16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

The Son is also the revelation of God, **Jn. 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth ... **Mt. 11:27** All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. ...

And through the Holy Spirit the Father created and maintains the universe, **Job 26:13** By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked

serpent ... **Ps. 104:30** Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. ... The Holy Spirit also reveals the Father and the Son, **Eph. 3:5** Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ... **II Peter 1:21** For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Through Him, God reveals salvation, **Jn. 3:6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... **Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

No wonder, - when men try to present such profound doctrines to explain God, - their attempts fail miserably because the concept of the infinite God extends beyond anything the human mind can capture. Instead, the stance of the born-again believer is simply this, **Ps. 118:23** This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. ... And we, by the faith given to us by the Holy Spirit, accept what the Word declares, without injecting it with our own imagination. What God reveals, by the Holy Spirit, we receive ... and when we receive it, it becomes clearer to our understanding.

The Jehovah Witnesses, though, deny the Holy Spirit as their Teacher, which means they fall back on constructing their own false doctrines and notions. They have nothing more to work with than the only means at their disposal, - the fallen and depraved sinful mind ... And out of their error, they produce a 'gospel' not of the Bible ... and since it is not of the Word of God, it is contrary to the work of God. Their 'Jehovah' is not the God of the Old and New Testaments for they irrefutably deny the Deity of Jesus and the Deity of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the 'building blocks' of their whole doctrinal edifice is fallible and corrupt.

Sadly, many Jehovah's Witnesses came out of traditional churches because what they were hearing was not answering their questions. ... Pray for them. When they come to your door, don't argue with them. Instead, use it as an opportunity to simply tell them how you came to know God through His Son Jesus Christ, Who came to die for you on Calvary. ... And tell them about how you have the assurance that when you leave this world, you will be with Him forever. ... No arguing. No heated words. No trying to 'get one over' ... Just simply tell them how the Lord saved you, and trust the Lord can do the same for them too.

God saves people from out of the Jehovah Witnesses, and I recommend a website published by ex-Jehovah Witnesses, *4Jehovah* (<http://www.4jehovah.org/statement-of-faith/>).

In our next study, we shall consider the two remaining issues ...

1. The doctrine of Scripture
2. The doctrine of the End Times.